FEATURE NAMES AND IDENTITY IN ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

This paper is about feature names in Zimbabwe. It focuses on the role played by place names in defining Zimbabwe, both as a physical entity and as a community of speakers with a remarkable history and a sense of nationhood. The paper thus focuses on two types of place names, that is, those that refer to the natural landscape, such as mountains and rivers, as well as those that refer to man-made features such as roads and streets, hospitals and schools. Regarding names that are bestowed onto the features of the natural landscape, we will look at how some place names vividly describe the outstanding features or characteristics of particular geographical features, that is, the extent to which the names are used as tools in describing the features; the way the eye meets the landscape. We will also look at how some names of physical features are coined in response to the landscape's 'behaviour' or in relation to the link the landscape has with historical event(s). The paper will also look at how the bestowal of commemorative names on Zimbabwean features has been used in concretising the Zimbabwean people's link with the country's history, that is, how Zimbabweans have tried to define themselves as a people through naming some of their popular places after names of the country's heroes and heroines, both living and dead.

[1] INTRODUCTION

Describing a place that existed a long time ago in the geographical area now called the United States of America, a famous toponymy scholar, Stewart, had this to say,

Once, from eastern ocean to western ocean, the land stretched away without names. Nameless headlands split the surf; nameless lakes reflected nameless mountains; and nameless rivers flowed through nameless valleys into nameless bays. (Stewart 1945, 3)

With the peopling of the world today, and with features needing reference and identification, the place described by Stewart is only unimaginable. Such an unintelligible landscape can only be true of an uninhabited place. Once inhabited, the people start naming the various features in their local area. The features, both natural and man-made, have to be provided with names with which they

will be known or referred to in the people's daily lives. Once coined and applied, the names gain popularity and thus become permanent labels referring to phenomena of the landscape. It is thus through the respective names that the people will be able to identify and/or distinguish their surrounding features, one from the others of its category. It is probably after realising their significance that Hagström concluded that it is with the help of names that we can create order and also structure our conception of the world; that is, it is through names that we can classify and arrange our environment by separating it into named categories and filling the categories with named components (Hagström 2007, 38). In the same spirit, Payne also notes that geographic names are of intrinsic interest because they are necessary for spatial reference in an otherwise confusing and often unintelligible landscape (Payne 1996, 1133).

A cursory survey of literature on names in general and on feature names in particular (see, for example, Kunene (1971), Guma (1998), Hagström (2007), Payne (1985), Payne (1996), Goodenough (1965) and Le Page & Tabouret-Keller (1985)) shows that the bestowal of names is not a haphazard process; every specific name reflects the intention of the person bestowing it. With the exception of a few that may be obscure, most names reflect the culture and philosophy of the cultural group that bestows them. The naming process is sensitive to various factors, some of which are physical, socio-cultural, historical, religious and political hence the conclusion that names are never neutral. As a result, whilst a few names may be oblique, some are descriptive, historical, and commemorative or transferred. Because of this and also following Le Page and Keller's conclusions on language and identity (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985, 247), we contend that feature names, like all other linguistic tokens, are socio-culturally marked and are used in a community because they are felt to have socio-cultural, historical as well as semantic meaning in terms of the way in which each individual member of the community wishes to project his/her own universe and invite others to share it. The same argument is made in Guma who notes that feature names and their naming processes are an interpretation of socio-cultural and historical events and also that the names embody individual or group social experiences, social norms and values (Guma 1998, 266). Payne also argues that names are applied to landmarks in the development of our 'sense of place' or identification with a place, something that is important in our overall growth and development (Payne 1985, 12). Viewed this way, therefore, feature names should not be seen merely as labels; they are not there to just tell people where they are in terms of physical location; there is a very intimate relationship between the name, the feature it refers to and the name-giver. More often than not, the names provide clues to our understanding of the name givers' history, their values and aspirations for the future, or simply their worldview. They are means through which we recognise and understand ourselves and the world that surrounds us.

Having noted the role played by names generally, in the subsequent sections of this paper, we try to provide a few examples of place names that refer to the Zimbabwean landscape and show how they are useful in depicting the relationship between the Zimbabwean people and their environment. The names that constitute our data include those of physical features such as mountains, rivers and streams as well as those of modern human settlements such as government buildings, schools, roads and streets. Not much has been done regarding the study and documentation of feature names in Zimbabwe. Unlike in other countries (see, for example, the United States of America, South Africa, Norway, amongst many others) where there exist thriving boards, councils or committees tasked with the responsibility of officially coordinating and overseeing the research and bestowal of names to features, no such official structures exist in Zimbabwe. To this researcher's knowledge, no comprehensive literature has been published that focuses on analysing place names, both as mere linguistic labels referring to features as well as reservoirs or symbols of socio-cultural and historical data about the place-namer. For these reasons, most of the research data on which this article is based is driven from oral traditions told by various people consulted.

