**About Mikidadi: Individual Biography and National History in Tanzania**

**By Pat Caplan**

**Published 30th November 2016 by Sean Kingston publishers**

This is the extraordinary story of Mikidadi, an ordinary Tanzanian from a remote island, who became a Koran-school teacher, charity leader, environmental activist and guardian of an extended family. This biography is not only about Mikidadi’s life and legacy, but also his times. He lived through transitions from colonialism to independence, socialism to neoliberalism, a single- to a multi-party state, and a local Swahili Islam to a more globalized and politicized form. He also experienced the rise of corruption, and the increasing role of Western NGOs and Islamic charities. In considering how wider historical processes impact on Mikidadi, as life gets progressively harder for his family, this book seeks to counter some of the recent rewriting of Tanzania’s post-colonial history.

Skilfully moving through the decades, between events at national, regional and individual levels, between three generations, and even adding a further layer of her own life as an anthropologist, Caplan succeeds in writing an engaging, accessible account that will appeal to both academics and students. For at the centre of this book is an unlikely friendship that began in 1966 between a 12 year-old boy and a 23 year-old woman, and lasted nearly four decades, to be cut short by Mikidadi’s untimely death in 2002. Recollections of meetings, and extracts from fieldwork notes and correspondence, bring a lively immediacy to this exchange, in which profound cultural differences between researcher and researched are overcome in interconnected lives.

‘A fascinating biography about a Tanzanian man, his life-world and a profound friendship that offers rare insights into the meaning of a shared humanity. The result is an unprecedented ethnographic analysis of contemporary Tanzanian history exploring how individuals, families and communities over time perceive, act, negotiate and strive to adjust in the shade of shifting political, economic and ideological conditions.’

Prof Kjersti Larsen, Associate Professor of Social Anthropology and African Studies at the Department of Ethnography, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo.

This clear and well written book follows the life of Caplan’s friend Mikidadi from Mafia Island.  She uses it to explore the last fifty years of Tanzanian history, and to question recent rewritings of history that elide the successes of the first decades of independence. The book celebrates a life and its place in history. It is an exemplar of public anthropology. ‘

David Zeitlyn, Professor of Social Anthropology, University of Oxford