

African Journal of History and Culture

Volume 7 Number 9 September 2015

ISSN 2141-6672



*Academic
Journals*

ABOUT AJHC

The African Journal of History and Culture (AJHC) is published monthly (one volume per year) by Academic Journals.

African Journal of History and Culture (AJHC) is an open access journal that provides rapid publication (monthly) of articles in all areas of the subject. The Journal welcomes the submission of manuscripts that meet the general criteria of significance and scientific excellence. Papers will be published shortly after acceptance. All articles published in AJHC are peer-reviewed.

Contact Us

Editorial Office: ajhc@academicjournals.org

Help Desk: helpdesk@academicjournals.org

Website: <http://www.academicjournals.org/journal/AJHC>

Submit manuscript online <http://ms.academicjournals.me/>.

Editors

Ndlovu Sabelo

*Ferguson Centre for African and Asian Studies,
Open University, Milton Keynes,
United Kingdom.*

Biodun J. Ogundayo, PH.D

*University of Pittsburgh at Bradford
300 Campus Drive
Bradford, Pa 16701
USA.*

Julius O. Adekunle

*Department of History and Anthropology
Monmouth University
West Long Branch, NJ 07764
USA.*

Percyslage Chigora

*Department Chair and Lecturer
Dept of History and Development Studies
Midlands State University
Zimbabwe Private Bag 9055,
Gweru, Zimbabwe.*

Pedro A. Fuertes-Olivera

*University of Valladolid
E.U.E. Empresariales
Paseo del Prado de la Magdalena s/n
47005 Valladolid
Spain.*

Brenda F. McGadney, Ph.D.

*School of Social Work,
University of Windsor,
Canada.*

Ronen A. Cohen Ph.D.

*Department of Middle Eastern and
Israel Studies / Political Science,
Ariel University Center,
Ariel, 40700,
Israel.*

Editorial Board

Dr. Antonio J. Monroy Antón

*Department of Business Economics
Universidad Carlos III ,
Madrid,
Spain.*

Dr. Samuel Maruta

*Southern Institute of Peace-building and Development
2806 Herbert Chitepo Road,
Ruwa ,
Zimbabwe.*

Prof. Christophe D. Assogba

*Department of History and Archaeology,
University of Abomey-Calavi,
Benin.*

Dr. Whitney Brim-Deforest

*6600 Orchard Park Circle,
Apt 6012, Davis, CA,
USA.*

Dr. Aju Aravind

*Assistant Professor
Department of Humanities and Social Science,
Indian School of Mines ,
Dhanbad, Jharkhand 826004,
India.*

Dr Jephias Mapuva

*African Centre for Citizenship and Democracy
[ACCEDE];School of Government;
University of the Western Cape,
South Africa.*

Dr Aisha Balarabe Bawa

*Usmanus Danfodiyo University, Sokoto,
Nigeria.*

Dr Wan Suhaimi Wan Abdullah

*Associate Professor
Department of Aqidah and Islamic Thought,
Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya,
Kuala Lumpur,
Malaysia.*

African Journal of History and Culture

Table of Contents: Volume 7 Number 9 September 2015

ARTICLE

Book Review

The ethnographic analyses of "*Zulu Woman*": A book review 171
Andnet Gizachew

Review

Decolonizing place-names: Strategic imperative for preserving
indigenous cartography in post-colonial Africa 180
Nna O. Uluocha

Book Review

The ethnographic analyses of “Zulu Woman”: A book review

Andnet Gizachew

Department of Social Anthropology, Wollo University, P. O. Box 1145, Ethiopia.

