

# IN PURSUIT OF ENDOGENEITY: AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED POST-INDEPENDENCE SHONA POETRY

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## ABSTRACT

Relevant history and culture are indispensable to the struggles for authentic liberation. Therefore, it is the duty of writers to affirm this fact. This effort by writers is an Afrocentric pursuit of the affirmation of endogeneity in post-independence Shona poetry. The poetry demonstrates the poets' intense interest in rootedness and dispel dislocation as an unnecessary luxury. As the exegesis unfolds, it is revealed that the poets exemplify and authenticate commitment to writing against alterity and the ideology of Eurocentrism and what it stands for. In fact, the selected poetry is applauded for its ability to affirm endogeneity. It is poetry of a struggle against the machinations of the ideology of Eurocentrism. It turns out to be poetry devoted to "remembering the dismembered" in a world riddled with imperialism and foreign domination. Reconnecting the audience with their life-furthering historical tradition is cast as a literary imperative.

**Keywords:** Afrocentricity; culture; history; Sankofa; Shona poetry

## INTRODUCTION

Rootedness in history and culture is life-affirming; while alterity is dismembering, disempowering and disorienting. Weil (2001, 43) contends that "to be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul." Weil's observation is germane to the subject under scrutiny as it points to a disturbing situation in which



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rootedness is not a priority. This article is an attempt towards giving primacy to history and culture as it finds expression in selected Shona poetry. The poems revolve around the idea that “we must utilize our culture, world-view, historical knowledge and realities to develop plans, strategies and approaches that are appropriate to our needs and interests” (Furusa 2000, 33). The poems are characterised by a sustained and thoroughgoing interest in rootedness in African historical and cultural traditions. History and culture are indispensable “... for the existence of men and women who are truly liberated, in other words who are truly masters of all the material means which make possible the radical transformation of society” (Fanon 1968, 310). Manifesting in the poems is a relentless contestation of alterity and affirmation of endogeneity. Adesina (2008) defines endogeneity as “an intellectual standpoint derived from a rootedness in the African conditions; a centering of African ontological discourses and experiences as the basis of one’s intellectual work.” For Wiredu (2004), the term implies giving primacy to the historical and cultural. On the contrary, alterity is “the state or quality of being other, or of not being of the self” (Hazell 2009, xvii).

## THE PRIMACY OF AFRICAN CULTURE IN LIBERATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN SELECTED POEMS

Against the backdrop that “colonialism (and its sequel-neocolonialism) includes a systematic programme of de-Africanization” (Wiredu 2004, 1); reAfricanization is indispensable and literature is one of the ideological apparatuses that can be deployed to serve that agenda. This finds ample expression in Everson Chibanda’s *Munodzisemei?* (“Why Do You Despise Your Culture?”), Greater Mhondera’s *Chivanhu Chasvava*, and Chiedza Musengei’s *Kuzvirukira*. (Acting in one’s interest). The poems deal with the dearth of location in age-old relevant traditions that give character to the Shona people. Chibanda’s poem is about acculturation. The persona is saddened by the euphoric and debilitating wholesale disregard of African culture and a general preference for non-African cultures, particularly from the West. The persona is disturbed because in such a scheme, “culture is becoming more and more cut off from the events of today” (Fanon 1968, 217). The voice in the poem invokes empowering “ancient and traditional cultural ideals and approaches” Gray (2001, 98). The dominant idea in the poem is that it is high time that the Shona people reconnect with relevant ideals from their past, against the longstanding onslaught on Shona culture. The poet notes that contact and interaction with European culture (*chirungu*) has resulted in the demise of crucial cultural traditions and practices necessary to make sense of the world. The title of the poem is in the form of a rhetoric question, which is basically a challenge to the audience to pause and reflect on the state of affairs. The quest for rootedness in the best cultural traditions manifests itself in the extract below:

<i>Dzedu tsika semarutsi munodzisemei?</i>	("Why do you despise our culture?")
<i>Pamadziona, sendove yedhongi munodzinyenyeredza,</i>	("You despise your own cultural practices like dung")
<i>Kuri kudokwairira dzavamwe tsika.</i>	("In preference of foreign cultures")
<i>Dzenyu tsika dzavanosema semarutsi</i>	("Ironically foreigners despise your culture")
<i>Dzavo muchidzifarira semanhanga</i>	("While you celebrate foreign cultures")
<i>Ngano nezvirahwe zvose mbombombo</i>	("Both folktales and riddles are lost")
<i>Kubva zvadzama semadora</i>	("To go extinct like Mopani worms")
<i>Mbakumba nengororombe zvitsvagei muzvione</i>	("Look out for traditional dances such as <i>mbakumba</i> and <i>ngororombe</i> ")
<i>Zvamedzwa nechisingarutsi chirungu</i>	("All have been lost due to westernization")
<i>Chirungu chekuuya nechirungurira (p.18).</i>	("Westernization brought problems with it")

The persona views acculturation as a malaise that is afflicting the Shona people. It is infectious to an extent that it has crippled African people's self-definition. The voice bemoans the cultural genocide that has destroyed the Shona's belief in themselves and subsequently turned them into foot soldiers in "imitative philopraxis" (Ramose 1999). The poem radiates with an agenda to reclaim the rich heritage of the Shona people and exposes the dearth of African ideals and approaches to life, which make African people susceptible to imperialist cultures. The persona seems to have observed that authentic liberation beyond political liberation is only possible on the basis of cultural values and principles. Asante (2009, 15) observes that Africa has often been betrayed by the ignorance of its own people of its past [and have turned out to be] the most betrayed of contemporary humans. The poet reiterates that life-guaranteeing aspects of African cultural traditions of different life-worlds must be quarried to service the current generation of Africans in their respective life-worlds. Kamba (2000, 169) argues that:

Progress itself has to be understood in the context of culture. It would be impossible to achieve real progress if such progress was at odds with culture. The riches of our cultural heritage those customs, values and beliefs which have been passed on to us by those who have gone before us, can themselves be the vehicle for transforming our societies, for bringing about betterment of life in a variety of ways.

Chibanda associates celebration of one's culture with freedom. This is the case, because rootedness in one's culture provides Africans with the leverage to celebrate what is embedded in their own history, rather than discard them as futile in the grand scheme of things. The poet sees no moral justification why African culture must be holistically

relegated to the dustbins of history. The poet goes down memory lane to reflect on the beauty of traditional African culture; the beauty of dances (*mbakumba, ngororombe*), story-telling tradition, traditional food and the fact that Africa was a healthy society. Against the backdrop that African culture is the mother of civilisation, what boggles the mind of the poet is that it is Africans themselves who have turned to be foot soldiers in relegating their culture to the periphery. In view of the undoubted vitality of African culture and world-view, the poet records the absurdity of scorning one's culture, while in the process blindly celebrating the cultures of other people. Mhondera's *Chivanhu Chasvava* ("Wither African Culture") exposes the hegemonic character of European culture that has incapacitated the Shona culture. Mhondera is a thoroughgoing Afrocentric poet, who holds sacred African cultural traditions as not only relevant, but crucial to the present dispensation. Assuming the voice of the mother-in-law the persona articulates the extent of distress that characterises the Shona culture. Renowned Zimbabwean poet Chirikure Chirikure also bemoans the general preference for English in the poem *Inongova yes yes*. ("Obsession with English"). The impact of European culture is aptly captured by the poet as follows:

<i>Chivanhu chako chagezwa</i>	("You have lost your culture")
<i>Chasukwa netsika dzemusanganiswa</i>	("Lost as a result of culture contact")
<i>Wangosara ganda dema chete mukwasha</i>	("What is only left is the black skin")
<i>Ukaona rusvisvi munhenhera ruchitungira</i>	("If you see a shrub growing from a stump")
<i>Kana mvura yezhizha yanaya</i>	("When summer comes")
<i>Runenge ruchikura kubva padzinde</i>	("The shrub grows from the stump")
<i>Dzinde iroro rinoramba riripo chete</i>	("The stump remains there")
<i>Rikadzupurwa uswa hwafa</i>	("If the stump is uprooted then the shrub dries out")
<i>Ndizvo zvakaitawo chivanhu chedu mukwasha</i>	("Son in law, that is exactly the situation with African culture")
<i>Chine dzinde guru kwazvo pasi pasi</i>	("It has a rich tradition")
<i>Tose tinokura mutsika kubva ipapo</i>	("Our culture is given impetus by that tradition")
<i>Kana tikadzipura chete unhu hwedu hunofa</i>	("If we lose our tradition we also lose our culture")
<i>Kuremekedzana matiri kwobva kwapera</i>	("And we also lose respect among us")
<i>Toita semhuka dzedondo dzisinganyari</i> (p. 98).	("Then we behave like wild animals")

The persona locates African tradition at the centre of any change as the Shona forge into the future. The persona challenges the audience to glean into tradition to get guidance regarding matters of life. Dimensions of development such as health, participation,

sanity, tolerance and cooperation are embedded in culture; hence the poet invites the Shona to be guided and oriented by their history. The persona contends that culture is a spring of motivation and the basis of identity. To borrow Adesina's (2008, 134) words, the persona offers:

...an uncompromising refutation of the epistemology of alterity, which has shaped modes of gazing and writing about Africa and Africans. Such a negation of alterity is the beginning of the journey to affirmation, a method of scholarship rooted in the collective self and speaks to it without the anxiety regarding what the Western Other thinks or has to say.

Like Chibanda, Mhondera seeks to revitalise Shona tradition so that participants in the culture can build on their tradition and realise visions of a new and better world order. The central concern in this the poem is that the future must be rooted in the best traditions. The two voices in the poem are committed to working towards decolonising the African mind, which is the first step towards freeing the African from cultural bondage. Clarke (1994) notes that in order to control people, one must first have control over their thoughts, and how they perceive their history and culture. Once they are ashamed of their history and culture, prison chains are not necessary. What Clarke is asserting is that people who are dominated by people from other cultures are as good as prisoners; it is therefore, these invisible shackles that the poets seek to untie.

In the poem, Mhondera is committed to "transforming spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them. It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity ... the veritable creation of new men" Fanon (1968, 36). The voice in the poem maintains that tradition signposts the course of action for the future; hence *tose tinokura mutsika kubva ipapo*. ("as we get into the future we are informed by tradition"). What the poet is emphasising is that cultural imperialism is failing African people because they cannot define themselves as a unique people among other cultures. Self-definition and self-naming tend to empower, while on the contrary, aping others produces weakened people. The overarching idea in the poem finds resonance in Senghor (1975, 594) as quoted by wa Thiong'o (1987), that "culture is inside and outside, above and beneath all human activities: it is the spirit that animates them, that gives a civilization its unique style." The persona is against wholesale negation of the Shona past, because that is a sure way to the demise of the Shona. The persona affirms endogeneity through reference to culture as *dzinde* ("anchor"); to imply that it is the centre that holds everything together. Culture is seen as a vital force from which inspiration must be drawn.

It is apparent that what the poet is arguing for is not a sterile worship of the past, but a realisation that contemporary times have their own challenges. The poem is indeed a fundamental contribution to an African renaissance; and satisfies Chinodya's (1999, 331) argument that:

The role of the arts must no longer be merely to preserve traditions for the edification of the uninitiated - but to reinvest, rediscover, reappropriate our culture, to adapt to keep pace with dynamic changes. We should therefore, abandon static forms. We should not be afraid to borrow from within and without. To steal even. Perhaps the only true history of the world is about the endless cycle of cultures pirating one another.

