Querying the Colonial Factor in Zimbabwe's Prime Tourist Destination Toponym

[1]Patricia Mumbengegwi; [2]Jacob Mapara; [1]Candida C. Chipotereke; [1] Odmell Chipungu and [1]Doreen Mtanga

[1] School of Hospitality &Tourism, Chinhoyi University of Technology

[2]Institute of Lifelong Learning & Development Studies, Chinhoyi University of Technology

ABSTRACT

The naming of Zimbabwe's prime tourist destinations has remained underexplored in tourism research, despite its centrality to cultural identity and heritage representation. The majority of these destinations, such as Victoria Falls, Kariba Dam, and Hwange National Park, bear colonial or anglicised names that obscure indigenous meanings and histories. While a wave of toponymic reforms during post-independence Zimbabwe (1980s–1990s) swept through schools, roads, and government buildings, tourist destinations were largely exempted, signalling the persistence of an "imperial hook" designed to attract traditional international markets. This study was motivated by the need to interrogate how colonial toponyms destabilise the cultural and traditional rubric of Zimbabwe's tourism landscape and to question the silences in renaming policies. Using a qualitative approach, the research examined the cultural, historical, and political implications of naming practices in major tourist sites. Findings reveal that colonial naming practices continue to distort heritage meanings and weaken local ownership of tourism resources. The study promotes a decolonial approach that prefers the use of endonyms to exonyms, thereby consolidating community identity and fostering socio-economic development. In addressing the colonial legacy of tourism toponyms, the research contributes to ongoing debates on decolonisation, heritage preservation, and sustainable tourism development in Zimbabwe.

Keywords*: destination, toponyms, endonyms, exonyms, onomastics, toponomastics*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is about cultural exchange(s) achieved through visiting places, physically and more recently, virtually. These places, termed 'destinations' are an amalgam of attractions that need to be identified before, during and after the fact. Recognition of these attractions is done by among other means, names. Storey (2011) asserts that place names have become routine in our everyday lives and as a result they are largely taken for granted. We never think about them or the processes underlying place-naming that divulge information on the social, economic, political forces and power relations that surround them (Caiazzo, Coates & Azaryahu, 2020).

The study of names is termed 'onomastics' and one of its principal branches is 'toponymy' which is the study of place names (Smith, 2016). Tourism is about places with names, hence the two are inter-related. According to onomasticians, names come in different forms and languages, but generally play the same roles, the main ones being identification, memorialization and historicization. Tourism is predominantly about the memorialization of travel experiences. Names of places also go through cycles, changing continuously as society, language, culture and politics evolve or devolve. Ainiala, Saarelma and Sjöblomnames (2016) put this down to the openness of the naming system. Some places have maintained their original names or their 'associative' or 'habitation' names, as indigenous people often gave appellations that related to certain events or manifestations of natural phenomena. Some toponyms have changed progressively in order to appeal to the targeted audience and others are corrupted versions of the original. Others have changed because of altered political circumstances and fortunes, while some are a result of the embracing of indigenous communities' rights, e.g., in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa.

Zimbabwe is an African country with several ethnicities and each has its naming conventions as regards places. Ideally the names of places should have cultural undertones and be in one of the several languages spoken in the country. The country was under British colonial rule for almost ninety years (12 September 1890-17 March 1980). After her independence in 1980, the tourism industry was primarily run by multinational companies like Southern Sun Hotels of Rhodesia and white Rhodesian families who owned smaller properties. As the country's legacy dictated from 1980 till the late 1990s, the traditional tourist source markets were dominated by visitors from Europe, particularly those from France, Germany and the United Kingdom. This market favoured certain places with specific attractions and these became the mainstay of Zimbabwean tourism. The history of these attractions was reflected by the anglicised and imposed toponyms, for example, the Victoria Falls. A classic case of colonial naming was a silencing act done through dispossession and laying claim to land already occupied by people who peddled the lie of a terra nullius.

From 1982 through to the 1990's there was a toponymic revolution as the new majority Government began to look into changing the names of places into local ones. Some suggestions were for new names while others were of the idea of going back to the original toponyms that existed in 1890 and subsequent years as the colonisers renamed spaces after dispossessing the Black majority. Schools, roads and buildings were the targets of this exercise; however, tourist attractions were not discussed. This can be alluded to the desire of mainly tour operators to

maintain an 'imperial hook', in an attempt to sustain the traditional tourist markets. This probably explains why the area of *toponomastics* has largely been ignored by tourism researchers in Zimbabwe. Resultantly, the toponymic characterizations of some of Zimbabwe's tourist attractions will be discussed in this paper. Whilst there are several tourist destinations, this paper focuses on the following: Victoria Falls, Kariba, Hwange and the Eastern Highlands.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although they are of considerable cultural and brand importance, the Zimbabwean names of the country's top tourist destinations Victoria Falls, Kariba Dam and National Park, and Hwange National Park have garnered scant attention from scholars. Discussions surrounding tourism have largely revolved around economic indicators at the expense of the politically and culturally sensitive ground of naming places (Basik, 2020; Nash, 2016). This is despite names in essence conditioning visitors' understandings and destination narratives to define meanings tourists bring to places (Caiazzo et al., 2020).

This deficit is particularly stark in Zimbabwe, where certain toponyms encapsulate colonial legacies, linguistic bias, and historical erasure. Nevertheless, place names are highly effective as identity, ownership, and heritage markers, concerns upon which Decolonial aims and community-based tourism (Storey, 2011; Nash, 2016) revolve. A recent Victoria Falls study illustrates how colonial pasts continue to structure tourism value chains, perpetuating participation asymmetries and benefit appropriation (Geoforum, 2024). There is thus the pressing necessity for qualitative analysis of Zimbabwean toponymy of tourism, particularly from postcolonial and critical toponymy approaches (Pfukwa, 2007; Raharjo et al., 2024), to establish how naming discourses constitute local identity as well as attract tourists globally.