[2] FEATURE NAMES IN ZIMBABWE

Like any other society, Zimbabwe defines itself through names. In doing this, it uses a variety of means and strategies. In this section, we assess the role played by place names in this defining process. Our point of departure is that cultural groups have their identity cemented by a common language and nomenclature; that Zimbabwean feature names are one of many means through which the Zimbabwean people express their linguistic and cultural identity. Like in many other African cultures, (see, for example, [Beier & Gbabasi \(1959\)](#) for Yoruba and [Kunene \(1971\)](#) for Basotho) Zimbabwean feature names are essentially expressions of some experience or attitude, usually local but sometimes national. Our investigation showed that most of the names express the name-givers' desire to create a group consciousness through the use of semantically and symbolically loaded names, the consciousness being necessary for the achievement of a common objective. It also showed that the names have an abiding interest, an interest that may be religious, cultural, historical or picturesque. In the language of the local people, the names of the respective features can either describe a feature physically or can provide insights into how the community of a specific group of people relates to its environment. In fact, our investigation showed that most names of geographic features are often localised for they come from the local people and through them, the people express their emotional attachment to their surroundings as experienced in their daily life experiences.

A linguistic analysis of place names in Zimbabwe shows that most of them are dithematic, that is, they are compound nouns combining two roots linked by

connecting vowels or affixes. An example of such a name in the Shona language is *Mabweadziva* (literally, the stones that belong to *dziva*, which is a compound name consisting of the plural noun *mabwe* (stones), the possessive affix *-a-* and the noun *dziva* (pool of water)). Another example is the Shona name, *Nyikavanhu* (literally, a country is people), which is a compound noun built up of the noun *nyika* (a country) and another noun, *vanhu* (people). The meaning of the name is that a country is defined or understood through the people who inhabit it. Yet another example is the place name, *Mudziwapasi* (literally, a root of the ground), which is also a compound noun consisting of the noun *mudzi* (root), the possessive prefix *-wa-* and the noun *pasi* (ground/earth). From a linguistic point of view, therefore, most of the names are sentential. In terms of meaning, their semantic value is usually not difficult to guess. More often than not, their meanings are easily inferable from the way they are composed, that is, the meanings are normally predictable from the meanings of their component elements as well as from the formula used in joining them; they are easily recoverable from simple rules of lexical and syntactic analysis. However, there are some names whose meanings go beyond the literal senses of the respective nouns and these may not be easy to retrieve. For such names, the researcher has to rely not only on his/her linguistic knowledge of the individual lexical items constituting the name but also on socio-cultural and historical information that is not accessible through the structure of the name. Historical and commemorative names are examples of names that normally need extra-linguistic information. To interpret these names, one has to be conversant with the entire historical or socio-cultural background leading to the choice of the name. Such names thus demand that the interpreter be knowledgeable about the circumstances under which they were coined. This is probably the reason why Pongweni argues that in analysing them one is essentially engaged in a linguistic investigation with social and political considerations predominating at various points. In the process of analysing them, one would be handling language data that has certain well-defined functions for the people who create and use it (Pongweni 1983, 4).

In the subsequent sections of this paper, we will focus on some of the types of feature names that came from our data. We should, however, precede our discussion by accepting the fact that we found it rather impossible to describe all the types of contemporary toponyms used in Zimbabwe in a paper of this scope; to describe the many and complex variables at work with appropriate examples would require an extended volume. We will only look at the most prominent types that we hope will help in showing the extent to which place names reflect the physical as well as socio-cultural and historical organisation of the Zimbabwean society.

