Table of contents

Shona Names: Their Origins and Import
Viriri Advice Executive Dean - Midlands State University)
Dr Vongai Z. Nyawo- Shava VIRIRI
Lecturer - History & Development Studies
Midlands State University 1

Pragmatics and Shona marriage anthroponyms
Livingstone Makondo (Centre for Higher
Education Teaching and Learning) University of Venda,
South Africa & Medicine Magocha (Tswane University
of Technology) 21

Representation of female politicians of female politicians as
mothers: The Case of the Kwayedza newspaper.
Mandiedza Parichi Midlands State University 37

A tribute to "Hombre" and others: the names we gave to our teachers.
Charles Pfukwa 54

How we were named yesterday: An exposition of characters'
names in selected colonial Shona novels
Godwin Makaudze 67

Of London pony, fish tail and carrot! Quizzing'beauty'
through naming of women'sselected hairstyles in Zimbabwe.
Umali Saidi 83

Derogatory Naming as a form of Social Control among the Ndebele.
Lindiwe Ndlovu 107

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Shona names: Their origins and import

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Abstract

Contrary to William Shakespeare's **Romeo and Juliet**'s notion about a name, according to The Afrocentric Experience, [2004], a name is the evidence of one's existence. A name establishes one's presence on earth. Names give a person identity and can be a source of pride or shame as it were. From the earliest literature, the Bible, the naming of a people, a place or a person has always been important as an indicator of who that people, place or person would become in the future. Examples of such naming are numerous and include the naming of Jesus, as Emmanuel and Peter as the Rock. In the same breath, in the Shona culture, newly born babies are given names in the families they are born into. There are traditional criteria followed when giving names. Naming is not done by everybody, elders or the mother and father of the child have the prerogative to name. This article endeavours to analyse the sources and meanings of Shona names given to children. The central thrust of the article is that, in the Shona society, a name has a lot of meaning, and significance and can therefore, even influence the behaviour of the owner.

Introduction

Etymologically, a name is a language unit of which a person or thing is known. Names signify status, physical or personality traits in a family, family achievements and meaningful social designations which yielded in social prestige within social

contexts. Names transmit meanings that are understood in the multiplex nature of any given cultural milieu. The Shona culture give names based on one's experiences, histories, emotions and happenings surrounding the birth of a child. Paul Leslie and James Skipper Jr. (1990 : 273) put it that:

> The meanings of names are the result of complex social negotiations, learned, interpreted, and reified through socialization. We learn at a young age how we are to call others. Transgression of acceptable naming traditions established by a group may be met with negative sanction.

Parents are expected to accept names, from elders, uncles or aunts that are given to their newly born babies. Because the Shona people are patrilineal, most names come from the father's side. Hence, culturally, children are named after their ancestors from their father's lineage. These elders could have been prominent, famous, respected, feared, and brave, with extra-ordinary traits, intelligent or powerful. However, namesaking is done sparingly since there is a belief, according to Samson-Akpan and Mokhathi-Mbhele (2002:3) that virtues are inherited.

Naming children after ancestors or elders has resulted in children with names similar to their surnames for example, Chirikure Chirikure, Zendakwaye Zendakwaye or Nyamupfukudza Nyamupfukudza. Mate (2006:23) believes that this is a result of the eagerness to link oneself with the past as a window to the future. The Shona believe that ancestral spirits have a bearing on the lives of their living folk. Therefore, recognizing ancestors by giving their names to newly borns honours them, makes them happy wherever they are and ensures protection of the living by the departed. As a result, the same name can be passed down generation after generation to ensure its continuity and survival in the family. There is a Shona song to the effect that children who bear elderly people's names should be given respect and special attention (vana vane mazita avakuru ngavaremekedzwe / children who are named after elders should be honoured.)

Linking Previous with Current Literature

Despite having a vast scholarly literature on naming and terminology worldwide, the Zimbabwean literature, though scant, is richly suggestive of the various functions and roles which names can fulfill. Since this study interrogates different theoretical perspectives that underpin studies in onomastics, naming has always

been an interesting issue. The onomastics literature consulted reveals that much has been unraveled in the various name studies categories like place names and personal names across the globe hence the need to fill in the gap in Zimbabwe. Any name becomes an emotional evocation of either positive or negative feelings. Signals that names sent can either reveal an ideological stance or express certain societal attitudes. As proof to the fragmentary nature of this onomastic collective endeavour, a brief survey of Zimbabwean studies is given in order to expose the existing gaps that this study seeks to fill. Typical of the proverbial blind man examining an elephant, this study provides another dimension to onomastics.