MAIN OBJECTIVE

The study sought to critically examine the toponymy of Zimbabwe's tourist attractions, with particular focus on the cultural, historical, and political dynamics that inform their naming.

METHODOLOGY

Firth's (1957) hypothesis that words are best understood by the company they keep was applied in this research, proposing distributional approaches to meaning. Collocation analysis, as

suggested by Wideman and Masuda (2018), was employed to examine the names of tourist destinations since co-occurring place names could reveal discourses of identity, ideology, and power. These views are shared by Arrous and Bigon (2022), Düzgün (2021), and Mapara and Nyota (2016), who argue that naming patterns offer insights into social practices and historical events.

Plural toponymies generated by colonial manipulations of indigenous naming conventions in Zimbabwe remain employed in defining tourism identity and stakeholder perceptions (Rose-Redwood et al., 2018). The research applied content analysis of maps, gazetteers, archives, and reports to examine this. Analysis continued in the discourse-historical approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Wodak, 2015), placing names in broader socio-cultural and historical contexts. The speech act theory (Austin, 1960; Searle, 1975) was also used, and naming as performative acts of authority and ownership (Mapara & Mapara, 2018).

UNDERLYING PROCESSES OF PLACE-NAMING

Gumbo, Ndana and Chebanne (2020) revealed that altering names for tourism destinations has the potential to obliterate the history and culture of a certain locality, depriving posterity of the heritage associated with the place. Hence, giving a new name for the place might neglect the story completely, and most people would disregard it as they will not be familiar with the account. However, those people who have roots in it, and know the story, altering the name abolishes something about the place' (Gumbo et al. 2020). Names are used to appropriate and mark out space. Research has shown that they can also be used to include or exclude certain categories of people. For example, naming a site can indicate to operators for whom were the tourist sites meant. If they were meant for Black domestic tourists, the naming, infrastructure and superstructure would give a clue.

Toponymic enquiry remains an undersubscribed phenomenon, with research on the colonial factor in the naming of tourism destinations still missing in the toponym discourse (Arrous & Bigon, 2022; Woodman, 2015). So, many scholars around the discourse have presented varied views with others seemingly agreeing that names merely label objects they denote and have less bearing on people's views of an area. Taking this perspective would blindly mean that tourism destinations, in this context do not have an influence on host communities' attachment to tourism or tourists' decision-making processes when it comes to destination choices or revulsion due to colonial genocidal acts reflected in names like Massacre Bay (Jalata, 2013;

Markus and Marcus, 2001). However, various scholars have so far challenged this argument (Arrous & Bigon, 2022; Mashiri, Chabata & Mamvura, 2017; Giraut & Houssay-Holzschuch, 2016; Makoni, Makoni, & Mashiri, 2007; Burnard, 2001). Those who problematise such a view highlight the symbolic functions of naming. Arrous and Bigon (2022) argued that toponyms reveal geopolitics and power relations involved in the usage and management of such places, which is also the focus of this study, which seeks to assess the extent to which the tourism destinations in Zimbabwe were really meant for the local, Zimbabwean tourists through names that were apportioned by the colonisers. Authors such as Caiazzo et al. (2020) contend that names attached to these tourism destinations can imply reflective identities, act as rudiments of detachment and/ attachment and dependence, and reflect collective values and social customs. Giraut and Houssay-Holzschuch (2016) emphasise that place names act as powerful elements of inclusion and exclusion. They can also be celebrations of bigotry and arrogance (Jalata, 2013). Research so far signals prevailing discourses that echo diverse representations, which calls for research on toponyms as it affects each sector than merely a generic exercise

Recent researches seem to focus on place naming as an authoritative act (Ndlovu, 2021; Basik, 2020). This entails that naming is a social practice embedded in social and political struggles. Thus, it is worthwhile for anyone who would want to study and understand the tourism trends and development models in Zimbabwe's major tourism destinations to be fully aware of the history and politics of their current names. One can also be forgiven for concluding that a place name has an impact on a place's development model hence, if there is a need to alter a development model, possibly towards a more inclusive one, in the context of tourism, then policy makers really have to rethink these tourism destination names. Such a critical turn of scholarly research has birthed an imperative new interest in the politics of naming by which essentialist views to affixing stable identities to particular spaces that were implicit in the traditional scholarship on place names are exposed and interrogated. Emerging now is a broadened view of research, which positions research on toponymy within the context of broader debates in critical human geography (Mangena, 2023; Ndlovu, 2021). According to Arrous and Bigon (2022), places are reinterpreted as palimpsests which can be re- and over-inscribed, demonstrating that any place-naming regimes are inherently unbalanced and historically contingent. Toponymic engravings prompt and accompany ideological struggles and power shifts. Thus, this paper on the colonial naming factor, with a specific focus on the tourism destinations in Zimbabwe seeks to interrogate local and international ideological struggles, as well as the power shifts and their impacts on Zimbabwe's tourism performance.

