

WOMEN, WEALTH GENERATION AND PROPERTY OWNERSHIP IN TRADITIONAL SHONA CULTURE IN ZIMBABWE

Godwin Makaudze

Great Zimbabwe University
Department of African Languages and Literature
makaudzegodie@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Feminist scholarship is awash with literature that strives to vindicate its position that women in general have never enjoyed status and platforms equal to those of their male counterparts in the social, economic, religious and political spheres in life. The literature bemoans the invisibility of women in matters to do with economics and property ownership. The literature further posits that women neither wielded any power nor had any platforms for the generation and accumulation of wealth or the ownership of property. Leaning on Africana Womanist theory, this paper contends that such a perception is the antithesis of what actually takes place in the Shona milieu where, traditionally, women have, not just platforms to generate and accrue personal wealth, but have also authority over the use and disposal of such wealth. Avenues for the generation and accumulation of wealth and other property by Shona women range from marriage negotiations, the institution of marriage itself as well as the family, working using one's hands and commanding positions of leadership.

Keywords: Shona women, generation of wealth, property ownership, Shona culture, marriage, *maoko* property, leadership, kitchen

INTRODUCTION

The marginalisation and invisibility of women in contemporary mainstream economics has drawn the ire of pro-women organisations and legislators. As pointed

UNISA 
university
of south africa

Latin American Report
Volume 30 | Number 2 | 2014
pp. 18–29

Print ISSN 1682-5055

out by Selden (1989, 135), women have been made inferiors and this oppression has been compounded by men's belief that women are, in any event, inferiors by nature. Understandably, it is argued that national development cannot be meaningful and complete if one gender is overridden and sidelined by the other in the economic sphere and in other activities of national significance. However, when these skewed economic patterns are addressed as a whole, Shona culture in particular is often roundly criticised for its purported highly patriarchal tendencies which favour men at the expense of women. To pro-women activists, patriarchy among the Shona makes the female subordinate to the male, or treats her as inferior to the male (Selden 1989: 137). This is believed to apply in all spheres of Shona life, including wealth accumulation and property ownership. The argument is that, in their culture, Shona women have never been accorded the space and liberty to generate, accumulate and own personal wealth.

This paper seeks to expose whether in their culture, Shona women have been barred from the generation and accumulation of wealth and from ownership of property. It focuses on the practices most criticised by the pro-women establishments as being disempowering to women, such as marriage negotiations, marriage and inheritance among others. Using these, the paper concurs with Adoo's (1998, 39) assertion that, in most countries in Africa, whole sectors of the economy (such as internal trade, agriculture, agro-business and health care) are in the hands of women. The paper, in fact, argues that African women— and specifically Shona women —not only have many platforms on which to generate and accumulate personal wealth, but that in most cases they are the only people who own private property.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The article buttresses its observations with the theory of Africana Womanism. Propounded by Clenora Hudson-Weems (1993, 2004), the theory is a counter-discourse to western feminists' understanding of the nature, scope and solutions to women's problems. It posits that feminism was conceptualised and adopted by white women, reflecting an agenda which was designed to meet their particular needs (Hudson-Weems 1993, 18). On the other hand, Africana Womanism is '...grounded in our culture, and therefore, it focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs and desires of African women' (Hudson-Weems, 24).

What makes Africana Womanism the ideal theory in this regard is that, it looks at women in the context of African culture and worldview. The platforms for Shona women to generate and accrue wealth – as well as the authority they have over property – are explored from the point of view of the participants in Shona culture. This fits well into p'Bitek's (1986, 37) assertion that only participants in a culture can pass judgement on whether a practice or custom is bad. Thus, only a theory by, about and for Africans can help explicate the room Shona women have always had in generating, accruing and owning wealth and property.

WOMEN AND GENERATION OF WEALTH IN TRADITIONAL SHONA CULTURE

Unlike feminist thinking, in traditional Shona culture women have many avenues through which they participate in the generation and accruing of wealth. They are never at the periphery of mainstream economics in society. Some of the ways include Shona practices (such as marriage negotiations, welcoming a new bride, polygyny and inheritance), working with their hands and undertaking positions of leadership.