Alec Pongweni (1983) examined war-related names as epithets determined by an ideology that was generated during Zimbabwe's protracted war of national liberation. Chimurenga names have become a national heritage with the ability to create multiple autobiographies whose collective aspirations are constructed in the realisation of forging identities of nationhood through the naming proces. It is crystal clear from the names studied that they never operated free of these ideological connotations, hence the combatants' insistence on the use of these Chimurenga War names (Pfukwa 2008, Makondo 2009) which "did not only reverberate beyond the immediate function" but also "embed a memory of suffering and hope; this memory is counternarrative". (Pfukwa, 2012: ix, x).

Ezra Chitando's intense passion for religious fanaticism in studying Christian names is evidenced when he traced the entrenchment of Christianity in Zimbabwe after the suppression of the 1896-97 uprisings. A kind of ambivalence and contradiction in sites of onomastics and popular culture are evident in that traditional Shona names became an epitome of shame and embarrassment that needed transformation to pave way for the emergence of new identities from the Western culture. This mimicry and assimilation suggests that colonialism remains intriguing. As proof that people have imbibed new tastes made possible by Christianity and by changes in public culture, the missionaries made it mandatory for their converts to acquire Christian names. This imitation and assimilation of the colonial culture is viewed in positive light by the colonised as being liberatory, progressive and civilised when in actual fact, it is a sign of deeper alienation.

Ancestral / Clan Names

Names like clan ones, are handed down from one generation to another generation. They are from ancestral clan and totemic names. In most cases, names connected to ancestors are longish, expressed in deep Shona that is not common place, names that sounds heavy to call and not easy to give a linguistic meaning as listed in the table below.

Table 1: Ancestral / Clan Names in Shona

Gender	Shona Name	English Translation
Boy	Jekanyika	Renowned traveller
Boy	Guramatunhu	Renowned traveller
Girl	Madhuve	Of the Zebra totem
Girl	Vachinjanja	Of the Heart totem

Godfathers and godmothers had a major task bestowed on them to give a name or naming after someone in the family. It is within the people's customs that the importance of a name to Africans be realised and placed to context. Clan and totemic names were "reserved for certain circumstances: ... The kings and traditional leaders have no special names. When they assume power, they adopt the name of the clan founder, for which the region is known:" (Abrahamo, 2002:93).

Table 2: Name that Indicate Family Crisis

Gender	Shona Name	English Translation
Boy	Munjodzi	We are in deep trouble
Boy	Tozivepi	From where can we get assistance
Girl	Tapera	We are finished
Girl	Pedzai	Finish them all

Names in the above table are given to children from our home area who are born when the family or nation was in crisis. For example, children were born during the 2007-2008 economic meltdown in Zimbabwe when the country experienced financial problems, are given names that spell out the hardships they faced like Tapera which means we are finished. Also, children who survived after a series of deaths of newly born babies in a family are named Tapona literally meaning we have survived. During the Zimbabwean Chimurenga War, a pregnant woman's husband who died during a contact had the baby girl born and was called Masaranani literally meaning who is left for you. The late husband was her only real world.

Table 3: Names Indicating Hatred

Gender	Shona Name	English Translation
Boy	Togarepi	Where will we stay
Boy	Toendepi	Where will we go
Girl	Tofarasei	How shall we be happy
Girl	Yeukai	Remember

Such names are heavy and burdensome to the child so much that others change them to something lighter when they grow up and get to comprehend their meaning. These are names that describe the kind of the life led in a polygamous family, rife with conflict.

Table 4: Names Indicating Family Conflict

Gender	Shona Name	English Translation
Boy	Munjodzi	We are in deep trouble
Boy	Mharadze	You are a witch
Girl	Muchanyara	You will soon give up /You shall be embarrassed
Girl	Nyararai	Keep quiet

When giving someone some advice, people do not always approach or confront the one to be advised. They sometimes resort to just naming their child in line with the message they want picked by the next person. As a result, children get names that are talking to the next person, a neighbour or an in-law.