CRITICAL TOPONYMIC THEORY

This study was informed by the critical toponymic theory. According to Wideman and Masuda (2018) and Tent (2015), the critical toponymic theory examines toponyms in the context of power struggles and political situations over places and place naming. In prior studies, Perko et al. (2017) purported that, individually or severally, people never have the same privileges to name places, thus the use of critical toponymic theory in examining the naming systems for major tourism destinations in Zimbabwe is justifiable. As such, one would expect that mainly the interests and ideologies of only a few privileged to bequeath names tend to inform the selection of place and consequently the ideologies of those unprivileged to bestow names are suppressed. As reiterated by Home (2021), Basik and Rahautsou (2019) and Nhongo and Masuku (2012), toponyms may be replete with questioned histories, a state of affairs that does not accord impartiality and diverse interpretations and sentiments, which therefore makes onomastics a contested arena in any discipline. The authors of this article have brought together an assortment of conceptually insightful and thought-provoking case studies that deal with the hegemonic and queried practices of naming. This conceptual paper builds on the work of scholars like Düzgün (2021) and Basik and Rahautsou (2019), who scrutinize the colonial clampdown on indigenous values. It does this by exploring how nationalist ideologies are consecrated through the rechristening of cities and the mapping of topographic features, contributing to the creation of commodified neoliberal urbanscapes. In addition, the paper explores the ongoing contestation over identity and place, as well as the emergence of fluid postcolonial identities. In this case, however, the authors opted to utilise the critical toponymic theory to expose the ways in which place names could have been used to claim territories and remove linguistic traces of native groups in Zimbabwe's major tourism destinations which for long has remained an orphan on the research radar.

PLACE-NAMING UNDER IMPERIAL RULE

Places were named in honour of the colonial metropolis (Boehmer, 2005; Room, 1989), which in this case was London and other places in the U.K. in general. Some were named after colonies or as celebrations of places in other colonies like Auckland and Sydney (Mapara and Nyota, 2016). For instance, Salisbury (Harare) was named after Lord Salisbury who was British Prime Minister when Rhodes was granted the Royal Charter to occupy what is today, Zimbabwe. It was then dubbed the Sunshine and Jacaranda City celebrating a foreign person to Africans and trees that were also foreign to Africa. But then the target markets were never

Africans but Whites who preferred to call themselves Europeans. Names like Troutbeck which are a combination of two nouns *trout* and *beck* are a product of a celebration of North American trout fish and the term for a fresh water stream, a beck hence Troutbeck. Why would one name a place Montclair? Who would benefit by associating with that place. Fellow Whites, mainly those that understand French would know that it means a clear mountain, but the question is which mountain? Is it Nyangani? But Nyangani is not always clear because of thick mists that most times cover the crest of the jewel. Interestingly, this is also as a place name that has a namesake in North America, specifically the United States.

ZIMBABWE TOURIST DESTINATIONS

Zimbabwe as a country is a prime tourist destination with an array of attractions, both natural and human-made. In the 1980s and early 1990s it was in the top ten destinations to visit in Africa. Some of the major attractions popular with the traditional source markets which have stood the test of time are as follows: Kariba, Victoria Falls, Eastern Highlands and Hwange to name a few.

The traditional source markets

This sector consisted of the above-mentioned European countries namely: Germany, France and the United Kingdom (UK). By default, this includes countries like Australia, the United States of America (USA) and Canada that are inextricably linked to the UK through colonialism. These countries accounted for 80% of tourist arrivals from 1980-1999 (*Zimbabwe Tourism Authority Report,* 2001). The other market was and continues to be South Africa. Below is a discussion of some names of top Zimbabwean destinations. They are not in any way discussed according to levels of prominence.

Kariba

Kariba is a town to the north of Zimbabwe. It is situated on the south bank of the Zambezi River and built on the twin hills of Botererkwa overlooking Kariba Gorge and Lake Kariba (one of the world's largest man-made lakes). The town was established in 1957 by the then Federal Power Board to accommodate Kariba Dam's construction staff as well as settlers (Mashingaidze, & Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation and Tugwi Mukosi Multidisciplinary Research Institute, 2021). The name Kariba is said to mean where the waters have been trapped *kariva* in the local Tonga language (Hang'ombe, 2015). During the five-year construction period of the dam, the BaTonga people living in the areas to be flooded were

relocated, as were animals marooned by the formation of the lake. Kariba became one of Zimbabwe's major tourist resorts largely because of its location on the lake and proximity to several national parks, including Mana Pools National Park, which was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1984. The town itself is also a National Park and some of its residents say in this area, animals have more rights than humans. It in some way therefore, becomes a place where people are as much as the trapped water in the dam are also trapped in this huge wildlife sanctuary.

Language appropriation and distortion in the naming of Kariba

Inasmuch as the bulk of literature points, the name Kariba appears to be a mere distortion by the mispronunciation of the indigenous noun term *Kariva* which literally translates to the 'the trap'. This would make sense to many as water was trapped between two mountains to form Lake Kariba, thus '*the trap'*, would mean where water was trapped. However, looking at the literacy levels of the so-called distorters, Pfukwa (2003) argued that these foreigners could bring in some names that have a symbolic meaning of their own in the name of distortion. For instance, in Arabic the term Kariba exists as a noun, which means nearer to God (Allah in the Arabic translation). Kariba's beauty and serenity are so stunning that one might feel nearer to God. Furthermore, the destination's association with the Zambezi River God *'Nyaminyami'* may also have been influential, as Nyaminyami played a significant role in the livelihoods of the BaTonga, making such a meaning arguably undeniable.

Scholarly reviews show that the term *Kariva* is a distortion in itself. Insights from Dewey (1991) inform that some of the Korekore people were also connected to the Zambezi River, in the area now called Kariba, before the Tonga settlers displaced them. Back then, the greater part of the place on which the water was trapped to form Kariba Dam was originally named *Karuva (literally translating to 'a flower')*, named after a chief's daughter. Therefore, the shift from *Karuva* to *Kariva* could have been intentional and meant to shift the matriarchal power reflected in the original name towards a more neutral one. While doing so, such a shift could reflect power imbalances between males and females in developing countries, where the elevation of women to positions of authority remains a challenge. This is something that is arguably the result of colonial patriarchy. Now that Karuva had a hive of activities, which included power generation and tourism and recreation, it may have been seen as unbefitting for the Lake and the town to carry a feminine name.