Shona practices as sources of wealth for women

Marriage negotiations

Traditionally, women participate in marriage negotiations, which accord them platforms to generate and accrue wealth. Marriage is a compulsory institution for both Shona men and women and abstaining from it is considered highly irresponsible behaviour (Gombe 1995). For the Shona, as is the case for other African ethnic groups, it is not a contract between two individuals, the bride and the groom. Rather, it is a contract whose discussion and solemnisation brings together members from the concerned families and their extended relations. From the would-be bride's side, participants include both male and female members of the nuclear and extended families. Among the female participants are the bride's mother(s) aunt(s), older and younger sisters, as well as the *ambuyawashas* –the wives of the bride's brothers. These are usually more than one because to the Shona, marriage is not transacted by a nuclear family, but by the extended families wherein all relations are represented by more than one person. It is important to note that these women are not observers or passive participants in the marriage transactions. They are active in the deliberations and, more importantly, also stand to receive personal material benefits for their efforts.

The aunt, or *tete*, is the most authoritative woman in the marriage of her niece. She is the most vocal and, if annoyed, she can stall marriage negotiations. This is because traditionally, she is the one in charge of bringing up all her brother's daughters and of tutoring them on matters related to marriage and the establishment of families (Gombe, 1995, 1998). In Shona culture, aunts make personal material demands during the marriage of their niece. Prior to the commencement of the negotiations, the aunts hold a caucus meeting where they agree on demands they will present to the groom's people as a token of appreciation for their role in tutoring the bride for them. The items they request are placed by the groom's people, along with items requested by other female attendees, on a wooden plate from which the aunt picks theirs (Gombe 1998). This practice is called *kunonga*. It is important to note that the aunt(s) always make their personal requests at the marriage of each of their nieces, thus have as many platforms for making such requests as the number

of nieces who will be married. Items they request can be in the form of beads or *ndarira*, copper or brass or cowry shell ornaments. In modern times these are usually in the form of money. Such items which they get during this custom constitute their personal possessions which they have authority over.

Apart from the aunt(s), other females like the girl's elder and younger sisters also participate in *kunonga* and pick from the wooden plate the items they will have demanded (Gombe 1995). The same women participate in this ritual at the marriage of each of their sisters, either in the capacity of elder or younger sister. In addition, the *ambuyawashas*, wives to the bride's brothers, also stand to gain material benefits at such family indabas. And it is they who prepare several dishes to be consumed by the participants. After the groom and his entourage finish eating their food, they send back the dishes with tokens of appreciation (Gombe 1998). Again, these tokens can be in the form of beads or copper or brass ornaments, though with the changes in lifestyle brought by the modern era, these now take the form of money. The tokens of appreciation received are shared among the *ambuyawashas* as their personal benefits.

Perhaps the biggest female beneficiary in such marriage negotiations is the girl's mother. She is given *mafukidzadumbu* (literally meaning 'covering the womb') wherein the groom is asked to clothe the 'abnormal load' the mother-in-law had to carry and is thus being invited to share the burden of bringing up his wife (Gombe 1995, 67). *Mafukidzadumbu* is a token given in the form of beads, and in modern times in monetary value. This ranges from \$50 USD to \$100 USD, varying from place to place. She is also given gifts for *gusha* (girdle), *mundya* (cradle-strap), *mafukudzadumbu* (for the kicking she received from the girl when she was still in her mother's womb), *hotamiro* (literally bending down to feed the baby), *tsengeramishonga* (the act of a mother chewing medicines for the child in her infancy) and *mwenje* (the light which she lit at night, attending to the baby). All the gifts relate to the amount of inconvenience the mother-in-law had to endure for the well-being of the young girl and each one of them is related to a particular problem connected with child-rearing (ibid). In addition, she is also given *chiuchiro*, a gift which gives the son-in-law permission to clap his hands for her in greeting or as a sign of respect (Gombe 1998, 98). All these gifts are in the form of beads and ornaments or bracelets, and in the modern era most of these now take monetary form. The above gifts due to the mother are never negotiated nor trimmed down. They are always paid in full and timeously.