Table 5: Names that Express Family Mood

Gender	Shona Name	English Translation
Boy	Rufaro	Happiness
Boy	Tendai	Give thanks to God
Girl	Zvikomborero	We have been blessed
Girl	Rutendo	Thanksgiving

The Shona often express their feelings, moods and sentiments through the names they give to their children. When children arrive when the family has a bumper harvest, a good hunt or good fortune parents take the liberty to name their children accordingly.

Table 6: Names that Praise God

Gender	Shona Name	English Translation
Boy	Kudzaishe	Give praise to God
Boy	Kupakwashe	The Lord provides
Girl	KudakwaShe	What God wants
Girl	VongaiShe	Thanks be to God

Some children are fortunate to arrive when parents want to thank the heavens, God, grandparents, ancestors or other loved ones for something. Such children mostly get names that indicate that their parents are grateful to someone for a favour. In other cases, when the required sex of a child is given or received, parents often thank their heavens right away. For instance, if a family had had

only boys, up to five or six, if the seventh child arrives as a girl, the child's sex gives them reason to be grateful. Also, Zimbabwean society is patriarchal as said before, in a family of only girls, parents will be hopeful to have a boy, if one comes their way, he will be given names that show that he will be the heir, the one to take care of and protect the sisters, for example, Mufudzi/ Sherpherd.

Table 7: Names Indicating Personal Features

Gender	Shona Name	English Translation
Boy	Chipfupi/Kapfupi	One who is very short
Boy	Chakaipa	One who is not good looking
Girl	Naki	One who is pretty
Girl	Dzvuke	One, very light in complexion

Names under the following category are a commentary on one's height, behaviour, complexion, appearance or gait. Such names, though no longer popular in contemporary times, are not usually given by the actual parents of a child.

Table 8: Names that Capture the Socio-politico-economic Atmosphere in a Nation

Gender	Shona Name	English Translation
Boy	Isapu (ESAP)	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
Boy	Zvipiko	Constant breakdown of ZUPCO buses
Girl	Gina (GNU)	Government of National Unity in Zimbabwe
Girl	Zviripi	One will have chased vanity

The naming process has been affected among Zimbabwean people who were recovering from the colonized mentality. Often children revive names that are an indicator of awareness by parents as to the goings-on around them. Such names are informed by the happenings in the social, economic or political arenas of the country. Parents use these names to mark, remember and reflect in future, the experiences they once had, be they fortunate or unfortunate.

Table 9: Names Indicating Global Events

Gender	**Foreign /International names given to Shona children**	**English Translation**
Boy	Osama	The most wanted Islamic terrorist
Boy	Barrack Obama	America's first black President
Girl	Tsunami	One of the deadliest cyclones
Boy	John White	A prominent white businessman

In this category, names often capture both the first and surnames of a hero, an event, an icon, artist, role model or someone held in high esteem by the world or by a country. They combine the hero's full name and then the child's real surname. For example, one can be Percyslage plus their surname. Percy Slage is a name and surname of an artist prominent at one time, and most likely, his music was liked by one who named the child. John White is a name of one prominent white businessman, cum tailor who lived in Gutu District of Zimbabwe at one time.

Table 10: Names Indicating Seasons and Days of the Week

Gender	Shona Name	English Translation
Boy	Mugovera	Saturday
Boy	Svondo	Sunday
Girl	Kushanyura	To harvest
Girl	Maenza	Summer

When a child is named after a season, or day of the week or month of a year, it is a sign that that's when the child was born. As a way of marking the time, freezing history, parents name their children as such. For instance, a child can be Svondo if they are born on Sunday and especially if the parents go to church on Sunday and on such a day they are blessed with a child.

Table 11: Names Indicating Regret or Disgruntlement by In-Laws

Gender	Shona Name	English Translation
Boy	Murambwi	The abandoned [when one is born disabled]
Boy	Rambai	Abandon him
Girl	Rashai	Throw away
Girl	Ndakaitei	What did I do?

In the Shona society, if a son is to marry, his parents have to consent to the marriage. They have to se their daughter-in-law to be and approve before any procedure is done. If normal steps are not taken and a son brings a girl who is already pregnant and they do not approve of the family which the girl comes from or care not happy with anything about the arrangement they are bound to name the girl's child according to how they exactly feel about the union. The name will be a sign of their disapproval of their son marrying without their blessings. Such a name is given to communicate to all who hear the name that the daughter-in-law is neither welcome herself not her offspring.

