ESSAY REVIEW

SHONA NOMENCLATURE

SINCE INDEPENDENCE WE have all been urged to work towards a truly Zimbabwean culture free from colonial distortion. To achieve this we need a firm, objective knowledge of Shona and Ndebele culture that must inform a new Zimbabwean identity; but such knowledge is not readily available and can be discovered only by the usual processes of careful academic research; in this process there may be considerable differences of opinion, as I demonstrated in the reviews on Shona sculpture *(ante* (1982), X, 49–57). Therefore, it is not a matter of regret but a healthy sign that Dr A.J. C. Pongweni's recent study of Shona nomenclature has provoked the following hostile review by Professor G.P. Kahari — and an equally vigorous rejoinder by the author which is appended to the review.

R.S.R.

Dr Alec Pongweni's *What's in a Name: A Study of Shona Nomenclature*[1] comes in the wake of similar studies which have been undertaken by a number of interested people since 1955. By way of example, one needs to refer to a number of articles in the Southern Rhodesia *Native Affairs Department Annual, NADA.*[2] The authors of these articles were Europeans who could not be expected to have the cultural background and recognize the implications, aptness and significance of the names that they tried to analyse.

However, in 1972 in *The Novels of Patrick Chakaipa*[3] I pioneered the study of Shona nomenclature in which I outlined five categories of Shona traditional names; and this study was followed up three years later by my book on Paul Chidyausiku.[4] There is ample evidence that Pongweni's study has been influenced by these precursors, and, as he says in his concluding remarks, 'a study of such material has of necessity to have a multi-disciplinary approach to the extent that a single scholar espousing one specialism cannot cope' (p. 87). What Pongweni brings to the study of Shona nomenclature is his formal linguistic training and expertise and his study heralds an important step forward in the field; certainly any work that stimulates discussion of Shona as a developing language must be welcomed.

In the event, Pongweni's study is disappointing. It is a piece of work which was full of promise but which is full of mistakes, both of omission and commission. The study is marred by his inability to quote correctly from his

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[1]A.J.C. Pongweni, What's in a Name? A Study of Shona Nomenclature (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1983), 98 pp., Z$3.90.
[2]S.A. Sandes, 'Zwenyika remembers' *NADA* (1955), XXXII, 31–40; S.K. Jackson, 'The names of the VaShona', *NADA* (1962), XXXIX, 55–9; J. Chidzima, 'The history of the Vashawasha', *NADA* (1964), IX, i, 16–33; T.J. Hemans, 'A note on Amandebele names', *NADA* (1968), IX, v, 74; Regulus, 'Native names as whereabouts of native places', *NADA* (1969), X, i, 81–8.
[3]G.P. Kahari, *The Novels of Patrick Chakaipa* (Salisbury, Longman, 1972), 37–8.
[4]G.P. Kahari, *The Imaginative Writings of Paul Chidyausiku* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1975), 35–8.

sources; by inconsistencies, sloppy translations, contradictions, inconclusive statements, use of slang language in a work of scholarship; by lack of knowledge on the structure of the Shona verb, the meaning of the Shona prefixes and generally his lack of knowledge of the culture surrounding Shona nomenclature. He is clearly out of his depth. For example, Pongweni states (p. 2) that there are six categories. This is not true as there are only five, as I stated in 1972. He fails to see (p. 3) that (f) is in fact (d). An adopted name becomes a nickname and is any one of these.

It is in Chapter 2 that Pongweni's study really falls below the expected standard of linguistic analysis. For example, of the twenty-one linguistic analyses only one is correct. The subject concord is inconsistently entered as {t-} (see, for example, (a) and (b) at p. 8) and {t-1} (see (c), (h), (i), (j) at pp. 9–10) and the verb radical is always put together with the terminative {-a}; thus *fara* and *muka* (p. 8) instead of *far-a* and *muk-a*. Complicated morpho-phonemic changes have been left unexplained. For instance, *Munyaradzi* is given as *mu - nyaradza - dzi* and *Varaidzo* as *varaidza - dzo* instead of:

$$mu + nyar + ya = nyaradz \text{ cause to be quiet} + \text{agentive morpheme } \{-i\}$$
$$= munyaradzi;$$
$$varir + ya = varaidz + \text{agentive ending } \{-o\}.[5]$$