[2.1] *Descriptive names*

From the data that we collected, we noted that most names of natural features such as mountains and rivers are descriptive. Most of them are picturesque; that is, they tend to capture or describe the photographic shapes of the respective features. They are forms of expressions through which the people summarise what comes to their minds when they look at their surrounding environment and its contents. They are driven from the respective features' shapes or outlook or from the features' relations to some important events. Writing about geographic names in the United States of America, Payne observes that some features, being unusual in their shape or appearance, evoke visions and an appropriate name describing the dream or vision is given (Payne 1996, 1134). Payne's observation is not far from what characterises the naming of physical features in Zimbabwe. A closer analysis of the country's feature names points to the fact that when coining them, people tend to select specific characteristics on an entity that they want to communicate or emphasise on. What is usually selected for emphasis is the unique or outstanding characteristic(s) of a particular feature. It is usually something about which people are concerned, something about the feature's identity or their own identity that they want to remember or entrench (Goodenough 1965, 275). The following are a few examples of descriptive feature names.

(a) **Nyarunwe** — this is a name of a mountain found in Masvingo province, Bikita district, which has one huge, tall and pointed rock at its peak and which literally means 'owner of one tall or long thin something'. To understand the link between the mountain and the name, one needs to note the linguistic analysis of this Shona name, where *nya-* is a possessive prefix meaning 'owner of', *ru-* is the class 11 enumerative prefix for tall or long concepts that are thin and *-nwe* is the enumerative stem for 'one'. Thus, conceived literally, one can easily infer that the name is driven from the fact that the mountain is said to own one tall something. This tall something is obviously the rock on the top part of the mountain which serves as its distinguishing feature, one that makes it unique from all the others that are neighbours to it. In fact, it is through this outstanding rock that one can easily identify it even from a long distance. The mountain thus got its name from this peculiar characteristic that the local people decided to emphasize on. Closely related to the philosophy behind the naming of this mountain is also the naming of another mountain in Zaka district called *Menomaviri*. The name consists of two parts, that is, the noun *meno* (teeth) and the enumerative *maviri* (two). Put together, the sum total of the meanings of the two parts is 'two teeth'. The name captures well the shape of the mountain whose peak is split into two protruding parts that resemble the shape of two front teeth (with some space in between them) planted in the gum of a person's mouth.

(b) **Mushonganeburi** — this name is a compound noun built up of the noun class 1 prefix *mu-*, the verb stem *-shonga* (dress, decorate), the conjunctive affix

FIGURE 1: Nyarunwe

-ne- (with) and the noun *buri* (a hole), which literally means ‘one who is decorated with a hole’. The name is driven from the fact that the mountain has a huge hole at one side of its slopes, a feature that is quite unique on Zimbabwean mountains. The mountain is thus distinguishable from other local mountains through this hole that the locals argue ‘decorates’ it. The hole on the mountain located in Mwenezi district is mysterious since no-one amongst the local villagers consulted knew whether it is natural or man-made. It is this peculiar feature on the mountain that the villagers decided to emphasise on, hence the derivation of its name.

(c) **Shayamavhudzi** — this is a name of another huge mountain in Mwenezi district. The name, also a compound noun, consists of the verb stem *-shaya* (lack something) and the plural noun *mavhudzi* (hairs). The name literally means ‘one who lacks hairs’. According to those who live close to the mountain, the name came from the unique fact that the mountain does not have any trees on it. This feature makes it different from other known mountains in the area, which have lots of trees on them, hence the reason why its treelessness had to be emphasised. To understand this name fully, one has to first understand the metaphorical sense

FIGURE 2: Shayamavhudzi

in which the trees on the mountain can easily be likened to the hair on a person's head. Conversely, the common concept of a bald head, which does not have hair on it, has been extended to vividly describe a treeless mountain. The same concept of naming has also been used to name a small mountain in Zaka district which is known by the name *Chevhudzi*, literally meaning 'the little one that possesses hair'. The name is built up of the diminutive possessive prefix *che-* and the noun *vhudzi* (hair). The little mountain does not have trees on its sloping sides but has a cluster of tall trees at its peak, resembling hair on a person's head.

(d) **Mudzimundiringe** — this is also a name of a very big and scary mountain in Manicaland Province. The name is a complex nominal construction built up of a combination of the noun *mudzimu* (ancestor spirit), *-ndi-* (object marker for 'me') and *-ringa* (watch). The sum-total of the literal meanings of the respective parts of this multiword name is 'the ancestor spirits watch me'. The mountain has very steep and slippery slopes that everyone who climbs on it should be extremely careful for any mistake can lead to an uncontrollable and fatal fall. Oral traditions behind the naming of this mountain point to the fact that many people were afraid of climbing it because of its very frightening lookout. As a result, anyone who

intended to climb on it had to ask his/her ancestors first so that they would give him/her the necessary protection so that he/she comes back alive and safe.