In addition, the mother, just like the father, is a beneficiary of *majasi*; an assortment of clothes paid for by her soon-to-be son-in-law. Again, these items are not negotiable and have to be paid on time. Above all, even today, the mother is also the recipient of wealth in the form of a beast (*mombe yeumai*, the mother's cow) at each of her daughters' marriages and this is always a live heifer (Gombe 1998, 107). The heifer is not part of the herd (of between five and eight beasts) given to the father. It is a standalone beast. In the event of a divorce, some of the beasts given

to the father can be returned, but the heifer given to the mother is never returned. In cases where the girl's mother dies before plans for marriage are made, the woman who looks after the girl until she gets married is given a beast, known as *mombe yeuredzwa* (a beast of thanking the mother who raised the girl). This again becomes the woman's personal possession.

At face value, it appears as if the bride's father is the biggest beneficiary of the marriage of his daughter since he receives a number of beasts. A closer look, however, shows that such is not usually the case. These cattle are later used by the same bride's father as bride price to bring a wife to the bride's brother. As such, although at the marriage of his daughter the bride's father receives more cattle, they are later passed on to pay bride price for someone his son wants to marry. This practice among the Shona is known as *chipanda*, where a father pairs each of his male child with a female one in the same family (Auret 1990). Under this practice, cattle that come from the marriage of a daughter are used to bring a wife for a son paired with the girl. Thus the father passes on the cattle he receives. In light of this, Gombe (1998, 190) notes that, a mother can own more cattle than her husband does. As the father 'spends' his cattle to pay the bride price for his daughters-in-law, the mother's heifers remain and they will be multiplying.

Apart from the heifer, the mother also receives *mbudzi yemasungiro*, a female goat given to her by her son-in-law when he brings his wife to her mother's home to deliver her first baby. In fact, the son-in-law gives two goats, a male one to his father-in-law and a female one to his mother-in-law. The male is killed for relish while the female is kept and will ultimately multiply. The mother receives such a *masungiro* goat when each of her daughters gives birth for the first time, thus boosting her herd if she has many daughters.

Welcoming of a new bride

In Shona culture, a new bride has platforms to raise wealth for herself. These include the *kutsiga* and the *kupembererwa* or *kupururudzwa* practices. These are practices she follows as part of the wedding ceremony. Some days after bride price has been paid, the aunt accompanies the bride to the groom's home. When they get there, they remain outside the homestead. The new bride's face will be covered by a cloth. They walk into the homestead only after being given a gift, and after a few steps inside the home they halt and are given further gifts (Gombe 1998). They can halt so many times before getting into a house where she will be welcomed. This custom is called *kutsiga*. The gifts she is given can be in the form of beads or chickens. Today, the gifts are monetary, and can be up to \$USD 5.00 per halt. Inside the house, every relative from her husband's side of the family who wants to have a glance at her face is supposed to give a gift first which in modern times is in monetary form again.

As for the *kupururudza* (welcoming) practice, the tradition is that each of the new husband's relatives gives the bride a gift as a way of welcoming her into the

family. Here the gifts vary, and include chickens and *ndarira* (beads). They can be monetary again. The following day, the new bride and her aunt get up very early and sweep the whole compound clean, making many small mounds of the dirt. Before they carry the dirt to the rubbish pit, each of the mounds has to be paid for by the husband's relatives. They also fetch water for everyone to bathe in, after which every beneficiary is expected to pay for bathing by giving a gift. They then go to fetch firewood and are given further gifts upon their return. After that, they prepare food for every member of the family and other relatives and again, the food has to be paid for before the guests would partake. All the gifts are collected and kept by the bride's paternal aunt who later hands all of them to the bride – for they are meant for the bride (Gombe 1998, 113). Nowadays, all these gifts are given in monetary form. The new bride (and her aunt) accepts these gifts only if they feel that they are adequate. If they feel that any gift is not adequate, they refuse it until a satisfactory gift is offered (*ibid*). All these gifts are the new bride's personal possessions and she has jurisdiction over them.