Table 12: Names Indicating a Delay in Consummation of Marriage

Gender	Shona Name	English translation	Suggestive of
Boy	Munonoki	The delayer	Almost failed to come
Boy	Kupakwashe	The way God gives	Suggesting one can never know
Girl	Anopaishe	God gives	If only we have the patience to wait
Girl	Tapiwanashe	We are given	At long last

In this table, names are given that denote a delay or an uncomfortable wait in the coming of either a marriage or a child to consummate a marriage. Normally, soon after a marriage a couple is expected to show signs of going the family way, the reason why the Shona often ask questions like, 'achiri kungofamba' is the daughter-in-law still walking with no pregnancy, 'guvhu richiri mukati?' is her umbilical cord still inside indicating no growth of a womb.

If pregnancy delays and comes at a time when people are almost loosing hope, such a child is likely to be named after the long wait that the parents experienced. When the child finally arrives, names are chosen that are suggestive of the unfortunate encounter that almost befell the parents.

Table 13: Names indicating the position of a child in family

Gender	Shona Name	English Translation
Boy	Takwana	We are enough
Boy	Nevanji	The eldest son
Girl	Zvakwana	It is enough
Girl	Todii	What do we do?

Often when parents have their children they name a target as to how many or when to have a child. In the same breath, the names they give their children speak

volumes as to who came as the first son like Nevanji and who is the last, Takwana. Our uncle and wife, Mr & Mrs Douglas Matope of Buhera have five children. They consulted each other for their fourth child's name and it was Todii literally meaning "what do we do?" They were seeking guidance from each other on a good number of children they should have then the fifth and last born was named Zvakwana, literally meaning it is enough. So from the question "what do we do?" (Todii) an answer was supplied as "It is enough" (Zvakwana).

Table 14: Names Indicating Religious Affiliation

Gender	Shona Name	English Translation
Boy	Munyaiwashe	The messenger of God
Boy	Tinotendaishe	We thank God
Girl	Chipiwachashe	A gift from God
Girl	Panashe	God's dwelling presence

During colonialism, the missionaries were successful in converting many people to Christianity. This does not imply that prior to the colonial period, Africans were not religious. They had the same concept of God manifesting itself in many forms including their expressions. This advent of Christianity which has given birth to the increase of Shona names referring to God has rendered Zimbabwe as a Christian society. Some names use synonyms or attributes of God as the Creator. Many parents have been under pressure to give their children names that sing praises of the Lord. Such names are recognized by the suffix '-ishe' at the tail of the name. The '-ishe' stands for Lord in English. The prefix of the name, for example 'Pana'-, where there is, says what parents want to say about the Lord so much that the name Panashe means where the Lord is.

Table 15: Names Derived from the Bible

Gender	Shona Name	English Translation
Boy	Abhurahama (Abraham)	The father of faith
Boy	Shadhireki (Shadreck)	Persecuted for God
Girl	Maria (Mary)	The mother of Jesus
Girl	Rute (Ruth)	One who loved her mother-in –law dearly

Most of the biblically derived names typical of those above, speak volumes about their bearers. Saul was well-known for terrorizing Christians but soon after his repentance, he changed his name to Paul. His lifestyle had been completely transformed into upholding admirable virtues of life. Names are statements of truth and these biblical ones show one's Christian doctrine.

Table 16: Names Indicating Trent / Vogue

Gender	Shona Name	English Translation
Boy	Tafara	We are happy[in cases where one is the only boy or only child]
Boy	Farai	Be happy
Girl	Kudzai	Give praise to God
Girl	Tafadzwa	We have been made happy

Names that are in vogue are usually unisex; they can be given to children across sexes. These names are popular with young couples who like to move with times. These kinds of names are normally picked by either parents from social circles, from church, from school, from literature read or from listening over the radio and watching television. They are an indicator of contemporariness. They are picked to indicate what is fashionable in a place at a particular time. For instance, the names Farai and Tafadzwa at one time were so trendy that parents would feel

left out if they did not name their child as such. Depending on where one lives, the urban environment is mostly responsible for creating these so called vogues.

