



Remnants of colonial place-names in Gutu, Zimbabwe: Objectifying history or sustaining the frontiers of 'othering'?

Vincent Jenjekwa^a

^aMidlands State University, Zimbabwe

ARTICLE HISTORY

Published online, 2021

ABSTRACT

This study, examines through the post-colonial and critical toponymy lens, the presence of settler place-names of colonial origin in the post-2000 resettlement areas of Gutu District of Zimbabwe. Despite the attainment of independence by Zimbabwe in 1980, farm areas largely remained as enclaves of colonial ownership because independence through the Lancaster House Constitution did not drastically change land ownership. The post-2000 fast-track land reform 'opened-up' these areas as the farms got transformed into villages and smaller farms after the compulsory acquisition of the farms by the Government. A critical study of the post-2000 toponymy in the resettlement areas reveals how the settler place-names displaced local place-names and, in the process, mutilated the history and culture of the indigenous Shona people. With the exception of only a few, settler place-names on the landscape currently, celebrate settler homelands, British imperialism and generally recast Anglophonic narratives. These settler place-names are embedded in the formal and informal cartography of the communities where they are used in mundane and official discourses. It is the contention of this paper that colonial names, as relics of the colonial era that ended forty-one years ago in Zimbabwe, are resilient symbols of settler identity, signs of the annexation of the physical and virtual African cultural space. They indicate how language, through place-names, can engrave heritage and identity on the landscape. While these colonial place-names depict the objective history of Zimbabwe, there could be a need for cultural restoration through the resuscitation of local place-names to ensure that the linguistic landscape does not continue to sustain the frontiers of dispossession. Data for this study was generated qualitatively through in-depth interviews, observation and document analysis.

KEYWORDS: Toponyms, place-names, displacement, post-colonial, colonisation



Introduction

The post-1990 period is known in onomastics (toponymy in particular) for the paradigm shift from the traditional study of place-names that focused on the development of extant typologies to a critical approach guided by the application of critical social theory (Tent and Blair, 2011). This shift in the theoretical orientation of the study of names of places has been termed ‘the critical turn’ by critical toponymists such as Azaryahu (1997; 2011) and Rose-Redwood et al. (2011; 2018). The critical turn was occasioned by the realisation that place-names are not mere denotative linguistic symbols but rich linguistic signs that stored, among others, cultural, historical, political, scientific and economic information about a particular community. This research article examines place-names within the framework of the critical turn in the context of post-coloniality in Zimbabwe.

More than four decades after Zimbabwe gained independence from Britain in 1980; the outlying rural communities that used to be mainly colonial settler farms before the year 2000 still have several English or European names whose origin is traceable directly or indirectly to the colonial era. This presence is ironic given the anti-colonial rhetoric associated with the megaphone anti-colonial ideology adopted by the post-independence government of Zimbabwe, particularly around the year 2000 when white farm-owners were forcibly ejected from the farms without compensation. This study examines the extent and trends of the colonial farm names and discusses what these names stood for and what they symbolise in independent Zimbabwe. It also examines how these colonial names erased or mutilated Shona culture and history through the systematic overwriting of place-names. Before the discussion of findings, a brief historical background of Zimbabwe, the theoretical framework and the methodology are outlined.

Background

Zimbabwe, a country in Southern Africa, was under the reign of the empire before its colonisation by the British in 1890. The southern and northern borders are shared with South Africa and Zambia, respectively. To the east, the country borders Mozambique, while the western border is shared with Botswana.

Historians trace the origins of what is now Zimbabwe to the Munhumutapa Empire of the Bantu people that reigned in the land from the 12th to the 17th Century (Nicolaidis, 2011). Historians such as Mudenge (2011) argue that the Munhumutapa Empire was prominent until the 17th Century when the Rozvi Empire took over. Both the Munhumutapa and the Rozvi Empires were built around ethnic composition (Nicolaidis, 2011; Mudenge, 2011; Manyanga & Chirikure, 2017). A powerful tribal chief had sub-chiefs under him. The fall of the Munhumutapa Empire was a result of several factors one of them being the defeat of the main Chief by the Rozvi. By the end of the 18th century, the Rozvi Empire was in control of all the land of what is now Zimbabwe.

After decades of relative stability, the Rozvi Empire was seriously shaken in 1826 when Mzilikazi, a renegade general of the Zulu King, Tshaka, broke away and emigrated northwards into the western part of the Rozvi territory (now Western Zimbabwe), with a group of followers which became known as the Ndebele (Mudenge, 2011). In western Zimbabwe, Mzilikazi conquered surrounding local chiefs. He subsequently demanded allegiance from Rozvi chiefs from as far as Mashonaland and Masvingo by way of payment of tribute (Zvobgo, 2009; Mudenge, 2011). As a result of his war prowess, Mzilikazi had conquered most chiefs and their sub-chiefs in the western and central parts of Zimbabwe by the time of his death in 1868. It should, however, be noted that the coming in of Mzilikazi and the Ndebele was characteristic of the territorial expansion and reconfiguration, a common feature of the Bantu political topography of the time (Bostoen, 2018).