Victoria Falls

Source: Moore and Cotterill (2014, p. 145).

The Victoria Falls are Zimbabwe's premier tourist destination, attracting an average of eight hundred thousand visitors per year (African World Heritage Fund Tourism Report 2, 2015; Nature based Tourism Africa Report, 2022). They are positioned almost halfway along the mighty Zambezi River's 2700 km journey from the source in north western Zambia to the mouth on the Indian Ocean. Here, the river plunges headlong into a 100m vertical chasm spanning the full one-and-a-half-kilometre width of the river, creating the biggest curtain of falling water in the world and also one of the seven natural wonders of the world (Burrett & Mateke, 2018). The power of the falls is awesome with the highest ever flow recorded in 1958. This constant pounding by the currents of the mighty Zambezi has, over the millennium, cut through the rock faults and fissures and carved out eight successive precipices (and now the ninth has begun). The first inhabitants of the surrounding areas about some 1.5 million years ago, could have seen a different Victoria Falls to the one seen today. Being one of the greatest physical spectacles in Africa and beyond, it stands to reason that its naming has attracted so much interest from us humans over time and therefore, the toponym for the area could be steeped in history and mystery.

Language appropriation and distortion in the naming of Victoria Falls

The breath-taking landscape was appropriated and turned into a playground for Whites, which celebrated colonial adventure, science and modernity while commemorating a past generation of explorers and 'discoverers'. Several ethnic groups claim ownership of the Victoria Falls and hence have put forth various names to the space. The Lozi/ Kololo (Zimbabwean side) name

for the Falls is Mosi-Oa-Tunya meaning, '*the smoke that thunders.*' Contesting ownership from the Zambian side are the Leya people, who actually claim that their naming for the same Falls has a descriptive backing. The Tonga-Leya name for the Falls is *Shungu Namutitima* which literally translates to *'Water that boils/Boiling Water that smokes'* which seemingly suggest a much closer connection to the falls as a geological feature that is associated with water or rain thus Shungu meaning boiling water as opposed to the Lozi toponym which associates the falls with fire as reiterated in the name, *'the smoke that thunders.'* Minor contestants to the place name are the Nambya who call the falls Chinotimba, translating to '*the thundering place*' which Hang'ombe et al. (2019) thought was because of the tribe's detachment from the falls, where they could only hear the roars and see the mist from a distance. The Ndebele name for the giant waterfall is aManz' aThunqayo '*steaming or boiling water.*'

Even though there are claims of detachment of other ethnic groups from the falls as revealed in their names for the falls, the naming practices could have been influenced by each group's use of the falls. For the Leya, the most reminiscent aspect of the waterfall is also known as *'Syuungwe mufu'* literally translates to 'mist of the dead', because it was associated with the memory of their ancestors. The *Syungwe mufu* included three places, which are first, the foot of the Falls, now known as the 'Boiling pot'. Here, offerings were hurled into the boiling pot over the lip of the falls from one of the islands hanging on the edge, but people also crawled down to the pit itself. History has it that this boiling pot was a focal point for most tribes around the falls, which could have informed their naming of the place, associating it with smoke, thundering, and steam (Mangena, 2023). Myths also suggest that there is an invisible monster that resided in the boiling pot, regarded as a River God by nineteenth European century 'explorers' (the same Nyaminyami of Kariba). However, all the surrounding ethnic groups associated the boiling pot with commanding ancestral spirits that needed pacification, and was a place where God could be approached (McGregor, 2003).

According to McGregor (2003), another significant ritual spot was at the topmost part of the waterfall and was known as *'Sambadwazi'* or 'cleanse disease'. The place lies on the upper lip of the Falls by the eastern cataract where the water swings round and over the edge of the gorge, but in doing so it creates a pool where the water does not move swiftly, which made it possible for people to dip themselves. The diseased and plagued jumped into this pool in a cleansing ritual in which they had to allow the garments which they immersed themselves in to be washed away over the waterfall, carrying infection and ill-health with it. The third site with special

meaning was '*Chipusya*', where water for rain requesting and other rituals was drawn. This place was only known to elders and individuals with spiritual powers to draw the water and would do so at dawn when they were unobserved. Of all these names, the one which was popularised is the Mosi-Oa-Tunya. To the Western world, especially the British, it was popularised by David Livingstone who gleaned it from his Kololo guides and companions when they took him to the falls in a canoe. However, instead of leaving the battle for place ownership and naming for the Falls to African ethnic groups, around the place, David Livingstone, in what is typical of most colonialists who include missionaries, named the falls after his potentate (of the then Great Britain during the time extending from 1837-1901) Queen Victoria, thus the modern-day Victoria Falls.

A closer analysis of this 19th century European explorer's naming of the falls, shows that the act could actually be equated to spitting in the faces of the African ancestors. He actually replaced African female royalty associated with the falls with British royalty, an act which would not be permissible in any European territory. One will never find any African royalty being celebrated on European soils. The pain of this affront is further heightened when it is realized that Livingstone was taken to the place by the Kololo who already knew it, like most local inhabitants. Tragically, and in typical European and colonial conceit, her historians harp on the untruth that Livingstone discovered the Victoria Falls.