Similarly the names given (at p. 16) are not adequately explained and so only the root equivalents should be given: (h) *-nyarara-a* (verb); (i) *-nyany-a* (verb); (j) *-nyoro* (adj.); (k) *pa+ai+d+a+moyo* (sentence construction); (1) *ma+chiv+a+ini (machiveni,* you covet me, not 'you envy me').

The author's inefficient analysis is continued in Chapter 3 but here it is compounded by his ignorance of the cultural background 'encapsulating' the names. The fact that the author has failed to deal with the structure of the name *Chabayanzara,* has led him to mislead us as to the significance of this name (p. 19). The name comes as a response to the question: *Chabaya chii?* (What has killed (destroyed) your family?). The full response is thus: *Chabayainzara (chi+a+bay+a+i+nzara)* (What has killed (destroyed) my family is famine). In the same manner *Maenganise* and *Maengamhuru* (p. 24) are short forms for *Mavenganise (ma-veng-a-nis-e)* and *Mavengamhuru (ma-veng-a-mhuru)* — the latter is entered correctly (at p. 25), another case of the author's inconsistency. A typical example would be *Mashongaika* from *Mashonga-nyika.* The author translates class 21 prefix {zi-} (p. 26) and morpheme {nya} (pp. 20, 27) as 'the' and 'Mr' respectively. The former refers to size, e.g. 'huge', and the latter to 'possessor of'.

In the next two chapters (4 and 5) the author demonstrates further his lack of understanding of the Shona morpheme, for example, *dzimbanhete.* He does not show us what is involved and how *nhete = tete* (adj., thin) is arrived at. The prefix with {ru-}, class 11, with its Karanga {gw-}, and Zezuru variant {rw-}, refers to *rufu* (death) and not just 'it' (death) (see pp. 32, 33, 37) and similarly the {ri} in *Risinamhodzi* refers to *budzi* (squash, plant) (see p. 35). The {zv-(1)} in *Zvamada* (p. 38) refers to the 'things' while the object prefix {-hu-} refers (p. 40) to *ushe* (chieftainship). The author shows no understanding of the signi-ficance of the noun prefix either in its primary or secondary function (p. 46). There is virtually no distinction between the prefix *ma-* in *makudo* and that in *mapenzi.* The example that he ought to have provided in order to give the derogatory tone is *Ma*karanga (the Karangas) or *Ma*zezuru (the Zezurus) to

    [5]See G. Fortune, *An Analytical Grammar of Shona* (Cape Town, Longmans Green, 1955), 212–13.

contrast with *Va*Karanga and *Va*Zezuru, respectively. The three categories that the author comes up with (p. 54) are all nicknames which belong to type (d) which he deals with earlier (p. 2). The author talks (p. 63) of 'the *rule* of English word-formation whereby the ending *-ity* is added *only to adjectives* to form abstract nouns'. The *author* does not need to be reminded of at least one such word which is formed from a noun — *authority*.

In Chapter 7, entitled 'The Not-so Fictional Names in *Kurauone'*, the author has actually gone on to demonstrate the fictional aspect of the characters. The names demonstrate this: *Gariramo* (beer is staying in there), *Ndingoveni* (I should be the only one), *Nhamoinesu* (Plight is with us). Two sentences (after the eighth paragraph on p. 70) amply illustrate the fictional aspect of the noun.