In 1888, Cecil John Rhodes, who had established the British South Africa Company (BSAP), obtained a British Royal Charter to act as a British proxy in furtherance of British imperial interests in Africa. Through his emissaries, Cecil John Rhodes negotiated with Lobengula, Mzilikazi's son, a move informed by Rhodes' appreciation of the political power dynamics in the land which used to be the Rozvi Empire (Beach, 1994, Mudenge, 2011).

The agreement signed between Lobengula and Rhodes's emissaries led by Charles Rudd, was used to dupe Lobengula and eventually dispossess both the Ndebeles and the Shona ethnic groups of their land. Rhodes and his Pioneer Column (a group of colonial fortune seekers) with ox-drawn wagons, set out for what is now Zimbabwe in 1890. The column entered Zimbabwe through the southern part, and at every point they stopped, they gave the place a name. The journey to what is now Harare left a trail of 'forts' on the way: Fort Tuli, Fort

Victoria, Fort Charter and Fort Salisbury (Harare). On the 12th of September 1890, the Union Jack, the British flag, was hoisted at Fort Salisbury as an indication of the colonisation of the land by the British.

Following the hoisting of the British Flag at Fort Salisbury (now Harare), the colonialists embarked on the systematic occupation of African land (Zvobgo, 2009). Although the Rudd Concession which had been signed between the BSAC and Lobengula only gave them limited hunting and mining rights. The colonialists had already made up their minds about permanent settlement and forced take-over of African land because of the advertisements sent out by Rhodes in South Africa (Mudenge, 2011, Zvobgo, 2009; Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009). By 1896, both the Ndebele and the Shona had borne the brunt of colonial exploitation and dispossession as they were systematically forced off their land to pave the way for farms while at the same time being forced to work for the colonialists in mines and on farms.

In terms of territorial administration, the colonial government had set up administrative structures that effectively neutralised the authority of local African traditional leadership. Local chiefs were made subservient to the colonial administration through the policy of indirect rule (a surreptitious influence of the local chiefs' leadership) (Mudenge, 2011; Zvobgo, 2009; Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009), and those who resisted were punished by being dethroned or having their chieftaincy nullified. By 1896, the colonial government had introduced a raft of legislative changes, for instance, the hut tax to make the Black indigenous people pay for being residents on colonial land. As a result, both the Shona and Ndebele agitated for the expulsion of the settlers from African soil. This agitation resulted in the 1896-1897 uprisings, known as the First Chimurenga.

Although the natives gallantly fought against the numerically inferior whites, the use of guns against spears, among other factors, made the Shona and Ndebele lose the war (Mudenge, 2011, Manyanga & Chirikure, 2017). After the quelling of the uprising, the colonialists consolidated their power and the reign became out-rightly repressive. The post-First Chimurenga period saw most African land being pegged into farms. Those whites who had participated in quelling the uprisings (First Chimurenga) were rewarded with vast tracts of land and the indigenous people who stayed on the land were displaced to tribal trust lands (TTL) that had poor soils, mainly in ecologically poor areas in terms of soil type and general climatic conditions (Zvobgo, 2009; Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009).

From the beginning of the 20th Century until the 1960s, draconian legislation was promulgated successively by the colonial authority to effectively subjugate Black Africans. For instance, both the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and the Land Tenure Act of 1959 effectively dispossessed Africans of their land and sources of wealth such as cattle (Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009; Zvobgo, 2009). The Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and its subsequent amendments demarcated the land in terms of European and African. It also set limits to the number of cattle an African could own, and excess cattle were supposed to be sold or purchased at sub-economic prices. by the colonial settlers. According to Beach (1970; 1992), this repression led to the coalescing of anti-colonial sentiments into active anti-colonialist nationalistic movements. This nationalistic movement also derived its impetus from the independence of Ghana in 1959. As a result, in Zimbabwe, the first prominent nationalist political party, the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) was formed in 1961 followed by the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) in 1963 (Chung, 2006; Zvobgo, 2009).

Of the numerous grievances the black indigenous people had, the land was the main one (Beach, 1994; Ranger, 1967; Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009). Nationalist leaders such as Joshua Nkomo mobilised the indigenous people to fight for their heritage. This anti-colonial mass mobilisation resulted in the armed resistance which had its first shots fired in Zimbabwe at the then Sinoia (now Chinhoyi) in 1966. Even though the seven liberation fighters who fought the colonial army at Chinhoyi were all killed, the subsequent fourteen years saw the intensification of the armed struggle leading to negotiations with the colonial regime in 1979 under the auspices of countries such as the United States of America (USA) and international organisations such as the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). These negotiations held at Lancaster House, Britain, led to the Lancaster House Constitution which paved the way for the granting of independence to Zimbabwe by Britain on 18 April 1980.