 As part of the bid to turn Mosi-Oa-Tunya into a European playground, they replaced the African feminine authority to the falls vested in *'Bedyango'* which in the local Lozi language means 'Gateway to the chief', a title that was always held by a woman. The above title implied royal power to the land, fertility and rain. *Bedyango's* royalty meant that she would lead the plagued to the waterfalls for cleansing during an epidemic (Phiri-Chitungu, 2022), take charge and oversee collection of water for rain requesting from the sacred secret site, handed the new incumbent the symbolic soil as well as handing over the chiefly paraphernalia during chiefs' installations. Further to that, the woman with the title was the only one in whom power was vested to dispose a wicked chief through poisoning. Discarding the symbolism of Mosi-Oa-Tunya meant devaluation of the African female authority and agency. Thus, through the naming processes, local cultural values were overridden and the scenery of the falls was acclimatized. Part of this process included the eviction of inhabitants as earlier explorers (clothed as missionaries) popularised racial imperial and colonist identities in which original ethnic groups featured as a generic exotic or subservient other. This reflects just a small part of

the relations, which is also dependant on fusions and interactions between the coloniser and colonised, and on interactions within and between different local ethnic groups (which was altered under the hegemonic influence of colonial rule).

New symbolic appropriations of the Mosi-Oa-Tunya Falls and the Zambezi (also formerly known as *Kasambabezi* in Tonga, meaning '*only those who know dare bathe')* as a whole from the early twentieth century depended on colonial administrators and royalty. Their blatant disregard for the Afrocentric royalty connected to the falls leads the authors to give a perception that, as an independent country and continent, decoloniality should also be revealed in the naming and popularisation of local names such as the Mosi-Oa-Tunya. One thought may be, the Western tourist should acknowledge and celebrate indigenous Zimbabwean royalty not British or any form of their royalty on the Black's land. Could it be that, it is high time the toponymic ownership of the falls be returned to the rightful owners, who are predominantly Zimbabwe and Zambia, through the renaming of the landscape? Maybe the names such as Livingstone town in Zambia, or David Livingstone statue on the Zimbabwean side should be re-evaluated as the falls were already in use before his "discovering" them. Colonial touristic toponomy has endorsed the placing of unique value on the Western perspective subjugating local own connections to the falls. There may be a critical need for Lozi, Nambya and Leya sculptures and toponymic appropriation around the falls. Places such as the 'Rainforest, David Livingstone's cataract view point, Livingstone Island and the devils pool', all should be replaced with names that celebrate Africanness and decolonisation of tourism sites.

Eastern Highlands

Situated along the Mozambican border is a different region of Zimbabwe which contrasts to the dry savannah in other parts of the country. In the eastern province of Manicaland there are three ranges of hills and mountains, namely; Nyanga (home to Mount Nyangani, the highest mountain in Zimbabwe standing at 2595m), Chimanimani and Bvumba ranges (Clark *et al*, 2017). These are characterised by rolling countryside, green forests, rugged granite peaks, misty valleys, deep gorges, cascading waterfalls, and sparkling rivers and lakes. It is an area of spectacular natural beauty with a cool damp climate making it one of Zimbabwe's top tourist destinations. This area reminded the first European settlers of Scotland, so they named it the 'Eastern Highlands'. The Great Dividing Range in Australia comprising of the main watershed of eastern Australia, a series of plateaus and low mountain ranges roughly paralleling the coasts of Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria for 3,700 km is also called, 'Eastern

Highlands', or 'Eastern Cordillera' (Ranger, 1987). This duplication of names is testimony to the British arrogance, play on power and celebrations of places in other colonies.

The Eastern Highlands is a place of note as it houses the holiday homes of several settlers. Noteworthy is that of Cecil John Rhodes, the leader of the Pioneer Column (the first White settlers in the country), after whom the country Zimbabwe was previously named (Rhodesia). Much of the area under the now 'Nyanga' National Park was the private estate of Rhodes. To this day the hotel at the site is named the 'Rhodes Hotel'. It is a travesty to still venerate his name as Rhodes was responsible for place colonial dispossession and several imperialistic atrocities that still plague the country. One of Rhodes' worst plays was his dying wish to be buried at Matobo (distorted by colonialists to Matopos) an ancestral shrine in Matabeleland, serving as the ultimate slap on the face to all the inhabitants' values and traditional beliefs. Several hotel properties that were established during the colonial period, such as the Leopard Rock in Vumba and the Rhodes Nyanga Hotel, further perpetuate imperialism in the marketing of certain rooms decorated in colonial fashion inviting tourists to come and sleep in the bed that Rhodes or other British royalty slept in. This shows these hotels were named to attract Western tourists and not domestic ones, because who would want to sleep in the bed where their mother was raped? (Mapara, 2017). Figuratively, that is what inviting a local to pay through the nose to experience the colonial master's bed means.

Vumba

Vumba is a favourite destination for more relaxed tourists looking for beauty and quietness among its deep, rich green forests, loping mountains, and valleys (Unwin, 2003). According to Chitotombe, Mhlanga, and Ndlovu (2023), Vumba is a distorted version of Bvumba (which means mist in the local dialect). The location is high in the mountains, where mists can collect at any time of day, shrouding the picturesque scenery, hence the name. The Zimbabwean place name "Vumba" exemplifies how colonization may subtly, and sometimes blatantly, modify indigenous place names, resulting in the loss or transformation of original meaning and cultural value. The anglicised spelling "Vumba" eliminates the characteristic "bv" sound in Shona, a common occurrence in colonial toponymy. This phonetic simplification typically made names easier for English people to pronounce while removing some of their original linguistic character. While "Vumba" continues to widely allude to the "misty" nature, the modest spelling change can be interpreted as a minor but ongoing erasure of the original linguistic integrity. The fact that, the name Vumba prefers the coloniser's phonology to the indigenous one,

automatically results in the loss of deeper cultural nuances. While "mist" is the major meaning, pre-colonial Shona names frequently contained many meanings, such as historical events, spiritual importance, or unique landscape elements (Jenjekwa, 2021; Makondo, 2009). These colonial name distortion tactics convert complicated indigenous names to a single, often superficial, descriptive phrase. This can result in a loss of the rich cultural background embedded in the original name.