(e) **Gwindingwi** — this is a name bestowed on numerous mountains and places in Zimbabwe. Generally speaking, in Shona, a *gwindingwi* is a thick forest with tall trees and a lot of tall grasses. Before population explosion in the country, many places and mountains were characterised with this kind of vegetation. One is tempted to conclude that this might be the reason why this is a common name in Zimbabwe today, even at a time when the forests have disappeared following human encroachment.

A cursory look at the country's rivers also shows that there are a number of them whose names tend to be descriptive of their sizes or behavioural characteristics. Here are a few examples.

(a) **Runde** — this is one of Zimbabwe's biggest and/or longest rivers. Oral traditions point to the fact that its name is a contraction of the river's original name, *Runoenda* (one that goes on and on), it being built from the noun class 11 prefix *ru-* for nouns that are tall or long as well as thin, the present habitual tense-aspect marker *-no-* and the verb stem *-enda* (go). From those that were asked, the name was driven from the fact that the river is very long to the extent that no-one knows where it starts from or where it ends. From the name of this famous river also was driven the names of a local high school, a shopping centre and a clinic that were developed at specific points along the river.

(b) **Rusape** — This is a name of a perennial river located in the eastern part of the country. The river's name is a contraction of the name, *Rusingapwi* built up of the noun class 11 prefix *ru-*, the negative formative affix *-si-*, the verb root, *-pw-* (dry up) and the terminal vowel *-i* and literally meaning 'one that does not dry up'. The name came from the observation that this particular river does not dry up when all the others in the area stop flowing in the dry season. It is this unique characteristic of continuous flow that the locals decided to emphasize hence the source of the name. A town developed close to this river and was subsequently named after it. We can thus argue that the town got its identity from that of the river.

(c) **Mutorahuku** — We have just noted from the above example that some features get names from their behavioural patterns. Another example is this name, which has been bestowed on quite a few seasonal streams that flow across some parts of rural Zimbabwe. The name is a complex nominal construction built up of noun class 1 prefix *mu-*, the verb *-tora* (take) and the noun *huku* (chicken), literally meaning 'the one who takes chickens'. Oral traditions surrounding the bestowal of this name point to the fact that in the dry summer season free running chickens in the rural villages usually stray away in search of food and water. The chickens, which leave the fowl run early in the morning, tend to do their hunting along local streams where they normally get green and fresh grass, grasshoppers and other

FIGURE 3: Mutorashanga

insects. Now, when it rains upstream and the streams overflow, the chickens are caught unaware and are eventually washed away. A lot of chickens, especially the small ones, have been lost this way. Some informants have argued that this could be the reason why the villagers along the respective streams eventually decided to coin this name as a warning to chicken owners to take care and possibly prevent this loss. Another closely related example is the name of a big river called *Mutorashanga*. The name is built up of the noun class 1 prefix *mu-*, the verb *-tora* (take) and the noun *shanga* (reeds), literally meaning ‘one who takes reeds’. When asked, some people who live close to the river argue that the idea behind the river’s name is the same as the one behind the name *Mutorahuku* discussed above. The only difference is that in the case of *Mutorashanga* it is reeds and not chickens that are washed away. The locals argue that the name originates from the fact that the river tends to wash away a lot of things, including its own reeds when it overflows in the early summer heavy rains. The name, therefore, is meant to emphasise this rare occurrence that results from the strength of the river’s tides.

Besides rivers and mountains, there are other man-made features that carry names that vividly describe the way the features meet the eye. One such name

is *Boterekwa*, the name of a highway that cascades down the steep slopes of the Shurugwi mountains into Chief Nhema's communal lands. The name of this road comes from the verb stem *-potereka*, which literally means 'wind around'. The name captures well the way the road winds around the mountain ridge, negotiating its way from one end of one mountain to another.

In concluding this section, we find it important to note that most of the names in this category are metaphorical. The process of creating them seems to be influenced by common things that people either see or experience in their lives, which they use to capture similar shapes or characteristics exhibited by the respective features.