Unfortunately, the 1979 Lancaster House Constitution did not provide finality to the contested land issue because it left the land ownership unchanged for the first ten years of independence unless the new government wanted to purchase land for the resettlement of landless citizens on a willing-buyer, willing-seller basis (Chung, 2006; Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009; Zvobgo, 2009; Mlambo, 2014). The new majority government, however, endeavoured to transform the governance system in line with independence.

One key area that needed transformation was the linguistic landscape, specifically in terms of names of cities, towns, roads and any other infrastructure identified for such purposes. Led by the late, long-time ruler, Robert Gabriel Mugabe, the new government embarked on the renaming of the landscape to depict the reality of independence. All the major cities were renamed starting with the capital, Salisbury, which became Harare, the name of an African Chief under which the capital city fell. The renaming of cities and towns also extended, sporadically, to streets, roads, and buildings in line with the agenda of decolonisation (Fisher, 2010).

Whilst most of the post-independence renaming focused on the urban centres, the farming areas remained largely untouched because the ownership of the land remained generally unchanged in line with the constitution. Major changes in terms of land ownership and in terms of name changes were witnessed after the year 2000 when the Zimbabwean government compulsorily acquired land for the resettlement of the landless natives. Most of the white-owned farms were subdivided into smaller plots for allocation to landless indigenous black people of Zimbabwe. Almost two decades after the displacement of the whites, this study examines the former farm areas from a place-names perspective within the context of post-coloniality.

Theoretical framework

Post-colonial theory and critical toponymy provided the theoretical anchor to this study. These theories are briefly discussed below.

Post-colonial theory

Post-colonial theory, according to Bhabha (1994), interrogates the nature of colonialism and the nature of relationships it generated during and after the end of colonialism. It examines the cultures affected by the colonial experience from the perspective of the colonised (Childs & William, 1997). As a theory, post-colonial theory owes its emergence to the work of the Palestinian scholar, Edward Said, who in his 1978 publication, *Orientalism*, examined the systematic projection of the colonised and men of colour as the 'insignificant other' in the imperial discourses of the 20th century (Said, 1978). In its dissection of the colonial and post-colonial situations, post-colonial theory makes use of terms such as alterity, ambivalence, hybridity and mimicry.

In terms of mimicry, the colonial experience is perceived as one that disorients the colonised, to the extent of making them the Whiteman's artefact (Fanon, 1967); one who imitates the coloniser because of the supposed superiority of the coloniser. The concept of alterity, a concept which explains the projection of the colonised as the insignificant other portrays how the colonisers denigrated the colonised as lesser beings. According to Said (1978), the difference between the coloniser and the colonised is the manifestation of the 'other'. However, within the colonial experience and afterwards, the relationship between the coloniser and colonised vacillates between repulsion and attraction, between love and hate and this binarity is explained by the concept of ambivalence (Ashcroft et al., 2007).

The interaction of the coloniser and the colonised, according to post-colonial theorists notably Homi Bhabha and Edward Said, resulted in the creation of a new cultural product (Ashcroft et al., 2007). The outcome is an ambivalent culture or personality which is a hybrid of the culture of the coloniser and colonised. This hybridity is a repudiation of the fallacy of the coloniser's racial and cultural purity (Childs & William, 1997). The cultures of the colonised and the coloniser exert mutual influence which gives birth to a new cultural product.

The tenet of 'othering' or 'otherness' is the focus of this paper although reference would be made to other related tenets such as mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity. The post-colonial theory provides an effective lens to the understanding of the post-colonial condition of farm names in Zimbabwe in this study. Post-colonial theory is complemented by the adoption of critical toponymy theory.

Critical toponymy

Critical toponymy is a theoretical position born out of the realisation that the study of placenames, particularly in post-colonial conditions, yields useful insights into the socio-political dynamics that yield the names (Azaryahu, 2011; Rose-Redwood, 2011; Rose-Redwood et al., 2018; Kadmon, 2004; Pfukwa, 2007; Mamvura, 2014). The proponents of critical toponymy note that the sudden shift in the approach to the study of placenames was witnessed starting from the 1990s. As a theory, critical toponymy is growing steadily as a way to uncover meaning hidden in the inscriptions on the landscape in the form of place-names through the application of critical social theories. Post-colonial theory and critical toponymy provide an effective theoretical lens to examine

the presence of colonial placenames on the landscape more than four decades after Zimbabwe gained its independence from Britain.

Methodology

This study adopted the qualitative methodology to study the current presence of colonial placenames in a specific area of Gutu District of Zimbabwe. The specific area is a place which was transformed into resettlement areas for black indigenous Zimbabweans after the compulsory acquisition of the land by the government following legislative changes of the year 2000. The white settlers of colonial origin bequeathed to the land a legacy of farm names most of which are still in use in official cartography. The studied area totals approximately 90 000 square kilometres. The total number of farms is fifty-nine (59) and of these, fifty (50) farm names are Anglophonic and of colonial origin while nine are derived from African indigenous languages.