One other disturbing feature of this study is its sloppy and slangy translations — *Nhamoinesu akasimuka ndokuisa mutsago wababa vake negudza ravo seri kwomusana wavo* is translated as 'Nhamoinesu obeyed. There was dead silence in the house. The tension was tangible' (p. 68, para. 4); *Seizve kuda kurova imbwa makaviga mupini?* as 'Why is he beating about the bush' (p. 71, para. 11); *Siya waroodza mwana wangu chete. Ndizvo zvandinoda. Iko kutya kufa, sen'anga* as 'You must pay for my son's bride before you kick the bucket [slang]. You have no choice. Look at you, coward' (p. 72, para. 11); and *Zvino vaNdingoveni vakati* as 'Ndingoveni had an axe to grind' (p. 86, para. 38). These translations bear no resemblance to the original and are thus misleading. Similarly the translations of the names which appear in the appendices give the study a feeling of lack of scholarship and a 'political-rally' atmosphere. For instance, Teurai Ropa is translated as '[We must] spill blood [in order to free ourselves]'; Farai Tichatonga as '[Rest assured and] be happy; [we cannot but win]'; 'Zvido zvavanhu' as 'The people's wishes [are priority No. 1]'. I have enclosed the imposed phrases in square brackets; I do not know where Pongweni gets them from. The morpheme {sa-} in Samushonga and Savanhu stands for 'the owner of' and so the translations (at p. 92) are, therefore, misleading.

Thus, as a work of a scholarship in pursuit of excellence, Pongweni's study leaves very much to be desired. It does not even follow the accepted Standard Shona spelling and word division; for instance, see *Wunganayi* for *Wunganai* (p. 90) and *Teurai Ropa* for *Teurairopa* (p. 91); but see correctly *Murambahama* (p. 91). It makes no attempt to give the origins of names like Chamboko, (p. 90), for example, which comes from Afrikaans *sjambok;* nor does it attempt to tone-mark the names. It is a great pity that a book with so much potential in it should turn out to have so little value. Certainly the last word has not been said on the subject of Shona nomenclature.

University of Zimbabwe   G.P. KAHARI

THE REVIEW by Professor Kahari of my book, *What's in a Name: A Study of Shona Nomenclature,* is characterized by that enthusiastic acerbity which sometimes enlivens debate in academia. In his opening paragraph he refers the reader to a series of *NADA* articles published between 1955 and 1969. This approach is open to two interpretations.

The first is that *What's in a Name* is not breaking new ground in the study of Shona culture. But in my study I do not make such a claim; rather I observe

that the study of Shona nomenclature is not, at the present time, being pursued as actively as it is in other cultures. That is why I urge colleagues in the field to do 'more and better' (p. 87).

Secondly, it is stated repeatedly that I am largely ignorant of Shona culture. Reference to the *NADA* articles, coupled with the reviewer's criticism of their authors for being unfamiliar with Shona culture, leaves the reader with no alternative but to equate my effort with that of those Europeans. I leave this assertion to the readers of *What's in a Name* to assess.

But there are several criticisms of my work that I wish to challenge on purely academic grounds. Kahari accuses me of failing 'to quote correctly from [my] sources', in spite of the fact that I acknowledge (pp. 2–3) that my source of the classification of Shona names is Kahari's half-page (in a 110-page book) devoted to the subject[1] — the half-page that forms the basis of his claim to have 'pioneered' the study of Shona nomenclature. The very use of the word 'pioneer' in the review is unfortunate, because Kahari has opened his review by referring us to *NADA* articles that predate his 1972 book. It cannot be argued that, merely because one disagrees with one's predecessors in a field of study, their work does not exist. Furthermore, it is important to point out that beyond listing the name-types his publication contains no systematic analysis of the function of names in Shona literature.[2] My chapter on *Kurauone* is probably the first attempt by anyone to do this.

Prefacing his examples of my alleged sins of 'omission and commission' with the cryptic statement 'He [Pongweni] is clearly out of his depth', Kahari says that I fail to see that the name-type (f) *zita rekudzandura* is the same as (d) *zita remadunhurirwa* (Pongweni, 1983, pp. 2–3). Now the fact is that the structure of the second parts (the verbal endings) of (f) and (d) above indicate a difference in the origin of the respective name-types: in (f) the person who bears that name is the subject of the verb *dzandura;* he chooses the name. Whereas in (d) *dunhurirwa,* the name-bearer is the indirect object — someone else, the community, imposes the name on him. In the former case, (f), the new name replaces the old, embarrassing one by becoming the family's official name. In the latter, the new name is additional, and subsidiary, to the first and is used particularly when discussing some characteristic action or behaviour of the person which prompted the observers to nickname him in the first place. Finally, on this point, Kahari makes the assertion of identity between (f) and (d) without acknowledging the fact that category (f) is not mentioned in his 1972 classification. For me, this is an unfortunate omission in Kahari (1972) since (f) *zita rekudzandura* represents an interesting cultural mechanism to which our ancestors reverted whenever the conditions for its use were satisfied.