In this case, the emphasis on "mist" for Vumba, while accurate, may obscure other, possibly more significant, memories the indigenous communities had with the mountains before colonial intrusion. It reduces the narrative surrounding the location to a single, easily digestible attribute for outsiders. Carter (2024) argued that this newness in place-name phonetics is still used to express colonial power, establish a sense of ownership, and remember colonial personalities or events, frequently at the expense of pre-existing indigenous identities. Even the simplest example of colonial renaming demonstrates how indigenous names were viewed as disposable or irrelevant, establishing a narrative of conquest and supremacy (Nash, 1999). The preservation of "Vumba" is not a relative exception to this pattern.

In the same line, Goitia (2024) suggested that when minor adjustments and distortions are made to place names, it is critical not to overlook the possibilities of exacerbating the concept of othering and exoticism. In most cases, colonial transliterations or descriptions of indigenous names may accidentally "other" the place or endow it with an exoticised, romanticised image that does not reflect its functional or cultural relevance to locals. While "Mountains of the Mist" sounds poetic, colonial narratives might have utilised such phrases to stress the "wild" or "untamed" aspect of African landscapes, fitting into a broader colonial vision that frequently objectified the land and its inhabitants/ owners. This might result in a mismatch between how outsiders view a place (as formed by colonial descriptions) and how indigenous Zimbabwean people understand and experience it. To change these colonial narratives, as a nation, we must return to the ancient place names. The original place names define us as a people; they are infused with rich cultural meanings, deeper links to community values, and an attachment to the local heritage.
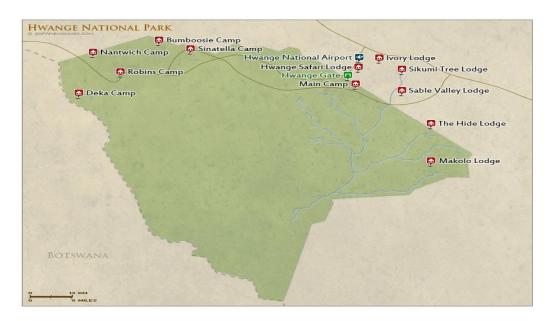
Prince of Wales

Other tourist areas in Manicaland were not exempted from the colonial naming. Prince of Wales View is located on a cliff that overlooks Forbes border post which is Zimbabwe's

gateway to Mozambique and the port city of Beira. The border post is named after Major Patrick William Forbes who was a soldier and administrator of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) through the first decade of its mandate as a Chartered Company. Despite being said to have been a person of great courage and good leadership skills during the march on Bulawayo, his stature crumpled through his failure to capture Lobengula during the Pupu-Shangani battle. This was coupled with the loss of nearly 40 lives during the so-called Shangani Patrol (McCarthy, 2008). What is also interesting in the two names, one related to royalty, and the other one of a person in service of the empire, is the Prince of Wales view, one overlooking a space that marked the border between what was then Portuguese East Africa (now Mozambique) and the Rhodesian possession. The fact that both places have not yet been renamed is a sign that, through such omissions, the Rhodesians continue to celebrate their conquests.

Hwange National Park

Originally, Robins Game Sanctuary belonged to a cattle rancher by the name Robins. Robins turned the ranch into a wildlife preserve because his herds were constantly attacked by lions and leopards. He later gave the sanctuary to the Zimbabwean government in exchange for a water supply and a new house (Haynes, 2014). The park was named after a local Nhanzwa (Nambya) chief. It also turned out to be the royal hunting grounds for King Mzilikazi in the early 19th century, and the Rozvi Changamire before that. The park is located approximately an hour's drive, south of the Mighty Mosi-Oa-Tunya (Victoria Falls). Being the biggest National Park in Zimbabwe, it vaunts of a tremendous collection of wildlife. On an approximate area of 14650 square kilometres, the park gives home to an approximate four hundred bird species and more than a hundred varieties of mammals. Hwange's elephants are world famous and the park has one of the largest elephant populations in the world. Hwange National Park is the largest in Zimbabwe. Hwange, is the only park offering the big five in Zimbabwe. The Park has three distinctive camps and administrative offices namely; Main Camp (which happens to be the largest), Robins and Sinamatella. Below is the map for Hwange National Park.
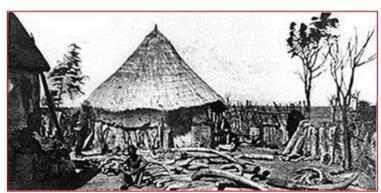
https://www.safaribookings.com/hwange/map

Language appropriation and name contestations in Hwange National Park

Quite a number of place names in Hwange have a colonial background attached. Such names include key places such as Robins Camp, Panda-ma-tenka Road, Nyorka Camp, Nantwich Camp, and Kennedy Vlei pans and Rail Siding, among others. Robins Camp was named after Herbert Robins, a European who bequeathed his land to the government upon his death in 1939. Nyorka Camp is a mere distortion of the Shona name *nyoka*, which means (a) snake(s). Nantwich camp was named after a town in England, while the Kennedy Vlei pans and Rail Siding were named after a white farmer who resided nearby in 1917. The name was popularised at the expense of the original African one. The worst of all distortions is Panda-ma-tenka Road for Pandamatenga Road. The road-naming itself was rooted on activities during the precolonial and colonial era, when there was so much trade in ivory. The picture below shows an elephant ivory trading post set up close to a 'raintree' in a small village in 1871. Pandamatenga literally translates to *'The place where trade is done.'*

Source: Haynes (2014, p. 27).