[2.2] *Historical names*

Quite a number of features in Zimbabwe have their names driven from important historical events that the name bestowers felt should not be forgotten. Whilst some events are those that impacted the name-bestowers' lives positively others are those that affected them negatively. They could also be those that affected or involved prominent people in society. In this case, what happened historically is summarised and permanently frozen in the form of a name which is then bestowed on a feature that was either the physical location of the historical event or was related in some peculiar way to the event. When coining historical names for features, some name givers tend to be interpretive whilst others are objective. When analysing historical names, therefore, one has to ask himself or herself this question; 'How much and to what extent does the name tell us what actually happened?' To understand such names, the interpreter has to be conversant with the entire historical and/or socio-cultural background leading to the choice of the name. An example of a feature name that was coined in response to historical events is *Mukuvisi*, the name of a stream that flows close to the city of Harare. The name is a noun driven from the causative verb stem *-kuvisa* (cause to come to an end) by adding the nominalising class 1 prefix *mu-* and the change of the final vowel from *-a* to *-i*. The noun literally means 'one who causes something to come to an end or to stop'. Oral traditions as given in Kahari point to the fact that,

In the early days, there were two chiefs in the district named Mbari and Seki (Seke). They were constantly having minor arguments about territory. Eventually they agreed that the boundary between their areas should be this stream and so it was called Mukuvisi because it was the place where the fighting came to an end. (Kahari 1990, 281)

The name thus has some historical significance because it identifies the place where the historical problem was brought to an end.

Another example is the name *Dzivarasekwa* (literally, the pool of Sekwa), which is built up of the noun *dziva* (pool of water), the possessive prefix *-ra-* and *sekwa*,

the corrupted version of a person's name originally known as *Sekwi*. This is the name of one of the oldest residential suburbs in Harare. Oral traditions say that a long time ago there was a very beautiful princess by the name *Sekwi* who quite often bathed in a water pool that was in that area. For this reason, the pool was eventually named after the princess. When a residential suburb was developed around the pool area, the pool's name was extended to be the name of the suburb as well. It is perhaps worthy noting that up to a few decades ago people from royal families were considered important hence anything associated with them could not go unnoticed or unrecorded. By bestowing the princess' name onto the pool and eventually to the suburb, therefore, the locals were actually trying to keep a record of some of the events that took place around this important figure in their society. Yet another example is the name of a small mountain in Bikita district called *Chinyamapere* (literally, the little one that owns hyenas). The name is a complex nominal construction built up of the diminutive noun class 7 prefix *chi-*, the possessive prefix *-nya-* and the plural noun *mapere* (hyenas). Interviews carried out with people who live close to this mountain point to the fact that on this mountain used to inhabit a lot of hyenas, which would wreck havoc by destroying large herds of cattle and other domesticated animals in the local area. Having established that the hyenas lived on this small mountain, the villagers decided to give it this name to summarise and concretise what was happening then. The mountain is known by this name even today when there are no more hyenas on it. The significance of the name today is to be a storage place for historical facts that surrounded this feature a very long time ago. Yet another example is *Marirangwe* (literal, the one that roar leopards), the name of a mountain that was famous for being home to a lot of leopards. The name is a noun built up of the nominalising prefix *ma-*, the verb stem *-rira* (cry/produce sound) and the noun *ngwe* (leopard(s)). Leopards were usually heard roaring on this mountain hence it was designated a dangerous place to visit. The villagers then decided to coin this name that depicted the events and fears of the time.

[2.3] *Commemorative names*

A commemorative feature name is one that is bestowed on a feature in honour of a person, place or event. To fully characterise commemorative feature names in Zimbabwe, we have to look at them from a historical point of view. There is need to note that before the occupation of the country by the British in the late nineteenth century the concept of land ownership in Zimbabwe centred around chiefdoms or kingdoms. Stretches of land and its inhabitants belonged to a particular chief or king. Boundaries were not fixed, and wars were often fought around areas of perceived boundaries, with one or the other chief claiming more land. However, with the coming of the British, the land was divided into administrative areas with clear and fixed boundaries and 'legal' names attached to each piece of

land. Besides the creation of boundaries on pieces of land, the new settlers also brought new concepts such as towns and cities, roads and streets, mines, churches and schools, all of which needed identification through names. The mere fact that the British settlers had a written aspect of their language meant that more places had to be named so that features could be recorded on their maps, and also that stories about Africa could be narrated in relation to more specific and easily identifiable areas.