The poets contend that the Shona past (*dzinde*) has to be the determinant of the course of action because “when the values of a people are relegated to the periphery of socio-economic activity, the system becomes irrelevant to the people.” Chiwome (2000, vii–viii). The poets also contend that a people’s culture is not only a lens of perception, but a basis for identity and freedom. Like Chibanda, Mhondera reveals a general detestation with the new world order to the extent that their:

... vision of life is that of conserving tradition, reforming morality, and a general discomfort with the modern world with its culture and technology. [They have] the tendency to see the black man in Senghorian terms - as a man of the eternal dance who is destroyed by the man of technology... the clear lack of a dialectical vision of life, the entrapment within the limiting, transcient, *Zeitgeist* of the epoch, a monolithic conception of cultural nationalism, the conception of revolution in cyclic terms (as endless beginnings), the search for refuge in things past and a heavily moralistic approach to life clearly undermine the potency of [their poems] (Muponde 2000, 45).

The interface of *ubuntu* and leadership is another aspect that finds expression in Shona poetry. Chirikure Chirikure and Ignatius Mabasa are renowned Zimbabwean post-independence poets who have deployed poetry to invoke Shona traditions on leadership and invite contemporary Shona culture participants to reconnect with Shona existential philosophy on leadership.

### Heritage of the Past and the Leadership Factor in Ignatius Mabasa’s “Chairman” and Chirikure Chirikure’s “Tosangana wadzoka”

The two poems that are explicated in this section are “Chairman” and “Tosangana wadzoka” by Ignatius Mabasa and Chirikure Chirikure, respectively. “Chairman” appears in a multi-voiced anthology entitled *Zviri Muchinokoro Kunaka* (“Sweet Melodies”), published in 2004; while Chirikure’s “Tosangana wadzoka” appears in a single authored anthology, *Chamupupuri* (1994) (“Whirlwind”). It must be noted that from the early 1990s, Zimbabwe was experiencing an economic downturn. In such a situation, the two poets take it upon themselves to remind the leadership of what tradition teaches society regarding leadership. By so insisting, the poets are committed to defending the people from miseducated leadership that has been alienated from their cultural dictates.

Mabasa’s “Chairman” is satirical and lampoons leaders who turn into dictators when they assume power. The poet criticises such leaders and reminds them to heed African

cultural projections on leadership. The persona bemoans a disconnection between leaders and their people, an attitude that is to the detriment of even the leader him/herself. The persona notes that complementarity between leaders and the people is an age-old virtue, and that any deviation from that sacred harmonious existence is problematic. The poet criticises leaders who negate African cultural dictates on leadership and challenges them to “take up again (sic) the heritage of the past and to bring it to culmination” Fanon (1968, 213). Leaders are reminded that in order to be relevant and functional in life they must abide by the teachings of the African culture on leadership. Mabasa castigates leaders who think that they are self-complete and self-sufficient and argues for cooperation and unity of purpose. He exposes leaders who, instead of drawing strength from the people, perceive themselves as all-knowing. The persona calls for the application of the African philosophy of existence to bring about the emergence of welfare states as opposed to poor-fare states. The persona presents a situation where some leaders become dictators who are answerable to none but themselves:

<i>Nei? Ngauchirega kuve mubvunzo</i>	(“You should not ask why”)
<i>Nekuti kuvamwe vanhu</i>	(“Because to other people”)
<i>Chikonzero hachina basa</i> (p. 43).	(“There is no need for justification”)
<i>Asi chinhu chinoda kuzivikanwa kuti:</i>	(“But people must know the following”)
<i>Munhu munhu nevanhu</i>	(“A human is human because of other humans”)
<i>Nyika ndini newe</i>	(“We constitute the nation together”)
<i>Ndiripo nekuti iwe uripowo</i>	(“I exist because you also exist”)
<i>Tese tiri vana vevhu, venyika</i>	(“We are all sons of the soil”)
<i>Zvatakati iwe ndiwe chairman</i>	(“When we said you are the leader”)
<i>Hatina kuti chawareva hachikanukwi</i>	(“We did not mean that all you said was fine”)
<i>Nekuti ticharega kukuudza kuti</i>	(“Because we shall not advise you that”)
<i>Chair yawakagara haina rimwe gumbo</i>	(“The chair that you are sitting on has a broken leg”)
<i>Dzoke wodonha uchitiwira, tokuvara tese</i>	(“Then you fall down injuring yourself and even us”)