Inasmuch as trade was good for the civilisation and general development of Zimbabwe and other African countries alike, it is what was traded at the trade post that is of concern. Trade in Ivory meant that there was a lot of disrespect for animal rights, where both Blacks and Whites would hunt these big animals uncontrollably for their ivory. Keeping such a name to date, seem to promote trade in animal products and poaching during an era where conservation and preservation issues are taking centre stage and some of the animals whose tusks were traded are now classified as endangered species. Trade in ivory at the Pandamatenga trade post was massive to the extent that elephant ivory would pass through here in wagonloads.

Further to that, not only did the trade post act as a trade route for ivory, instead, Pandamatenga Road brought ill-fated missionaries northward into the far interior of the country. Ambitious Jesuit missionaries in black robes, who included Henry Depelchin under the Tati guide Theodore Nigg all set up a temporary camp at Pandamatenga in 1880 before getting permission to cross the Zambezi. This is a clear indication that the place played a critical role in the colonisation of Zambia and Zimbabwe, thus of concern should not only be the spelling distortion on the name currently but rather a total change of place name to something that does not exacerbate memories on how Zambia and Zimbabwe were colonised and how the countries suffered some key losses in materials of value as a result of tourism.

CONCLUSION

Coloniality in tourism toponym destabilises the cultural and traditional rubric in Zimbabwe's tourism destinations. Most of the names given to tourism destinations and major sites, and attractions in Zimbabwe were bestowed before independence. This study therefore recommends that, if decoloniality is to be advocated for in the tourism sector of Zimbabwe, claim of ownership and contest should be propagated in two ways. Over and above advocating for restoring locals' attachment to their cultural and heritage sites now used for tourism, there is a clear need to propagate tourism through the use of endonyms as opposed to exonyms on all touristic sites. The discussions posed in this paper have revealed that most of the exonyms either 1) promulgate the celebration of white European legacy on black soil, 2) completely distort the meaning engraved in local names that unified communities or 3) celebrate the bad deeds by Europeans which is a clear sign of colonisation under post-colonial rule. Thus, tourism marketing should see a complete turn of events in the branding of these tourism sites, thus advocating for the renaming of most of the places of interest within the tourism context.

When tourism destination names are distorted and misappropriated, they lose their historical, linguistic, geographical and cartographical meanings amongst other significances and functions. The call for decolonising Zimbabwe's tourism toponomy as championed in this study is in tandem with the spirit African renaissance currently suffusing the whole African continent. The benefits of indigenous tourism toponomy are quite legion. Place names serve to stamp a people's peculiar identity and ensuring socio-economic development. Over four decades into Zimbabwe's independence, the defaced toponyms still reign as symbols of imperial imposition. This study is only the tip of the iceberg as several tourist destinations, properties, organisations and activities have also misappropriated or distorted indigenous names. It is therefore high time to right the wrong by reverting to the original place-names in tourism destinations where possible or altering some native names where they resonate with some bad memories of events that transpired on a particular place.

REFERENCES

Ainiala, T., Saarelma, M., & Sjöblom, P. (2012). *Names in focus: An introduction to Finnish onomastics*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society.

Arrous, M. B., & Bigon, L. (2022). What Africa might contribute to critical toponymy. In L. Bigon, L. & M. B. Arrous (Eds.) *The politics of place naming: Naming the world* (pp. 217-232). Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. London: Oxford University Press.

Basik, S., & Rahautsou, D. (2019). Toponymic politics and the symbolic landscapes of Minsk, Belarus. *Geographia Cassoviensis, 13*(2), 107-120.

Boehmer, E. (2005*). Colonial and postcolonial literature: Migrant metaphors*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Burnard, T. (2001). Slave naming patterns: Onomastics and the taxonomy of race in eighteenth-century Jamaica. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 31*(3), 325-346.

Caiazzo, L., Coates, R., & Azaryahu, M. (2020). *Naming, identity and tourism*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Coates, R. (2012). Eight issues in the pragmatic theory of properhood. *Acta Linguistica Lithuanica, 66*, 119-140.

Carter, P. (2024). *Naming no man's land: Postcolonial toponymies*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Chitotombe, J. W., Mhlanga, D. & Ndhlovu, E. (2023). Contested landscapes: Politics of space and belonging in land-use planning in Bvumba forest along the Zimbabwe-Mozambican border. In S. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (Ed.), *Post-independence development in Africa: Decolonisation and transformation prospects* (pp. 195-211). Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Clark, V. R., Timberlake, J. R., Hyde, M. A., Mapaura, A., Palgrave, M. C., Wursten, B. T., ... & Barker, N. P. (2017). A first comprehensive account of floristic diversity and endemism on the Nyanga Massif, Manica Highlands (Zimbabwe-Mozambique). *Kirkia, 19*(1), 1-53.

Storey, D. (2011). Critical toponymies: The contested politics of place naming. *European Planning Studies, 19*(6), 1131-1132. https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2011.568823

Dewey, W. J. (1991). *Pleasing the ancestors: The traditional art of the Shona people of Zimbabwe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Düzgün, D. (2021). The death of the author in place names: A Barthesian intervention into critical toponymy. *Geography Compass, 15*(11), e12598. https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12598
Fontein, J. (2016*). The silence of Great Zimbabwe: Contested landscapes and the power of heritage* (Vol. 37). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Goitia, A. G. (2024). *Constructing the other: Unveiling the exotic, barbaric and parodied archetypes in Western discourse* (Master's thesis, Illinois State University). Illinois State University Institutional Repository.