The qualitative methodology enables an in-depth study of a phenomenon or phenomena in their naturalistic setting (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Yin, 2009; Patton, 2002). It is a methodology that makes use of in-depth observation, participant observation and documentary study, among other data generation tools. In qualitative studies, concepts are studied to establish the extent, significance or prevalence from a non-quantitative point of view, as a result, the researcher is central to the study (Guest et al., 2006). This has led some scholars to argue that qualitative studies lack empirical strength and methodological rigour. Such allegations can only be associated with scholars who have no thorough grounding in qualitative methodology because real qualitative research is methodologically sound as it adheres to “goodness of fit principles” as argued by Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 6). The credibility of qualitative research is enhanced by the use of multiple data generation tools, methodological and analytical rigour, member checking, and audit trail, among others. The use of multiple data generation tools is known as triangulation and it is an effective way of dealing with inherent shortcomings which could be in a single data generation tool.

This study made use of an in-depth study of the colonial names left on the landscape by colonialists. In-depth interviews were done with two councillors, two war veterans, three District Administrators (one serving and two retired), three lands officers from the then Ministry of Agriculture, Water, Climate and Rural Resettlement three former farm workers, the local chief and two villagers.

The triangulation of data generation tools involved the use of in-depth interviews of purposively sampled information-rich participants; the observation of the presence of the colonial names in terms of visual written displays on roads and buildings such as farm stores and through the day-to-day communication of the community, and the study of relevant documents such as the list of farm names from the District Administrator's office. The data included the placenames obtained from observation, in-depth interviews and document study; the views of the ordinary black African indigenous people of Zimbabwe who reside in the delimited area and government officials involved in the administration of the demarcated area. A total of 16 participants were interviewed. Such a sample is quite suitable for a study of this nature because qualitative studies are in-depth studies guided by the principle of data saturation (Guest et al., 2006; Creswell, 2014).

Findings and discussion

From this study, settler toponyms, in the colonial period and currently, project the political control, the racial jingoism and the cultural sensibilities of the colonisers to effectively confirm the 'othering' / 'otherness' of the indigenous black people. These place-names are an indication of the annexation of both the physical and virtual cultural space of the Africans. Also, to the colonialists, the absence of physical buildings or agricultural land was deceptively peddled as terra nullius (vacant land) and yet there was no such land in the pre-colonial period in Zimbabwe. While the physical space was reclaimed in the post-2000 fast-track land reform programme, the virtual cultural space remained unchanged. Supported by formal cartography, the colonial strategies undermined their efforts.

Table 1: Some anthroponomic farm-names

Allanberry	Appin
Argyle	Blythe
Craig	Edgar Ridge
Edinar	Haig
Maggies Rus	Markdale
Maxwell	Merlin
Nelville	Noeldale
Ripley	Vitcom

Anthroponomic names appear as names with or without affixal additions. Those without affixes are Craig, Edinar, Maxwell, Nelville, Ripley, Apin, Blythe, Haig, Merlin, and Vitcom. Those with affixes are Allan Berry, Markdale and Noeldale. The name Allanberry is made up of Allan and -berry. The suffix /-berry/ according to SayWhyDoI.com (2010), has Germanic roots. It is the evolved /-burg/ or /-borg/ and means a fortified settlement. Markdale and Noeldale carry the suffix /-dale/ which is an old English word for valley.

Table 2: Farm names adopted from European ad American placenames

Afton Water	Bell Spring
Chilly	Condor
Crownlands	Culloden
Dalcross	Daviot
Eastdale	Eyrie
Fairlie	Fortress
Goodluck	Grasslands
Landsdown	Lauder
Leyburn	Lorn
Norwood	Silverdale
Smilingvale	Strathearn
Strathspey	Willand
Widgeon	Wheatlands
Wragley	Beeskraal
Osemrowend	Goeie Hoop
Geluk	Voorspoed
Felixburg	Welwart

The farm names in this category are common English place names with the exception of Osemrowend, Geluk and Felixburg which are from German as well as Beeskraal, Goeie Hoop Voorspoed and Welwart which are Afrikaans names. Names such as Strathearn (a valley), Strathspey (a river), and Eyrie (a fortress) are names that celebrate the Scottish nomenclature and homeland. Crownlands (see Table 2) refers to the British Crown and the farm was regarded as a special treasure to the British Queen (Jenjekwa, 2018).

Table 3: Farm names derived from local indigenous names

Amalinda	Chibakwe
Chindito	Chipesa
Endama	Inyatsitzi
Mazongororo	Nyombi
Nyororo	

Amalinda, Endama and Nyombi are opaque but show some relationship to Nguni languages through the use of the prefixes /ama-/ and /e-/. Chindito is an opaque Shona name. Mazongororo (Shona) refers to millipedes and Nyororo (Shona) is the generic name of a wetland particularly at the source of a river. Chibakwe is a transphonologisation of *chibage* (Shona) (maize). Inyatsitzi is a transphonologisation of Nyazvidzi which means a river with deep pools. Chipesa means ‘that which makes someone lose direction’. From the in-depth interviews, Chipesa was regarded as sacred and is still considered to be so. There are oral narratives of how people who went into the forest wandered in the forest after losing direction.