The Shona woman continues to receive gifts in her new home. On the day that the bride is to be handed over to her husband, the man is supposed to give her gifts at various stages – such as asking her to sit on the mat, when she undresses, and so on. Gombe (1998, 114) writes that in the nascent stages of a marriage, a woman is given a cow (*gomwe*) by her husband, and then goats. The bride then spends about a year in the home of her husband's parents. After that, she is given gifts and gadgets by her husband's family as she moves to her new home. She is given new mortars, grinding stones, winnowing baskets and clay-pots. She also goes back to her people to tell them of the new developments and, again, is given many gifts with which to start her home. From then on, she participates in the affairs of the home and the village as an independent mother. She and other daughters-in-law participate at functions and events, such as funerals, where they do various duties such as the bathing and dressing of the body of the deceased, entertaining mourners with humour, cutting out a path to the grave and fetching water for various purposes. For all these and other duties, the daughters-in-law are given many gifts which they then share among themselves after the event (Gombe 1998, 117). If the gifts are not adequate, they turn them down until better offers are made.

Polygyny and inheritance

In Shona culture, polygyny and inheritance are avenues which women use to accrue more wealth. A man who intends to marry an additional wife or to inherit a widow does not make a personal decision. Before getting the additional wife, the man is supposed first to seek the consent of his first wife or wives. No man takes an additional wife without this being sanctioned by the earlier wife or wives (Rukuni 2007). The first wife or wives get a cow each for consenting to a husband's request to take on an additional wife. The inherited wife also gets a personal possession. She

is given a beast, known as *sendekauta*, for her to consent to sexual requests by the new husband (Gombe 1998).

SHONA WOMEN AND MAOKO WEALTH

Another avenue for generating and accruing personal possessions by the Shona woman is the work of her hand. The Shona woman, just like all other African women, has a strong hand. She is very hard working and makes a lot of personal wealth, known as *maoko* property, from the strength of her hand (Aschwanden 1982 187–204; May 1983, 65). Adoo explains that the African woman never has to fight for the right to work as claimed by feminists. To them, work is imperative. She writes:

For most...African women, work is a responsibility and an obligation. This idea is drummed into us from infancy. We have never had to fight for the “right to work” – a major concern of early Western feminists. In ... Africa, virtually no family tolerates a woman who does not work (Aadoo 1998, 46).

The same philosophy is explained by Aschwanden (1982, 47) who says a young man looking for a woman to marry is advised to make sure his beloved has thorny hands as soft hands are a warning that the girl is lazy. These cases show that Shona women are urged to be very industrious and, indeed, prove to be so. From their industriousness, they make a lot of personal wealth. Most of these women are skilled in various ways including basket weaving and the making of gadgets such as *rusero* – a winnowing or sifting basket, *shandiro* – a basket for sowing, *nhengwana* – a basket used to gather millet, pottery –including jars such as *rongo*, a medium-sized jar for warm water, *hadyana*, a small jar for cooking vegetables, *shambakodzi*, for cooking stiff porridge, *mbiya*, a small jar for relish and *pfuko*, a small jar for storing the husband’s beer (Aschwanden 1982, 190–195) and decorating walls of huts and other structures using various distinctive patterns.

Shona women are also the backbone of agriculture. Upon marriage, every woman is given her own personal field, *tseu*, where she grows crops to her liking, such as groundnuts and round nuts. She is the owner of both the field and all the produce, and can dispose of them without necessarily consulting her husband. However, all the other fields belong to the husband and the woman assists in tilling these. Here, she is again in charge, and her husband cannot dispose of the produce without informing her and without obtaining her consent. Some women also perform midwifery duties, assisting mothers of the society in giving birth. These midwives are in turn given gifts by the husbands of the wives they assist. These activities bring the women gifts in forms of chickens, goats, sheep or even grain which they continuously trade and thus, ultimately, work their way up to bigger possessions such as cattle.