As also noted in [Chabata \(2007\)](#), an important aspect in the settlers' naming of all these features was the concept of commemoration, a concept which was rare in Zimbabwe before their coming. Names of important or famous people or places in Britain and Europe were bestowed on towns and cities, roads, schools, residential suburbs, etc. They, thus, gave the features the names that told their history, names that identified them with their origins. The concept of naming places after names of prominent people in society continued even after independence in 1980 where features are named after Zimbabwean and/or African heroes and heroines, both living and departed. At the same time, those names that celebrated colonialism are replaced with those that celebrate the newly hard-won independence. Colonial names are viewed as symbols of colonialism; hence they have to be replaced with those that have an African or Zimbabwean anti-colonial flavour. As noted in [Raento & Douglas \(2001\)](#), [Basso \(1996\)](#) and [Hendry \(2006\)](#), this is typical of newly independent societies. To show how the British symbols of colonialism were eradicated through renaming of places in Zimbabwe, we can start with the name of the country itself, *Zimbabwe*, formerly *Rhodesia*. The new name, *Zimbabwe*, was derived from Great Zimbabwe, the country's national shrine, which was an important spiritual place for those who ruled the vast empire of Monomotapa before the arrival of the British settlers. This name is a symbol of national unity, and is of socio-cultural, historical and religious importance to black Zimbabweans. The country's name, therefore, shows the people's return to their origins or roots, their original identity and also their resistance to domination. Names of many towns and cities were also changed from their symbolic colonial labels and were replaced by locally relevant indigenous names that were symbolic of the new order and new ownership of the land. For example, *Salisbury* was renamed *Harare* after the Shona chief, Neharava and *Fort Victoria* became *Masvingo*, again linked to the Great Zimbabwe stone structures. Other names were simply new transliterations to reflect the correct local pronunciation and the local languages' newly developed orthographies. For example, *Gwelo* became *Gweru*; *Selukwe* became *Shurugwi*; *Sinoia* became *Chinhoyi*; *Umtali* became *Mutare*; *Matopos* became *Matobo*; *Marandellas* became *Marondera*; *Que Que* became *Kwekwe*; *Gatooma* became *Kadoma*; etc.

As already intimated above, the founding of the 'new nation' in 1980 after the two protracted liberation wars also created opportunities for expressing some pa-

triotic fervour that were non-existent before. For example, most colonial street names which were symbols of colonisation were replaced by names of legendary figures who had distinguished themselves during the two liberation wars the country fought against colonialism. A look at the streets of Harare, for example, shows that street names such as *Rhodes*, *Livingstone* and *Charter* have been replaced with those of Zimbabwe's celebrated war heroes and heroines such as *Josiah Tongogara*, *Herbert Shitepo*, *Mbuya Nehanda*, *Sekuru Kaguvi*, *Leopold Takawira*, *Josiah Chinamano*, as well as *Robert Mugabe*, whose name appears on street signs as frequently as that of *Rhodes* once did. Other streets have been named after former or current leaders of neighbouring countries, such as *Samora Machel* of Mozambique, *Julius Nyerere* of Tanzania, *Kenneth Kaunda* of Zambia, *Nelson Mandela* of South Africa and *Sam Nujoma* of Namibia. Others have a general pan-Africanist theme, such as the *Africa Unity Square*, formerly *Cecil Square*. Important government buildings were also named after national heroes such as *Mkwati*, *Chaminuka*, *Karigamombe*, etc., all of whom were heroes of the first liberation war of 1896–7. As late as 2005, the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education also came up with a proposal to replace all school names in the country, which have colonial connotations with those of the country's heroes and heroines. The following are only a few illustrative examples; *Prince Edward* was renamed *Murenga*, *Queen Elizabeth* was renamed *Nehanda Nyakasikana*, *Churchill* was renamed *Josia Tongogara*, and *John Cowie* was renamed *Zororo Duri*.

Another form of commemoration now common in Zimbabwe is the idea of naming new developments such as schools, hospitals and clinics and growth points after names of chiefs under whose jurisdiction the developments are taking place. *Nyahunda*, *Gutu*, *Bengura*, *Gudo* and *Mazungunye* are examples of schools named after the respective local chiefs. *Ndanga* and *Gutu* are names of big hospitals also named after the chiefs in whose areas the two hospitals are respectively located.

[3] CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have tried to show that feature names in Zimbabwe are coined in ways that summarise the way the people understand themselves vis-a-vis their environment. We have noted that whilst some names describe the shape or behaviour of their respective features, some are historical records and others are sources of inspiration in the process of building a better future for the country. Our research has also established that most feature names, especially those of the natural landscape, are coined and bestowed by people who live in the respective surrounding areas. In a way, we have tried to show that feature names are not names for their own sake; they are coined and applied by a particular group of people for a particular reason and are relevant to the bestowers' daily lives.

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