For navigational and official reasons as outlined in the background, the colonial farm names are still active today despite the post-2000 resettlement which ushered in some new indigenous names to places that emerged inside the farms. This study established that the colonial farm names emerged as the colonial administration pegged the farms and these names were carried from one generation to another except in seldom cases when the names were changed to reflect the new ownership.

These names were officialised on maps and in other official communications such as those by the Deeds Office. The names are common family names or derivations from common personal names such as ‘Noel’ through the addition

/-dale/ (old English word for valley) to make it 'Noeldale'. The name 'Haig' echoes the name of the British First World War field marshal.

Despite the fact that colonialism officially 'ended' in 1980 in Zimbabwe, the presence of colonial settler place names confirms the indelible legacy of colonialism. Colonial farm boundaries served, and still serve, as critical reference points in the subdivisions made after the year 2000 when most of the farms were transformed into smaller plots or villages. According to Fisher (2010), the settler cartography effectively created a picture of a completely annexed territory. As a result, the names gained relative permanence ahead of the pre-colonial indigenous African names that were not supported by a writing culture. Unfortunately, as would be argued later in this discussion, some of the indigenous names picked for use by the colonialists were transphonologised as the settlers tried to adapt them to English.

Colonial place names as a confirmation of political power

A study of the colonial place names indicates that place naming confirmed the colonial administrative authority over Zimbabwe. While Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980, the landscape still testifies to the political power that the colonialist wielded for more than a century. Table 1 shows the names of British personalities such as Haig, who was a British Field Marshal in the First World War (see Table 1). Apart from farm names derived from names of European personalities, the colonisers also named the farms by duplicating place-names from Western Europe, mainly from Britain as shown in Table 2.

The presence of the colonial names confirms the irreversibility of the colonial era politics in Zimbabwe. While the colonisers physically left, the colonial farm names and the boundaries pose as some invisible colonial symbols of power that exert control on the issues of the former colony by proxy more than forty years after independence. It can be argued that this political leverage of the former colonial power, Britain, has made the current government of Zimbabwe capitulate and settle for the payment of the displaced farmers (Campbell, 2018; Samaita, 2020) with the hope of attaining closure to the issue of land in Zimbabwe.

On the basis of the farm names recorded and kept in Zimbabwe's Deeds Office, the dispute over land between Zimbabwe and the white farmers of settler origin is likely to be protracted because the original names (and implicitly the colonial owners) have not been totally overwritten and forgotten. In the

private and public media, currently, there are numerous stories of the displaced farmers returning to reclaim 'their' land confirming the ubiquitous presence of the former colonial power in the affairs of Zimbabwe today (Marawanyika & Sguazzin, 2021). The farm names and the ownership they denote are indeed a political albatross in the politics of independent Zimbabwe.

From a post-colonial theoretical viewpoint, the continued presence of the names could be viewed from different angles. Apart from the administrative reasons associated with the continued presence of the names, the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) seemed to lack the appetite and energy to rid the landscape of the English names. From the in-depth interviews, it was indicated that the English names are not really hated by most locals, if anything, these names remind some of them of how "life was generally good during the colonial period. There was no corruption and we could afford basics" (Interviewee 6). Colonial names in this regard, could be viewed with a certain degree of nostalgia owing to the majority government's failure to fulfil the aspirations of the majority of the people in terms of uplifting their living standards over the years.

This nostalgia, coupled with the national position on English as the official language in Zimbabwe, has made the English farm names not a critical issue of concern to the communities. The presence could, therefore, be an indication of post-colonial hybridity, the co-existence of the culture of the colonised and the coloniser. This does not, however, cleanse the names of their role in displacing local names, hence, the post-colonial presence of the English names is an indication of the side-lining of the history, heritage and indigenous knowledge of the indigenous African people of Zimbabwe.

British colonial jingoism and the colonial place names

Another pronounced dimension of the colonial place-names is the depiction of colonial jingoism. The colonial place-names still active on the landscape now confirm that the British colonial mission was driven by excessive sense of self worthy that regarded all the other races except white as highly privileged (Jenjekwa, 2018). In the then Southern Rhodesia, the Scots who made the largest percentage of the English settlers had their names in most of the areas. This duplication of Crownlands echoes the naming of Victoria Falls by David Livingstone, a Scott, who claimed to have discovered the falls and yet the falls were in an area under the Tonga people of Zimbabwe who called them Mosi-oa-Tunya.

In the spirit of British jingoism, David Livingstone thought that the falls were a beautiful natural wonder beyond the comprehension of the Africans, hence his choice of the name of the British Queen, Victoria. The act of naming Victoria Falls became an act of appropriation and up to this day the Falls are known by the colonial name with no hope for the restoration of the original name.