Table 17: Names Indicating Illegitimacy

Gender	Shona Name	English Translation
Boy	Chirimubhachi	Hidden in a Jacket
Boy	Rambai	One who was divorced
Girl	Bvunzai	Ask for details
Girl	Murambiwa	One who was forsaken

Giving birth out of wedlock is a taboo in Zimbabwe. However, as a result of teenage pregnancies, 'nhaka' as well as unfortunate incidences of rape and rituals, girls and women give birth out of wedlock. When the father of a child is not known, a name might be picked that is suggestive of the mystery or secrecy within which the whole incident is shrouded in. For instance, Chirimubhachi suggests that the woman and a few others knew the whole truth but would not tell it for fear of shame, reprisals or other such negative results.

Table 18: Names Indicating Alliteration

Alliteration is the close repetition of consonant sounds, usually at the beginning of words. It is also known as 'head rhyme'. For example, Mazvita Manditi Mandizvo - Thank you God for calling me Mandizvo. Kurima Kwaramba, the full names show the richness of poetic Shona speech. Kumbirai Kangai whose Chimurenga name during the second war of liberation was Kangai Mbeu Kurima Kwaramba. Chenhamo Chakezha Chimutengwende, a former Zimbabwean Minister and Muchadei Muchadahama Masunda, the current Mayor of Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe has an alliterative name. Besides names being alliterative, such names like Chenhamo (a poor little fellow who grew up in abject poverty) are full of pathos thereby evoking the feelings of pity, tenderness and sympathy. The bearer is rendered a pathetic object who usually suffers helplessly as in the death of Shakespeare's Desdemona which was pathetic.

Table 19: Names Indicating the Chain of Being

Does God have a name? Although God has many titles, he has only one name. In each and every language, the name is pronounced differently. The English name is usually Jehovah or sometimes Yahweh (Psalms 83:18). Chain of Being is the idea that the universe, as an organic unity, consists of a series of links and gradations of beings and objects arranged in a hierarchy of existence from the least significant to the source of creation, who is God himself, towards which all things look up to. Jesus said "Our Father in the heavens let your name be sanctified" (Matthew 6: 9).

Gender	Shona Name	English Translation
Boy	Musikavanhu	Creator of the universe
Boy	Nyadenga	One who reins supreme
Girl	Chibwechitedza	God the most high
Girl	Baba vedu	Our father who art in heaven

A person is a pivotal being who unites natural and supernatural orders of existence, shares with the angels, eternal spirit and intelligence. Naming is reason governed by logic and also comes from intuitive intelligence. Shona people share with animals and plants the capacity for reproduction and feeling. These philosophical ideas are given expression through names. This is well encapsulated in Hamlet's famous speech:

> What a piece of work is man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god : the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals....

In the early 18th Century, the German philosopher Leibniz, starting from the assumption that God creates out of his goodness and perfection, developed the idea of a perfect world which is implicit, in the principle of plenitude. The Shona people's perception of imperfection or evil, Leibniz argues is a result of man's limited view of universal harmony. This phenomenon has given birth to Shona names like Pakuramunhumashokoanowanda, literally meaning that when one grows up there is a lot of conflicting talk.

Gender	Shona Name	English Translation
Boy	Pakuramunhumashokoanowanda	Conflicts come with age
Boy	Swerakuendamukwashawezuva	Son-in-law who is lazy
Girl	Hapanyengwi	It's a no go area
Girl	Mozohwanda	You should be ashamed of yourself

Names, like art, inculcate moral views of Shona people and serve an important social function. The underlying assumption is that, naming has a significant formative target in Shona people's moral and spiritual development. Some names are didactic- that is, they teach through poetry. This shows the poetic nature of Shona names which exude both deep and surface meanings, put differently, names showcase both metaphorical and literal meanings. Altman- Alvarez (cited in Mandende, 1988:174) supports this view:

> We must see in each name all of the poem's 'cerebral phosphorescences', ... for in names writers of skill pack many connotations and ... 'tell all the truth/ but tell it slant' [and] they produce little puzzles for the critic who must 'by indirection find direction out.

It is factual that languages offer a repertoire of linguistic expressions to refer to an individual, his/her society and the different circumstances and situations around him/her. Names express a people's understanding of their culture. They are societal constructs, very functional in giving significant insights into social and cultural expectations and roles in life.