When he turns to the second chapter of my book, the reviewer makes further contestable assertions. And this, because he missed a crucial statement of mine (pp. 1–2): 'The linguistic structure of the names will also be discussed, *but only to the extent that it throws some light on the meaning of the names*' [emphasis now added]. In view of this, the isolation of verb roots from the terminative vowel, which he would have me do, has no contribution to make here. I correctly separate the subject concord [t-] from the following vowel, [-a] or [-i], whose function is to indicate tense. This separation is crucial because it tells us when the experience encapsulated in the name occurred: in the past,

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[1]G.P. Kahari, *The Novels of Patrick Chakaipa* (Salisbury, Longman, 1972), 37–8.
[2]Ibid., 37

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whether the name promises or threatens the community with some action in the future, or whether the name expresses an on-going experience. Further, and arising from the omission to read a crucial sentence, Kahari urges me to commit two mistakes.

In the first place I am criticized for not following Fortune[3] and not informing my reader that, in Kahari's words, the name *munyaradzi* has the structure *mu-nyar + ya = nyaradz* (cause to be quiet) + agentive. In fact, however, Fortune did not place '+ agentive' after the gloss but after *mu-nyar + ya*. Be that as it may, both Kahari and Fortune leave the strange animal *ya* unexplained. If it is the one that changes the final 'r' in *mu-nyar-* to the *dz* of *nyaradz-*, how does it do that? We need a scientific explanation. The second error that I am urged to commit is to regard the name *paidamoyo*, as a 'sentence construction'. In fact it is a relative clause.

In the midst of all this confusion, however, Kahari gives a plausible meaning of the name *chabayanzara*, namely that it originates from a response to a question *chabaya chii?* Hence *chabaya inzara*. But my own interpretation (p. 19) of the name is equally plausible. The question is, are we to stick stubbornly to our own views without opening our minds to alternative or parallel solutions to problems? This head-in-the-sand approach leads the reviewer into making some unwarranted generalizations about names such as *maenganise* vs *mavenganise; maengamhuru* vs *mavengamhuru*: that in each pair the first spelling is a shortened version of the second. But this is patently untrue. The difference in spelling reflects a difference in pronunciation, which originates from dialectal variation — Zezuru and Manyika in the first of each pair, on the one hand, and Karanga in the second of both pairs, on the other.

The strangest aspect of Kahari's review of my book is his ill-advised abandonment of his own field of interest, literature and literary criticism, and his assumption of the garb of linguistic analyst. And so he criticizes me for not showing that in the name *dzimbanhete*, the *nhete* is derived from the adjective *tete*. This is his own example and it is not tone-marked. Later in his review he lambasts me for not tone-marking my examples. There is, however, no need to mark tones on examples in a book that is going to be read by people who speak different dialects, unless all the examples are taken from one dialect. Marking the tones would then assist readers who do not speak the particular dialect. As for the name *dzimbanhete* and the reviewer's criticism of my analysis of it, I refer readers to my recent article on word-formation in Shona.[4] *What's in a Name* is not a textbook on Shona morphology and the intelligent reader knows that. Also the section of the review in which Kahari 'explains' the significance of *gw-* vs *rw-*, *hu-* and *zv*, as they appear in the names *gwatipedza/rwatipedza*, *matohushaya* and *zvamada* in my book is uncalled for. It simply repeats without acknowledgement what I myself said in my book (pp. 32ff).