FEMALE LEADERSHIP AND GENERATION OF WEALTH

Linked to the *maoko* property are also positions that warrant and guarantee a woman of amassing and owning her own property. These include being a queen, diviner or spirit medium. The Shona, just like other many African societies has a flexible role allocation as observed by Hudson-Weems (1993, 2004). In other words, though each gender has roles assigned to it, such roles are not cast in stone. There are also positions and roles that can be assumed and undertaken by a member of society regardless of his or her gender. These positions include being a chief, diviner or traditional healer, or being a spirit medium. These are positions of influence and affluence. Most traditional healers and diviners among the Shona are women. This is due to the fact that women usually go into the forest to gather wild spinach for the family meal. In doing these duties, they come across many plants and trees whose roots, barks or branches have medicinal properties. Whenever they administer such medicines to their clients, they are rewarded with gifts. Traditional healers and diviners are consulted by most people in society, including kings and chiefs. A traditional healer looks forward to receiving a gift if he or she has helped a client. In the past they received gifts such as grain, tobacco, chickens, goats or cattle depending on the gravity of the problem (Gombe 1998: 145). Today, they can still receive these or have them in monetary form. Thus, these positions of responsibility earn women substantial amounts of wealth, placing them amongst the elites of the time.

WOMEN AND PROPERTY OWNERSHIP IN TRADITIONAL SHONA CULTURE

In Shona tradition, women are accorded the right own property. As mothers, Shona women are the only people to own private property in Shona culture. Such property includes physical structures at home, like the kitchen as well as other possessions like cattle, which are the backbone of Shona wealth. In addition, women have personal possessions obtained through working with their hands (*maoko property*) as well as holding positions of leadership. This disproves feminist perceptions that they hardly own anything which can be called theirs.

The Shona kitchen as the mother's property

In Shona culture, the kitchen is the first structure to be built at every new home. All other structures are built after it. In instances where only a single structure constitutes a home, that structure would be the kitchen. This structure is a personal possession of the Shona woman. At a polygynous marriage, each wife is supposed to have her own kitchen, regardless of the number of wives a man has (Makaudze and Viriri 2012). Thus there are as many kitchens at a home as the number of wives. The kitchen and most of its contents belong to the woman, the mother. Paraphernalia in

the kitchen include kitchen utensils such as cooking pots as well as plates and clay pots. The mother, as the sole owner of such gadgets, can lend any of them to other women in the neighbourhood without having to consult the husband or any other family member. She uses her own discretion. Thus she has autonomy over these possessions.

In addition, the household gadgets mentioned above are her personal and private property. If any of her gadgets is broken by either the husband or a child, they are supposed to be replaced (ibid). In the event that she dies, no other woman is expected to use her gadgets, except those allowed by custom (these are her younger sisters or her brothers' daughters). If a man wants to marry again after the death of his first wife, he has to build his new wife her own kitchen and provide new utensils and kitchen equipment. Shona custom does not allow the new woman to use the kitchen or the household goods left behind by the first wife or wives. Thus, the mother's kitchen and goods remain sacred and personal and are not supposed to be tampered with.