In a recent address to delegates at a meeting in Victoria Falls, the President of Zimbabwe, Emmerson Mnangagwa, lamented the continued use of the name Victoria Falls instead of Mosi-oa-Tunya because if the name is changed tourists will not visit (*New Zimbabwe*, 26 June 2021). The fear of losing business might be a smokescreen used by the post-colonial government to hide its love for the English connection portrayed by the name. This is indicative of the coloniality of the independent African countries where their economies, and subsequently their thinking, are tied to the former colonial powers to the extent of making the former colonisers mimic men, a confirmation of how the colonial system of governance disoriented the colonised and left him/her rootless. This neo-colonial state of affairs has been dissected by scholars such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986).

The place names in both Tables 1 and 2 confirm that the indigenous inhabitants of the land were regarded by the colonialists as the “insignificant other”, a popular projection of the Africans and Asians in the 19th Century Anglophone discourses (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994). Ironically, this jingoism is inadvertently celebrated through the overwhelming presence of colonial names in Zimbabwe today.

Anglophonic farm names and western cultural sensibilities

In line with the British sense of excessive self-worth, the settlers also inscribed the landscape with names that betrayed their Victorian cultural sensibilities based on Victorian ethos and values. This is a form of cultural imperialism (Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1994; Ashcroft et al., 2007; Tomlinson, 2012), the imposition of cultural values, symbols and customs of a powerful country on a subjugated country. The farm names portray British nomenclature, for example, the derivation of place-names from verbs and adjectives by using a suffix such as *-dale* in names such as Eastdale, Markdale and Noeldale. The other cultural feature of the British place naming is the personification of the land (Jenjekwa, 2018). This is witnessed in the names Blythe, Smilingvale and Lorn Farm, among others. Blythe projects the land as happy, Smilingvale perceives it as a

living organism capable of smiling and Lorn Farm depicts the land as solitary. This personification depicts the attitude of the British towards the land.

Names for the farms were also obtained from an appreciation of the natural environment. The Victorian Era which came after the 18th Century Romanticism encouraged fascination with nature in a way that rebelled against the British society's long-standing convictions. Lorn Farm could be perceived Romantic focus on individual solitude. The solitude and individualism are also conveyed by the names that denote self-contained enclosures for example, Haig, Eyrie, and Fortress. These descriptive toponyms which may appear as objective reality could be indicative of the colonisers as a displaced people in search of a home in an alien land that had been described as the epicentre of darkness.

Grasslands, Woodlands, Wheatlands are farm names that describe the natural features and might have been used to portray to fellow whites in the homeland in Britain that Africa was not an uninhabitable heart of darkness. This depiction of the land is consistent with the observation of Stella's (2007 p. 102) in a study of the naming trends in Papua New Guinea. According to Stella's (2007 p. 102):

landscape and place were immediately represented in ambivalent terms by colonialist discourse: Mysterious, exotic, romantic, and idyllic on the one hand, and harsh, inhospitable, untamed, corrupted, and fatal on the other. This confirms the emotional ambivalence of settlers towards the colonised land.

The indigenous farm names as repositories of Shona culture

Of the 59 farm names, nine of them are of indigenous languages origin. Mazongororo, Nyororo, Chibakwe, Chindito, and Chipesa are all Shona names while Amalinda Endama and Nyombi are opaque names apparently derived from Zulu language. Inyatsitzi is a transphonologisation of the indigenous name Nyazvidzi. It is interesting to note that these names were picked from the indigenous languages by the colonialists. Mazongororo is a Shona name for millipedes.

Oral records indicated that the farm is located in an area that had a lot of millipedes to warrant the name. Similarly, Chibakwe is traceable to the Shona word *chibage* for maize. According to interviewees, the farm was renowned for maize farming in the colonial days. Chipesa Farm is derived from a forest that stretches for kilometres in Widgeon Ranch. Chipesa [a forest where one can get lost] was and continues to be regarded as sacred because it is believed that the ancestral spirits reside there. As a name, Chipesa is a repository of Shona

religious and environmental knowledge. Interviewees indicated that such dense forests were sources of traditional medicine, firewood, mushroom, edible insects and wild animals for meat. Hence, they were supposed to be protected.

One of the intelligent indigenous ways of preserving such forests was through associating such features with ancestral spirits which the Shona people revered hence the name Chipesa. Nyororo Farm is a Shona generic name for wetlands. The Shona people protected wetlands because they realised their significance as sanctuaries for birds, snakes and other reptiles. As a result, Nyororo Farm currently has part of the Driefontein Wetlands World Heritage site (Mabhachi, 2015).

The adoption of the indigenous place names by the colonisers for these few farms confirms the ambivalence of the coloniser towards the African land and its people. The use of selected indigenous names by white settlers on their farms is a confirmation of the mutual cultural influence which the coloniser and the colonised experienced. This mutual influence repudiates the binarity and myth of cultural purity which the colonisers wanted to project (Bhabha, 1994). It could also be seen as an indication of the ironic crack in the superiority of the coloniser and his language. The name Nyazvidzi [the river with deep pools] where Inyatsitzi Farm was derived from is originally a name for a relatively large river in Gutu. The name describes the deep pools that characterise the river. The transphonologised name (Inyatsitzi) muddled the original meaning. This transphonologisation of local names oftentimes created meaningless names which the local people had to use even if they did not want to.