Mabasa launches a scathing attack on leaders who deliberately obstruct dialogue, which is necessary to “constructing the good and sustainable society and world we all want and deserve to live in” (Karenga 2016, A6). Mabasa exposes and attacks authoritarian regimes that thrive on selfishness and greed. Mabasa bemoans a situation where, “instead of benefitting from cultural hybridization, post-independence Africa saw the rise of authoritarian regimes, which adapted colonial structures and knowledge systems to suit their selfish ends.” (Chiwome 2000, viii). Mabasa castigates leaders who treat people as objects who are to be controlled by the leader by challenging miseducated leaders

to tap from the wisdom embedded in their culture. Instead of shunning cooperation, as the leader in the poem does, the proverb, *munhu munhu navanhu* emphasises complementarity. This means that the alienated leader in the poem is renegeing on the dictates of African philosophy that

every member should visibly participate in society and not disappear in the whole. All this has a bearing on government. Officials should know the people they are serving and government should be in the service of values rooted in humanity. (Shutte 1992, as quoted by Prinsloo 1998, 43).

Chirikure Chirikure is synonymous with the task of reminding leaders to safeguard the relationship between themselves and the citizens. Chirikure's *Tosangana wadzoka* ("We meet when you return") satirises leaders whose leadership styles are not premised on the African philosophy of *ubuntu*. Chirikure expresses the view that by dislodging and pushing people to marginal sites leaders plot their own demise. To the poet, a leader is only good when there is unity of purpose between him/her and the people that he/she is leading. Chirikure notes that the people will legitimise and strengthen the leader's position in power only if there is complementarity between the leader and his or her subjects. Chirikure exposes the individualistic nature of leadership, which is contrary to African culture and worldview:

<i>Wati zomba kumanhengenya ikoko,</i>	("You are comfortable at the top")
<i>Zviri pano pasi hauchakwanisi kuzviona</i>	("You cannot see what is happening at the bottom")
<i>Isu mazwi ashoshoma, kuedza kukusheedza</i>	("We are almost losing our voices trying to call you")
<i>Tiri kuona mujuru uri kuno zasi kwatiri</i>	("We see termites at the bottom")
<i>Uri kumunya mapango emanera augere.</i> (p. 44).	("Termites which are destroying the ladder you are sitting on")

Mabasa also notes that leaders who do not situate their leadership styles in African culture end up degenerating into dictators; because it is only their ideas and interests that prevail over the needs and wants of the people. Authoritarian leadership is cast as a manifestation of the negation of *ubuntu*, which is tantamount to nullifying collectivism and participatory and cooperative management.

The two poems stress the critical need to ensure that the bond between the people and leaders is strengthened and never be destroyed by a false pretense to knowing everything on the part of leaders. Mabasa and Chirikure lampoon such victims of miseducation, who in turn, victimise the people. Individualistic tendencies tend to result from miseducation of leaders and to Chinweizu (1987, xii), this is:



...a miseducation which, under the mystique of “modernizing” [leaders] into some “civilized” condition, work[s] to infect the [leaders] with an intellectual meningitis that would twist [their] cultural spine, and rivet [their] admiring gaze upon Europe and the West. It [is] miseducation which [seeks] to withhold from [leaders] the memory of our true African past and to substitute instead an ignorant shame for whatever travesties Europe chose to present as the African past. It is a miseducation which [seeks] to quarantine [leaders] from all influences, ancient as well as contemporary, which did not emanate from, or meet the imperial approval of Western “civilization.” It [is] a miseducation, which by encouraging [leaders] to glorify all things European, and by teaching me a low esteem for and negative attitudes towards things African, sought to cultivate in [leaders] that kind of inferiority complex... a miseducation [which] sought thereby to indoctrinate [leaders] with the colonizer’s ideology...