His subsequent criticism that I do not understand 'the significance of the noun prefix both in its *primary* and *secondary* function' is also uncalled for. What is the purpose of including this distinction in my study, unless it is only to boast that I, too, have read Fortune's *An Analytical Grammar of Shona*, from which Kahari has taken it? This pretence of competence in linguistic analysis assumes absurd proportions when I am criticized for saying (p. 63) that the English nominal ending *-ity* is added only to adjectives to form abstract nouns.

[3] G. Fortune, *An Analytical Grammar of Shona* (Cape Town, Longman Green, 1955), 212–13.

[4] A.J.C. Pongweni, 'Some word derivational processes: The case of the class 9/10(N) prefix of Shona', *Journal of Asian and African Studies* (1982), XXIV, 106–19.

Kahari writes 'The author does not need to be reminded of at least one such word which is formed from a noun—*authority*'! That *authority* is not derived from *author* can be established by consulting any English dictionary. *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* (1972) has separate entries for these two words, each followed by a series of different words derived from it. Further, *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles* (1933) tells us that *author* came into English from French *autor* and *authority* from French *autorité*. Finally, on this point, the most 'authoritative' modern publication on English grammar states that -*ity* is added only to adjectives.[5] I thought it was a matter of common knowledge that some people exercise *authority* although they may have *authored* nothing!

When the reviewer turns to my chapter on *Kurauone,* he fails to grasp the meaning of some of the most obvious statements in the book. The title of the chapter is misconstrued as suggesting that the names in *Kurauone* are not fictional. How could I make such a blunder when I took the names from a work of fiction? 'The Not-so Fictional Names in *Kurauone*' is meant to foreground the fact that although these names are, indeed, from a novel, they nevertheless are plausible, bearing a close resemblance in structure and meaning, to the names of flesh-and-blood people discussed in the preceding chapters of the book. I conclude that chapter by stating (p. 86): 'There is . . . a chain of plausibility between the names and implied character of the personae recorded in the telephone directory, the University graduation lists, and the names and character of the dramatis personae in *Kurauone.*'

Finally, the last critical statements in the review which I wish to reply to are those directed at my translations. The reviewer's misgivings arise from my alleged additions (exaggerations) to the Shona texts. This difference seems to have a bearing on one's answer to the question 'What is translation?' For me, as for other professionals, it is the replacement of textual material in one language (the source language) with textual material in another (the target language). This is the guideline. But the very difference in idiom between any two languages calls for resourcefulness on the part of the translator. Translation thus becomes what my Latin teachers used to call a 'rendition' of meaning. A word-for-word translation leads one into writing a strange language which those teachers used to call 'Translationese'. Therefore, I paraphrased the meaning of expressions in order to contextualize what would otherwise have been elliptic, uniformative and even nonsensical expressions. Names, particularly those of ex-combatants, are short statements summarizing long experience. If my translations, as Kahari observes, tongue-in-cheek, create 'a political-rally atmosphere', then let them do. Political rallies are part and parcel of our political culture. And I used a slang expression, because the context, a family dispute, and the speaker, a jilted wife, justify such a translation.

Kahari's conclusion to his review is 'Certainly the last word has not been said on the subject of Shona nomenclature'. But I made no claim to being definitive and in fact myself said:

> What we have done in this study is, among other things, to draw the attention of colleagues in the Humanities and compatriots generally, to what is decidedly a fertile area for research. Our hope is, further, that our comments will galvanise them into doing more and better (p. 87).

[5]R. Quirk, S. Greenbaum, G. Leech and J. Svartvik, *A Grammar of Contemporary English* (London, Longman, 1972), 1000.

But in further research and criticism I am compelled to emphasize the importance of Roman Jakobson's observation that 'a linguist deaf to the poetic function of language, and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistic problems and unconversant with linguistic methods, are equally flagrant anachronisms'.[6]

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[6]R. Jakobson, 'Linguistics and poetics'. in R. and F. DeGeorge (eds), *The Structuralists from Marx to Lévi-Strauss* (Garden City NY, Anchor Books, 1972), 120.