Mother's material possessions as private property

Mother's material possessions and immediate family needs

The heifers (*mombe dzeumai*) and the *masungiro* goats, given to her at the marriage or first deliveries by her daughters, together with their offspring, belong to the mother and are solely hers. During her lifetime, the mother has complete control of such property (May 1983, 65; Weinrich 1982, 42). She can dispose of such wealth as and when she deems fit and, while she might inform her husband what she is doing with her wealth as a courtesy, he does not have the power to dissuade her from doing what she likes with it. She can use her cattle to pay bride price for her brother's son or she can even choose to slaughter one or two of them for a meal. Under no circumstances will a member of her family be permitted use these cows or goats or their offspring – and, if they do, the animal will have to be replaced as soon as possible (Weinrich 1982, 42). Where a family might encounter challenges that demand the payment of cattle, if the father does not have cattle, the family will be considered as having nothing with which to settle the matter. This is so, even if there are several herds which belong to the mother. The only thing that the family might do in such a case is to ask her to lease the cattle to someone else or to give them the cattle to settle an immediate and pressing need. They are then expected to pay back the cattle timeously (Gombe 1998, 108). If she dies before they pay, they will be haunted by her angry spirit. Gelfand (1973, 31) stresses that such possessions are the women's personal property. Commenting on the mother's wealth, Furusa (2006, 4) says:

The denial of women's rights to own property *during the colonial era* was in direct violation of the principles and practices, of for example, Shona culture in which the only person who owns private property is the woman. Whatever my mother owns belongs to her. No member of the Furusa family, including her children, has right to it. We only have the privilege to share it with her while she is living. On the other hand, whatever the father owns belongs to the whole family, including our mother [*italics my own emphasis*].

Thus, women among the Shona, especially mothers, are the only people who own private property. The father's wealth belongs to the whole family, including the mother. Hence, the perception that the traditional Shona woman (of the colonial period) was like a donkey which did not have even a National Identification card (Barnes and Win 1992) applied to women in the new order brought by colonialists and not in Shona culture. Even today, it becomes fallacious to argue that Shona tradition denies women platforms to generate, accrue and own personal wealth.

Mother's material possessions and the inheritance ceremony

Popular belief among contemporary Zimbabweans is that in Shona tradition, a woman loses all her property during the inheritance ceremony. Contemporary writing and music accuse the Shona inheritance custom as one in which a woman is robbed of her hard-earned possessions. They suggest that a widow loses her home and wealth in the form of cattle and other personal possessions. As such, inheritance is one of the many Shona practices that are being crusaded and legislated against. Surprisingly, such legislation is meant to safeguard a woman's possessions, believed to be taken away through the inheritance custom, yet in reality inheritance if done in the tradition way safeguards the same. In other words, modern legislation, which is against the Shona inheritance practice, strives to do what the practice actually does.

Contrary to popular belief, inheritance in Shona culture is never a custom meant to disempower women. The customs around inheritance are meant to perpetuate the social well-being of people and of women in general. At inheritance, the woman's personal wealth is never given out to anyone – all of it remains hers. The other motive behind the inheritance customs is to safeguard the woman's personal wealth against being taken by anyone. The mother's cattle (*mombe dzeumai*), goats (*mbudzi dzemasungiro*) and all their offspring are not inherited by anyone. Gelfand (1977, 44) writes that, before anything is given out, the widow is asked if she has any cattle or goats of her own. If she does, they are left for her, but everything else will be given to the new husband or her eldest son. The eldest son is here given if the widow will have chosen not to be inherited by any of her former husband's relatives. The fact that she is asked if she has cattle of her own implies that society knows that a mother is entitled to, and can have, such wealth, disproving feminist claims about property ownership rights. As for the rest of the property left by the deceased, some of this is given to relatives and a large amount left for the wife and the eldest son who continues to look after her, who together with his widowed mother make sure it

serves the same purpose as had been intended by the deceased. Gombe further notes that even cattle that would be handed over to the widow and the eldest son are still very much controlled by the widow. He says:

Pfuma iya yakasiwa inenge yave kutongwa nomwana uyu achibatsirana namai vake. Nyangwe zvavo vanga vasingapiwi pfuma iyi mbune, vakadzi vanga vaine samba rokuona kuti yashandiswa nomutoo kwawo wokukwidziridza zvido zvemhuri iyi. Ndivo vanetenge vari mapatakiyi anoshanda ari mumashure memwana wavo (Gombe 1998, 190).