Individualism breeds discord between the people and their leaders, which is detrimental to collective progress. Such leaders are challenged to “govern with the people and for the people” (Fanon 1968, 180).

Leaders who are uprooted from their cultural traditions are depicted as threats to harmony and peace in Africa. The two poems are dedicated to retrieving and deploying the philosophy of *ubuntu* to reconnect African leadership with that philosophy, for the good of both the leader and the people. By so insisting, African leaders are relevant and effective and are seen as guarantors of the emergence of welfare states. Mabasa and Chirikure also use their voices to affirm endogeneity by reasserting the critical role of history to any society’s transcendence.

## INVOKING HISTORY IN THE SEARCH FOR A RIGHTFUL PLACE IN THE WORLD

*Zvichida* (“Maybe”), a poem by Mabasa aptly captures the disillusionment that engulfs society, despite attaining political independence; amidst promises of a welfare state. Against the economic decline in post-independence Zimbabwe, the poet lampoons society for failing to further Nehanda’s vision and mission of resistance and struggle. Against the crisis that Zimbabwe went through from 2000 to 2010, the poet attributes the continued decline to failure to draw lessons from the past. The poet challenges the people to reflect seriously on what they can possibly learn from father figures in Zimbabwean history. The voice in the poem is therefore, saddened by the failure of the Zimbabwean populace to learn from legends such as Nehanda, Kaguvi and Sororenzou Murenga. Against the unprecedented decline, Zimbabweans are challenged to reconnect with the great heroes of Zimbabwe for transcendence. The poem goes as follows:

<i>Dzimwe nguva</i>	("Sometimes")
<i>Nerimwe zuva</i>	("One day")
<i>Muchagara pasi</i>	("You will sit down")
<i>Mumumvuri</i>	("In a shade")
<i>odzikisa pfungwa Mug</i>	("And seriously think")
<i>Mukarangarira</i>	("And remember")
<i>Mbuya Nehanda</i>	("The legendary Nehanda")
<i>Avo vakati</i>	("Who said")
<i>Kuvana vevhu</i>	("To the sons of the soil")
<i>Kuna Sororenzou Murenga</i>	("To Sorenzou Murenga")
<i>Kuna Kaguvi gamba</i>	("To Kaguvi, the hero")
<i>Tarirai varungu vatiseka</i>	("Look, whites have demeaned us")
<i>Simukai, torai zvombo</i>	("Rise and take up arms")
<i>Tarirai varungu vatirozva</i>	("Look, the whites have dispossessed us of our heritage")
<i>Honai varungu vatishora</i>	("Look, the whites look down upon us!")
<i>Kana zita raNehanda matokanganwa</i>	("And you have forgotten about Nehanda")
<i>Nekuti chimurenga chakapfuura</i>	("Because the war is over")
<i>Kana kuti aive ani, makanganwa</i>	("You have forgotten even her role in the struggle")
<i>Kana kuti akafira chii, muchaziva?</i>	("You have forgotten what Nehanda died for")
<i>Nhasi Zimbabwe iya yadhogodha</i>	("Now Zimbabwe has rotten")
<i>Nevasvetasimba vadvinyiriri</i>	("Because of exploiters, the oppressors")
<i>Zvave zvimwechete zvakafira Nehanda</i> (p.32).	("It is as exactly the same as what Nehanda died for")

The poet presents a nation that is gripped by serious challenges and chastises society for ignoring the lessons from Nehanda and others. Confronted with hyperinflation and the resultant problems, history is cast as an important guiding light in the search for a breakthrough. The voice in the poem is against the negation of life-affirming history. To the persona, problems are best understood and confronted through an appreciation of history. A society confronted with economic challenges has no choice but to excavate and draw inspiration from the great heroes of the nation. Clarke (1997) aptly observes the following regarding the importance of history:

The ultimate purpose of history and history teaching is to use a people's talent to develop an awareness and a pride in themselves so that they can create better instruments for living together with other people. This sense of identity is the stimulation for all of a people's honest and creative efforts. A people's relationship to their heritage is the same as the relationship of a child to its mother ... History is a clock that people use to tell their time of day. It is a compass that they use to find themselves on the map of human geography. It also tells them where they are. Most importantly, an understanding of history tells a people where they still must go, and what they still must be.

The poem is actually a challenge and an invitation to people to glean on their past in order to tap from their abundant and life-affirming heritage of resistance and struggle in order to be counted among the people of the world.

Mabasa presents a gloomy picture of Zimbabwe, which is said to be in decay (*yadhogodha*). The persona seems to argue that deterioration can only be met with active and optimistic struggle for a better human condition, as this is exactly what history teaches the people. Mabasa immerses Zimbabwean people in their history, for them to extract important lessons from it; lessons that can lead to a liberated identity, which is defined by well-being, justice and freedom. Mabasa presents Zimbabwe as a "rotten" society, which has failed to learn from past events. Reconnecting with heroes is seen as an indispensable step towards creating a more humane life-world.

Chirikure's *Europe Vakomana!* exposes the notorious and racist perceptions of Africa and Africans, that were produced by Europeans. Chirikure notes that Africans have been denied their history; and in the event that there is some version of African history that Europeans came up with; that so-called history only serves to keep Africans down. The persona notes that Europeans notoriously created a "tradition" of African humanity, which is defined by chaos as a result of ethnic conflicts. In fact, Europeans viewed Africa (and some still do) as uncivilised and a land of all unimaginable bad things. The poet notes that these myths about Africa were a subject of study; and in the process, the African was taught to despise anything African. The poet exposes the devastating effects of Eurocentrism. The persona uses his voice to rewrite history and contribute to the reconstruction and restoration of African humanity. wa Thiongo observes that African people did not hear of culture from Europeans, but that they had a culture, poetry and dignity even before the coming of the white man. wa Thiongo (1981, 22) states:

African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans, that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry, and above all they had dignity.

Chirikure captures the Eurocentric distortion of African humanity, which casts Africa as an uncivilized continent in a state of chaos; and yet the indisputable truth is that Europeans "were the last branch of the human family to emerge into that arena called civilization" (Clarke 1994, xv). The poet is protesting against racial prejudice, which

paves a way to neocolonial domination. Chirikure exposes the white supremacist system that peddled lies to confuse the world.

<i>Maitidaro neikowo nhai vakomana?</i>	("Why did you do that to us?")
<i>Kutinyorera here ndima pamarudzi edu!</i>	("To write about us")
<i>Hanzi zvakabvira kare zvicharamba zvakadaro</i>	("That it started long back and will remain like that")
<i>Iri dzinza neroro dzinza kusangana, kutatsurana</i>	("The alleged menace of ethnic conflicts It is deplorable!")

Chirikure exposes and resists the European view of Africa as a continent where chaos reigns supreme. In view of this distorted version of the African past, Chirikure sees the role of the poet as that of telling the African story; deconstructing the myths, while in the process reconstructing and recreating humanity. The poet is a voice of "Africa explaining itself, speaking for itself, and interpreting its past...an Africa rejecting the image of its past as drawn by the artists of imperialism" (wa Thiongo 1986, 2). He contends that rewriting history with a view to providing the truth about Africa is a step towards the decolonisation of the African mind; and this provides a solid base for other forms of freedom. The poem is therefore, a repudiation of Eurocentric notions of Africa. It is a challenge to arch racist notions where:

The Africa that is portrayed in books by Western ethnologists and historians is the Africa of the savage Africans who did nothing, developed nothing, or created nothing historical. There are the stereotyped racist conceptions about Africa—the propaganda angle of the Christian missionaries, learned historians, ethnographers, and explorers. (Onyeweunyi in wa Ngugi 2003, 29)

The poet emphasises the necessity of resisting racial domination and rewriting history as follows:

<i>Chimbopedzeranai madaka enyu ikoko</i>	("Settle your conflicts among yourselves")
<i>Isu kuno tichironedzera njere nezvinyoreso</i>	("While we write our own history")
<i>Tiwane kusiira vana vedu nhoroondo</i>	("So that we leave correct history through writing")
<i>Nhoroondo yakarongetedzwa pasina ugube</i>	("History which is free from the racist distortions")
<i>Ndzivo mangwana vagoziva kupa Nehanda bute (p.121)</i>	("In order for our children to know their traditions")

The poet can be regarded as an activist in the quest for decolonising the mind of an African by way of re-writing history—because as Chirikure seems to argue, the

first step for Africans to liberate themselves from European domination is for them to be liberated psychologically. Chirikure reveals the “uncompromising aversion to the ‘epistemology of alterity’”—the ‘othering’ of Africa and Africans - and the advancement of scholarship grounded in centering of African ontological experiences” (Adesina 2008, 133). Chirikure contends that Africans have to be liberated from the inferiority complex before anything else because “for instance European and American [strategies] tend to confuse African people and paralyze their will to act. (Furusa 2000, 34). The poet regards re-writing history as the first step towards liberating the African. Therefore, “Europe Vakomana! is an act of demythologisation, reconstruction and recreation of Africa, and the insistence of the poet therefore, aims at renovating and restoring African humanity. In fact, the decolonisation of the African mind is an act of psychological liberation, which provides fertile ground for real political and economic independence. Chirikure contends that imperialist cultures, especially the Western culture, are aimed at annihilating African people’s creativity and liberation; and in the process, relegate them to the periphery. Chiwome and Mguni’s assertion is instructional:

When a people’s culture and history are destroyed, their vision gets blurred. When wisdom and knowledge come from above, creativity gets reduced as communities lose their latitude to pursue their objectives. (2000, 66)

The poet sees writing as part of the struggle for equality, freedom and justice among Africans and other cultures of the world. He can thus be credited for his observation that Africans suffer a cultural and psychological crisis—and hence, emphasises that “Africans are people in the way the Americans, Europeans, Asians, et cetera are people. Africans are not some strange beings with unpronounceable names and impenetrable minds” Achebe (2009, 126). Chirikure’s poem makes a positive contribution towards humanising and harmonising both Africans and other peoples of the world. He is conscious that a decolonised mind provides fertile ground for self-definition and self-naming.

## CONCLUSION

The article set out to interrogate the expression of endogeneity in selected post-independence Shona poetry. Couched in the poems explicated in the paper is the contestation of the epistemology of alterity, which leads to cultural, political and economic underdevelopment. Manifesting in the poetry is also an uncompromising repudiation of the epistemology of alterity. Endogeneity is abundantly embedded in the poetry in such a manner that history is seen as a guiding light in the search for respect in the world, as well as a tool for achieving liberation and development that the people are searching for. The voices in the poems; analysed in this chapter, reveal detestation with uncritical celebration of European culture. There is a deliberate attempt to reposition the Shona culture and move away from the Western culture that has a

tendency to confuse and hinder Africa's progress. The ideology of Eurocentrism and its agenda of subverting other cultures is exposed. The primacy of culture in informing and guiding leadership is also reiterated. It is apparent from the analysis of the poems in this rendition that learning from *ubuntu* is a sure way of ensuring relevant and culturally-grounded leadership. In the final analysis, the poets reiterate the imperative to invoke history at all times; including when society is confronted with problems. To the poets the heritage of the past remains crucial to the progress of the people and gaining respect from other peoples of the world.

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