Gender	Shona Name	English Translation
Boy	Pazvaivetsa	It was destined for something
Boy	Hatikanganwi	We will not forget
Girl	Dangarembwa	One with a kraal full of dogs
Girl	Mugove	One's destiny

Names are a medium through which information, knowledge, culture, ideas, perceptions, norms, standards and value systems are transmitted and inculcated within a society. They approve or disapprove the characteristics and attitudes on the bearers' communicative intentions. Names possess both lexical and contextual meanings. No little wonder why Pfukwa and Barnes, [2008: 98] put it that: "A name is a social peg; it expresses a cultural or social perspective of the namer or the owner of the name. Naming and renaming becomes an act of claiming and rewriting an identity." Names become a revelation of how Shona people view life in general, cultural values and their philosophy in particular. Musere and Byakutaga [cited in Mandende, 1998:173] argue that:

> African names often reflect negative or positive opinions of the name givers towards the child or other people [usual kin, neighbours, or friends]. The child's name can commemorate significant events or circumstances at the time of birth.

It is a name that helps the bearer in shaping his/her destiny, though God claims to be the overseer when he says "For I know the plans that I have for you, plans not for disaster but plans to give you hope and a good future." (Jeremiah 29:11)

Names become labels that have a closer link with the naming of their functions. A name is, therefore, a way of self- fulfilling prophecies in moulding one's destiny. It is an expression of one's wishful thinking. Is it by coincidence that Arsene Wenger is head coach of Arsenal team?

Table 20: Names and Magic

It is through naming that the root of magical theory is more pronounced in that the name of a thing, animal or person is the miniature image of it, and it can be used as a substitute for it. We have encountered people who were injured as effectively by working on the miniature image of himself, especially his name, or by working on a figure of him in wax or clay. In the cases of wax and clay, the image is used often baptized with the name of the victim it represents. One's name was written on a piece of lead, wax or pottery then adding an appropriate curse and buries it, was a classical method of killing or injuring an enemy. As the lead grew cold, so inversely, the person bearing the name grew colder and eventually dies.

In some instances, a nail was driven through the name in a bid to pierce the enemy. As the paper with the names was being nailed so was the real person. In January 2011, a Chipinge magistrate died while trying to prosecute a cattle rustler and died while trying to pronounce judgment. There are curses that are connected to lawsuits where the name of an opponent in the courts was buried to stifle his slippery tongue. Certain curses are intended to strike the victim with a disease.

Table 21: The Idea of Having Two Names

The fact that any person can be subjected to magical influence through simply usage of the name meant that life was altogether too dangerous. It was necessary then to hide one's name for this did not actually give a magician power over it. A person's ordinary name became merely a convenient label. The name which enshrined the essence of a person or creature's identity was its 'real' name, which was secret. In the past, even up to now a person is given two or more names. One is for ordinary, everyday use and the other, his real name, is kept secret. Sometimes, it can be so secret that the person might not know it- after it was whispered into his ear by his mother when he was a baby.

The real names of Gods, angels and demons were also kept secret, for the reasons mentioned earlier. The scriptures in the book of Revelation have a rider on a white horse that is called Faithful and True and has another secret name. It reads 'His eyes were as a flame of fire and on his head were many crowns, and he had a name written, that no man knew but he himself'. Again in the Bible is the angel who visited Manoah, the father of Samson, refused to reveal his name, - 'Why ask me my name, knowing it is a secret.' Another Angel who wrestled with Jacob also refused to tell his name, probably because he thought Jacob could use it to defeat him. We get the clue from Jewish commentators who believe that this angel's real name was Sammael. The name made him a terrible angel of death and poison, and its meaning is Venom of God.

Changing Names in Adulthood

Parents and relatives take pains in choosing names for their children, often with the underlying feelings that the name will affect the child's character. People who repent to Christianity or any religions order take new names as a sign that as new

person they are beginning a new life. Paul in the book of Corinthians says "When a person is in Christ, he is a new creature, the old things have gone and behold the new has come" (II Corinthians 5:17). In this similar fashion, people who join occult societies and witches take on new names on entering the Devil's service. Some magicians and respectable numerologists would use one's name in an attempt to destroy a person but is the belief that one's name contains the essence of the person. It needs to be analysed following a set of traditional rules which would reveal one's character and destiny. It is a name that distinguishes one from other people and on this basis; the numerologist's conviction is enshrined in one's individuality. The idea of reducing names into numbers turn them into reasonable small numbers running away from the risk of harming multitudes of different people in the world who have similar names.