The wealth left behind by the deceased would be under the jurisdiction of the son who would be assisted by his mother. Even though the wealth would not have been left directly in her hands, women (that is the mother) had great authority in making sure it was being used for the good of the family. In fact, the woman held the keys to the wealth, working behind her son.

It becomes clear that the Shona woman remains in great control of family wealth. This still happens even if the inheritance custom gives her a new husband from her deceased's relatives. From the wealth, she determines what can be used and for what purpose. If she does not consent to any of the proposed uses, then that wealth will not be used.

Mother's material possessions during divorce

Divorce does not make her lose her wealth. In cases of divorce, a wife has the authority to take along with her all her property which include grains in her granary as well as animals such as goats, cattle and chickens (Kabweza 1979, 85). This is contrary to colonial and modern thinking that all she takes away with her is a single item, her *gupuro* (divorce token). Such colonial and modern thinking makes it appear that a divorced wife is bound to suffer by being made to go away empty-handed.

CONCLUSION

Colonial and feminist literature underscores that women do not have any power or platforms to accumulate or own property. This article, by examining the Shona milieu, has shown such a perception to be fallacious. In the Shona worldview, women do not just have platforms to generate and accrue personal wealth, but also have authority over the use and disposal of such wealth. Avenues for accumulation of wealth and other property by Shona women range from marriage negotiations, marriage and the family, working using one's hands, as well as commanding positions of leadership. It would therefore be prudent for those who accuse Shona culture in respect of the marginalisation and invisibility of contemporary women in mainstream economics to first undertake a thorough examination of what actually happens in the culture in question before making hasty comments and leaping to inaccurate conclusions.

REFERENCES

- Adoo, A. 1998. "The African woman today". In *Sisterhood, feminisms and power: From Africa to the diaspora* ed. O. Nnaemeka 39 – 50. Asmara: Africa World Press.
- Aschwanden, H. 1982. *Symbols of life: An analysis of the consciousness of the Karanga*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Auret, D. 1990. *A decade of development: Zimbabwe 1980–1990*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Barnes, T. and Win, E. 1992. *To live a better life: an oral history of women in the city of Harare*. Harare: Baobab.
- Furusa, M. 2006. The muse of history and politics of gender representation in Zimbabwean women's literature. In *African womanhood in Zimbabwean literature: new perspectives on women's literature in African languages* ed. Z. Mguni, M. Furusa and R. Magosvongwe 1 – 23. Harare: College Press.
- Gelfand, M. 1973. *The genuine Shona: survival values of an African culture*. Gwelo: Mambo Press.
- Gelfand, M. 1977. *The spiritual beliefs of the Shona*. Gwelo: Mambo Press.
- Gombe, J.M. 1995. *The Shona idiom*. Harare: Mercury Press.
- Gombe, J.M. 1998. *Tsika dzavaShona*. Second edition. Harare: College Press.
- Hudson-Weems, C. 1993. *Africana womanism: Reclaiming ourselves*. Troy, Michigan: Bedford.
- Hudson-Weems, C. 2004. *Africana womanist literary theory*. Asmara: Africa World Press.
- Kabweza, O.M. 1979. Kurambana. In *Pasichigare: essays on Shona culture in retrospect* ed. O.M. Kabweza, L.M. Hatugari, M.A. Hamutyinei and C. Hove. 83 – 85. Gwelo: Mambo Press.
- Makaudze, G. and Viriri, A. 2012. Prison or re-colonization? An Afrocentric explanation of the African hut. *Journal of Zimbabwe Studies: Arts, Humanities and Education* 1 (1): 37–47.
- May, J. 1983. *Zimbabwean women in colonial and customary law*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Weinrich, A.A.H. 1982. *African marriage in Zimbabwe*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- p'Bitek. 1986. *Artist the ruler: essay on African art, culture and values*. Nairobi: Heinemann.
- Rukuni, M. 2007. *Being Afrikan: rediscovering the traditional unhu-ubuntu-botho pathways of being human*. Arcadia: Mandala.
- Selden, R. 1989. *A reader's guide to contemporary literary theory*. New York & London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.