Names of prominent rivers in Gutu were similarly transphonologised. Mutirikwi [a river with waterfalls] became Mtilikwe and Dewure ([a river that violently washes objects away) became Devuli which rendered them meaningless. This makes transphonologisation an indicator of colonial arrogance. While the failure to pronounce words from a different language is a universal linguistic phenomenon, the adaptation of words from indigenous African languages to English in the colonial period helped to alienate the landscape from the rightful inhabitants. Therefore, the change of Nyazvidzi to Inyatsitzi portrays cultural prejudice on the part of the colonisers.

Apart from Chindito, Nyombi, Amalinda and Endama which are opaque, the indigenous farm names convey certain aspects of the African indigenous knowledge system, hence the overwriting of numerous other indigenous names by colonial names erased a significant chunk of African indigenous knowledge.

Post-colonial theory views this erasure as a strategic side-lining of the heritage of the colonised to render it invisible. Hence, the overwriting of local indigenous names is an act of “othering”, the projection of the colonised as an insignificant being (Said, 1978, 1994).

Conclusion

More than four decades after the official end of colonial rule, the landscape still bears testimony to this British cultural imperialism. The landscape portrays the colonial history of political domination of the Black indigenous people by the British, British ethnic and racial chauvinism. It reflects how the indigenous people were ‘pushed off the map’ (Madden, 2017). The findings of this study also tally with the views of critical toponymists such as Alderman, (2003), Azaryahu (1996, 1997, 2011), and Rose-Redwood et al. (2018) who concur that place-names play a critical symbolic role in the definition of socio-political relationships.

The place names studied project the cultural, political and social values of colonial settlers who ruled Zimbabwe for close to a century. It is evident from the available names that place-names were used to erase the title of the indigenous people to the land. Whilst there have been symbolic changes of place-names in Zimbabwe in the forty-one years of independence, the farmlands, which are away from the metropolitan centres have continued to portray the objective of colonial rule in Zimbabwe.

These names have become frontiers that preserve the history of colonisation thereby relegating Shona indigenous knowledge and stories of Shona heroes and heroines into oblivion. The post-colonial theory views this continued presence as some form of mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity. In terms of mimicry, the colonial experience thrived on the side-lining and denigration of the other. This created a servile and subjugated mentality that eventually perceived whiteness and all symbols of whiteness as unassailable symbols of civilization. Colonisation created black people in white masks (Fanon, 1967).

The way forward

There is a need for further research on place-names in post-colonial African communities. Hopefully, this will result in a shift of the scholars' attention from the urban centres to the countryside to account for the erasure of indigenous African heritage through the continued use of Anglophonic place names. This study does not advocate for a wholesale erasure of colonial place names but seeks to draw attention to the vestiges of colonialism that are embedded in communities as silent frontiers of the 'otherness' of the Black people of Africa.

References

- Alderman, D. H. 2003. Street names and the scaling of memory: The politics of commemorating Martin Luther King, Jr. within the African American community. *Area* 35(2): 163–173.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. and Tiffin, H. 2007. *Post-colonial studies: Key concepts*. London: Routledge.
- Azaryahu, M. 1996. The power of commemorative street names. *Society and Space* 14: 311–330.
- Azaryahu, M. 1997. German reunification and the politics of street names: The case of East Berlin. *Political Geography* 16(6): 479–493.
- Azaryahu, M. 2011. The critical turn and beyond: The case of commemorative street naming. *ACME: An International Journal of Critical Geographies* 10(1): 28–33.
- Beach, D. N. 1970. Afrikaner and Shona settlement in the Enkeldoorn Area, 1890-1900. *Zambezia* 1(1): 5–34.
- Beach, D. N. 1992. The origins of Mocambique and Zimbabwe: Paiva de Andrada, the companhia de Mocambique and African diplomacy 1881-1891. *Unpublished History Department Seminar Paper* no. 89. Harare: University of Zimbabwe.
- Beach, D. N. 1994. *A Zimbabwean past*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Bhabha, H. K. 1994. *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.
- Bostoan, K. 2018. The Bantu Expansion. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*. DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.191
- Campbell, J. 2018. Recently Evicted White Farmer Gets His Land Back in Zimbabwe. Available on <https://www.cfr.org/blog/recently-evicted-white-farmer-gets-his-land-back-zimbabwe> [28/06/21].
- Childs, P. and Williams, R. J. P. 1997. *An introduction to post-colonial theory*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Chung, F. 2006. *Re-living the Second Chimurenga*. Harare: Weaver Press.
- Creswell, J. W. 2014. *Research design*. California: SAGE Publications.
- Fanon, F. 1967. *Black skin, white masks*. London: Grove Press, Inc.
- Fisher, J. L. 2010. *Pioneers, settlers, aliens, exiles*. Canberra: Australia National University Press.

Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. 1994. Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.). *Handbook of qualitative research*: 105–117. Thousand Oaks: Sage publications.

Guest, G., Bunce, A. & Johnson, L. 2006. How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field methods* 18(1): 59–82.

Horsman, S. 2006. The politics of the toponyms in the Pamir Mountains. *Area* 38(3): 279–291.

Jenjekwa, V. & Barnes, L. 2017. The transition from KwaMudzviti to the town of Mupandawana: a toponymic perspective. *Nomina Africana* 31(2):127–139.

Jenjekwa, V. 2018. A toponymic perspective on Zimbabwe’s post-2000 toponymy (Third Chimurenga). PhD thesis. Pretoria: Unisa.

Kadmon, N. 2004. Toponymy and geopolitics: The political use – and misuse – of geographical names. *The Cartographic Journal* 41(2): 85–87.

Mabhachi, O. 2015. *African cranes, wetlands and communities*. Modderfontein: Endangered Wildlife Trust.

Madden, D. J. 2017. Pushed off the map: Toponymy and the politics of place in New York City. *LSE Research Online*. Retrieved from <http://eprints.ise.ac.uk> [10/11/17].

Mamvura, Z. 2014. A sociolinguistic analysis of school names in selected urban centres during the colonial period in Zimbabwe (1890-1979). PhD Thesis. Pretoria: Unisa.

Manyanga, M. & Chirikure, S. (Eds). (2017). *Archives, Objects, places and landscapes*:

The multidisciplinary approaches to Decolonised Zimbabwean pasts. Bamenda:

Langaa RPCIG. Marawanyika, G and Sguazzin, A. 2021. Two Decades After Land Grab, Zimbabwe Starts Paying Farmers. Bloomberg, 22 June, 2021. Available on <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-06-23/zimbabwe-makes-payment-of-1-million-to-white-former-farmers> [23/06/21].

Mlambo, A. S. 2014. *A history of Zimbabwe*. New York. Cambridge University Press.

Mudenge, S. I. G. 2011. *A political history of Munhumutapa c1400-1902*. Harare: African Publishing Group.

New Zimbabwe. 2021. ED Disses Africans Mimicking Europeans, As He Opens PAPU Indaba. Available on <https://www.newzimbabwe.com/ed-disses-africans-mimicking-europeans-as-he-opens-papu-indaba/> [28/06/21].

Ngugi wa Thiong'o. 1986. *Decolonising the Mind*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.

Nicolaidis, A. 2011. Early Portuguese imperialism: Using the Jesuits in the Mutapa Empire of Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Peace and Development Studies*, 2(4): 132-137.

Patton, M. Q. 2002. *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. California: Sage Publication, Inc.

Pfukwa, C. 2007. The function and significance of war names in the Zimbabwean armed conflict (1966–1979). PhD Thesis. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

Raftopoulos, B and Mlambo, A. S. 2009. *Becoming Zimbabwe: A history from the Pre-colonial Period to 2008*. Harare: Weaver Press.

Ranger, T. O. 1967. *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7: A study of African resistance*. London: Heinemann.

Rose-Redwood, R. S. 2011. Rethinking the agenda of political toponymy. *ACME: An*

Rose-Redwood, R., Alderman, D., & Azaryahu, M. (2018), "The Urban Streetscape as Political Cosmos." In R. Rose-Redwood, D. Alderman, & M. Azaryahu (Eds.). *The political life of urban streetscapes: Naming, politics, and place*: 1-24. New York: Routledge.

Said, E. 1978. *Orientalism*. London: Routledge & Kegan.

Said, E. 1994. *Culture and imperialism*. New York: Vintage.

Samaita, K. 2020. White farmers welcome offer by Zimbabwe's government to get back land. *Business Day*, 22 March 2021. Available on <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/world/africa/2020-03-22-white-farmers-welcome-offer-by-zimbabwes-government-to-get-back-land/> [28/06/21].

- SayWhyDoI.com. 2010. Meaning of place names: Why do we call places by certain names *SayWhyDoI.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.saywhydoi.com/meaning-of-place-names-why-do-we-call-places-by-certain-names/> [14/02/22].
- Stella, R. T. 2007. *Imagining the other: The representation of the Papua New Guinean Subject*. Hawai: University of Hawai Press.
- Tent, J. and Blair, D. 2011. Motivations for naming: The development of a toponymic typology for Australian place names. *Names* 59(2): 67–89.
- Tomlinson, J. 2012. Cultural imperialism. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470670590.wbeog129> [28/09/18].
- Tucker, G. R. 2011. *Place-names, conquest, and empire: Spanish and Amerindian conceptions of place in the new world*. Texas: University of Texas.
- Uusihakala, K. 2008. *Memory meanders: Place, home and commemoration in an Ex-Rhodesian diaspora community*. Helsinki: Helsinki University printing Press.
- Yin, R. K. 2009. *Case study research: Design and methods*, 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zvobgo, C. J. M. 2009. *A history of Zimbabwe, 1890-2000 and postscript, Zimbabwe, 2001-2008*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.