Conclusion

It has been proven beyond any reasonable qualms of doubt that the conviction that the name of a thing contains the essence of its being is one of the oldest and most fundamental cultural beliefs. Names were and still are used to identify things and human beings. It could have been necessary to recite a long and detailed description of the characteristics of a thing, an animal or a person, but names brought in and gave us convenience. The paper went on to show traditional criteria that are followed when giving names. Naming is not done by everybody, elders or the mother and father of the child have the prerogative to name. It further analysed the sources and meanings of Shona names given to children. The central thrust of the paper was that, in the Shona society, a name has a lot of meaning, and significance and can therefore, even influence the behaviour of the owner. The name becomes a summation of all the characteristics which make up the thing, animal or person, what it is. The name becomes that thing, that animal or that person's identity.

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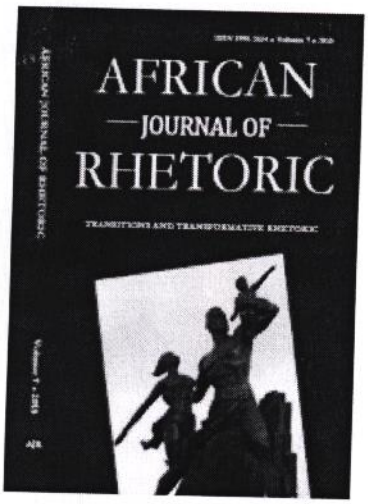

Table of Contents

Dedication
iv

Editorial notes
vii-xviii

Acknowledgments
xix-xx | Ige, Segun

Rhetoric and Mondela's panegyric : extending dialogue on Africa's transition from pains of misrule to gains of transformative democracy
21-48 | Osakwe, Mabel

A corpus-based critical discourse analysis of selected speeches of Nelson Mandela
49-78 | Makamani, Rewai

Transition and transformation : a practitioner's reflection
79-92 | Manuel, Trevor

Africa's transformational post-colonial leadership and colonial antinomies Sir Quett Ketumile Joni Masire of Botswana
93-128 | Mhlanga, Brilliant

An analysis of Bishop Dumeni's four funeral speeches in the pre-independence era in Namibia
129-157 | Mbenzi, Petrus / Kangira, Jairos

Political transition and the rhetoric of transformation in the liberation war literature
158-192 | Viriri, Advice

Decolonizing health professionals' education : audiology & speech therapy in South Africa
193-227 | Pillay, Mershen / Kathard, Harsha

The writer's speech : J. M. Coetzee's allegory of self-figuring in his Nobel prize lecture, 'He and His Man'
228-248 | Garside, Damian

Using marketing as a means to 'sell' salvation
249-273 | Adebayo, Rufus O. / Govender, Jeevarathnam P.

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Abstract

The article seeks to initiate debate about Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, with a special focus on the rhetorical engagements surrounding the promise of transition and transformation. It further asserts that the principal aim of the struggle was the rhetoric of land redistribution in the post-independence era imbued in the current dialectic between transition and transformation. The selected war literature mirrors a period of national reconstruction that is characterised by writers who register not only the joys and pains of national rebirth, but writers who begin to constitute a critical consciousness embedded within the context of Zimbabwe's developmental politics. This literature laments the failure to fulfill most of the aspirations after Zimbabwe's independence. It examines the consequence of the regression of the liberation movement into nationalism that focused on the transfer of power from the Rhodesian regime to the African nationalists, rather than the transformation of society to realise the ideals of the liberation struggle. This left all the despotic Rhodesian institutions statutes intact and this could hardly have facilitated the outcome of what the struggle stood for. It is intriguing that the common liberation war rhetoric deliberately eulogises the contribution of the war veterans who negate what the liberation movement stood for before and after independence. It is through this rhetoric of transition and transformation that Zimbabwe's current socio-political dire straits are no more than the inevitable consequence and outcome of two decades of misguided economic policies founded on populism, politics of patronage, mismanagement, incompetence and corruption.