Gumbo, B. G., Ndana, N. & Chebanne, A. (2020). 'Parakarungu chishovoonzi': The politics of toponymy in the Chobe District, Botswana. *Nomina Africana: Journal of African Onomastics, 34*(1), 45-62.

Hang'ombe, K., Chabata, E., & Mamvura, Z. (2019). Syungu Namutitima or Victoria Falls? Contest for place and place naming. *Nomina Africana: Journal of African Onomastics, 33*(1), 19-31.

Hang'ombe, K. (2015). *Morphology and semantics of Tonga anthroponyms: A case of Tonga given names and surnames* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Zambia, Lusaka.

Haynes, G. (2014). Hwange National Park: *The forest with a desert heart*. Reno: University of Nevada Press.

Home, R. (2021). African urban history, place-naming and place-making. In R. Home (Ed.), *Land issues for urban governance in Sub-Saharan Africa* (pp. 317-337). Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Jalata, A. (2013). The impacts of English colonial terrorism and genocide on Indigenous/Black Australians. *SAGE Open, 3*(3), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244013499143

Jenjekwa, V. (2021). Post-2000 revitalisation of Shona place names in Zimbabwe: Recovering voices from the past. *Nomina Africana: Journal of African Onomastics, 35*(1), 1-14.

Magudu, S., Muguti, T., & Mutami, N. (2014). Deconstructing the colonial legacy through the naming process in independent Zimbabwe. *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences, 6*(1), 71-85.

Makondo, L. (2009). *An investigation into anthroponyms of the Shona society* (Doctoral dissertation). University of South Africa, Pretoria.

Makoni, B., Makoni, S. & Mashiri, P. (2007). *Naming practices and language planning in Zimbabwe. Current Issues in Language Planning, 8*(3), 437-467.

Mangena, T. (2023). Theorising multiple place names in Southern Africa. In L. Bigon & M. B. Arrous (Eds.), *Place naming, identities and geography: Critical perspectives in a globalizing and standardizing world* (pp. 259-275). Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Mapara, J. (2017, June 15). "Identity and heritage in the global South and challenges of Euroculturalism and Eurolingualism." Paper presented at the "The Wealth of Languages: Multilingualism, Translation, and Language-rich Cultures" Conference, University of Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia.

Mapara, B., & Mapara, J. (2018). How corruption is reflected in language: The case of Zimbabwean Shona. *NAWA: Journal of Language and Communication, 12*(1), 103-117.

Mapara, J., & Nyota, S. (2016). Suburban blight: Perpetuating colonial memory through naming. In Z. Mutare, O. Nyambi, T. Mangena, & C. Pfukwa (Eds.*), The postcolonial conditions of names and naming practices in Southern Africa* (pp. 289-306). Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Markus, A., & Marcus, A. (2001). Genocide in Australia. *Aboriginal History, 25*, 57-69. http://www.jstor.org/stable/45135471

Mashingaidze, T. M. (2021). One dam, two different relocation processes: The case of Kariba, 1956-1961. In T. M. Mashingaidze, Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation, & Tugwi Mukosi Multidisciplinary Research Institute (Eds.), *Development induced displacements in Zimbabwe: Learning from colonial and post-colonial experiences* (pp. 43-62). Harare: Weaver Press.

Mashiri, P., Chabata, E., & Mamvura, Z. (2017). *Zimbabwean naming practices and patterns: A sociolinguistic approach*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications.

McGregor, J. (2003). The Victoria Falls 1900-1940: Landscape, tourism and the geographical imagination. *Journal of Southern African Studies, 29*(3), 717-737.

Nash, C. (1999). Irish placenames: Post-colonial locations. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 24*(4), 457-480.

Ndlovu, S. (2021). Coloniality of power and resistance in some interracial toponomastic transphonologies in Zimbabwe. *Marang: Journal of Language and Literature, 34*, 75-89.

Nhongo, R., & Masuku, J. (2012). Influence of an African language on European place names in Zimbabwe: Is it language corruption, language development or resistance? *Nomina Africana: Journal of African Onomastics, 26*(1-2), 89-104.

Nyambi, O., Mangena, T., & Pfukwa, C. (2016). *The postcolonial condition of names and naming practices in Southern Africa*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Perko, D., Jordan, P., & Komac, B. (2017). Exonyms and other geographical names. *Acta Geographica Slovenica, 57*(1), 99-107.

Pfukwa, C. (2003). Onomastic innovation in Zimbabwean noms de guerre. *Nomina Africana: Journal of African Onomastics, 17*(2), 47-66.

Phiri Chitungu, V. (2022). Idyango and other forms of ICH: A response to the Covid-19 pandemic in the Southern Province of Zambia. *Dande: Journal of Social Sciences and Communication, 4*(1), 29-44.

Ranger, T. (1987). Taking hold of the land: Holy places and pilgrimages in twentieth-century Zimbabwe. *Past & Present, 117*, 158-194.

Room, A. (1985). *Dictionary of world place names derived from British names*. London & New York: Routledge.

Searle, J. R. (1975). Indirect speech acts. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics* (Vol. 3, pp. 59-82). New York: Academic Press.

Basik, S. (2020). Naming, identity and tourism. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism, 20*(5), 540-542. https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2020.1853603

Tent, J. (2015). Approaches to research in toponymy. *Names, 63*(2), 65-74.

Unwin, M. (2003). *Southern African wildlife: A visitor's guide*. Bucks, UK: Bradt Travel Guides.

Wideman, T. J., & Masuda, J. R. (2018). Toponymic assemblages, resistance, and the politics of planning in Vancouver, Canada. Environment and Planning. *Politics and Space, 36*(3), 383-402.

Woodman, P. (2015). The toponymy of absence. *Review of Historical Geography and Toponomastics, 10*(19-20), 7-16.