Received 15 July, 2015; Accepted 8 August, 2015

This book review brings once more to the spot light the work of Rebecca Hourwich Reyher, American feminist, the Zulu Women about which not too many before this work has dealt with. The book by a woman which have no similitude with the Zulu women of South Africa except her feminist zealotry for women emancipation and her sex divulging in a field of study not of her professional commitment gives us one vital piece of contribution to the understanding of the lived experience and the overall life the Zulu women in the social reality the Zulu world. However, evaluated as ethnographic work, for it at last intentionally or unintentionally belongs to such a genre, it has severed methodological and theoretical parts that account to lack of observance to the ethical and epistemological assumptions of the field of study. This has been identified by many among ethnographic work reviewers before as much as the additions this work claims to have done to the body of knowledge. The review was carried out at both subjective (persona and identity of the author as well as the unique setting of the Zulu women) and objective (criteria for validity of representation in ethnographic study) levels addressing from the very personal up to utterly impersonal considerations of state and society. The leading theoretical assumptions in ethnographic research have guided the review process. In so doing, interpretations approach with descriptive and analytical document analyses of primary (the book) and secondary sources are used. Central of this paper's critical review is that the author has tried to represent the wider and complex life of the Zulu Women which cannot be simply reduced to one dimensional narrative in to very narrow baggage of a single woman's hardly representative life history informed by biased western value laden assumptions, ill designed methods of inquiring and rhetorical representation (nature and structure of language used); hence, without prejudice to its positive contribution, it has faulty elements of methods of inquiry, representation and theoretical assumptions that rendered the work a case of misrepresentation though not total non-representation. Thus, it reiterates the imperative for observance of the validity of every step ahead in ethnographic inquiry for rendering a society properly represented as might it bear trans-generational appeal and relevance as the epics stories the world over.

Key words: Ethnographic work, Zulu women, apartheid, polygamy, Zulu marriage and Reyher.

INTRODUCTION

If they have to tell my story, let them say I walked with giants; men rise and fall like the winter winds, but these

names will never die. Let them say I lived in the time of Hector! Let them say I lived in the time of Achilles.

E-mail: andugiz77@yahoo.com or andnetg@gmail.com. Tel: 091578025.1

Author agree that this article remain permanently open access under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

- *Agamemnon in Troy* (Petersen, 2004)

Alexander in a short life, but without doubt, he achieved mythical aura of his ancestors, Achilles and more. His sacrifice was nearly death but in keeping to his side of the bargain I cannot help but feel he conquered People always want to know how the Legendary Hero of all time, Alexander the great died; but I tell them how he lived.

Ptolemy's Final Speech in Alexander the Great (Stone, 2004)¹

Life-history helps to understand how people interpret social reality by using methods that allow researchers to see the world through their eyes. Life –histories, therefore, place great importance on the person's own interpretations and explanations of their behavior and such as, provide ethnographers with very personal richly descriptive narratives which give us great insight in to every day social life across time.

(Payne, J. and Payne, G., 2004 , p. 23).

The intention of life history methods is normally to explore "what happens" according to the eye witness, but also to discover 'the inner experience of individuals, how they interpret, understand and define the world around them'.

(Faraday, A. and Plummer, K. , 1979, p. 776)

Rationale of the paper

This paper deals with the ethnographic analysis of "Zulu Woman" an ethnographic novel authored by Rebecca Hourwich Reyher, American feminist. The book represents the marriage life of the Zulu royal women through the narration of the protagonist Christina Sibiya's marriage life. As an ethnographic novel, the book review is to take objective and subjective criteria. On the one hand, the characteristic features that constitute the ethnographic genre that lends objectivity to the task of review; on the other hand, as the representation of women, the voiceless and whose lived experience is most often invisible (Declich, 2001) carries gendered peculiarity as well as spatio-temporal subjectivity; add to this the nature of art (obviously personal) used in the representation of the story. Accordingly, the paper stands for this attempt to look in to 'Zulu Women' in line with these objective and subjective parameters, in addition to the aim of the writer. Thus, the paper gives emphasis to

¹The above two epigraphs may be considered irrelevant for African reality for they are from ancient western civilization; however, in taking as part of this paper their relevance is noted on two counts; first, that these stories are no longer considered in water tight Civilizational decided; are part of universal culture which have their own versions in every human society; second, epic stories are not alien to the land of Shaka Zulu, perhaps a close case of similar from the near past to the ancient epic stories. The gender Varsity may be genuine concern to ponder; yet, the aspect of the epic put for the utility of this review is the aspect of representation to be proper and lasting. This concern is even more valid to women stories than men given the often voiceless subaltern status of the former.

several points of discussion: biography of the author, brief summary of the book, methods used in organizing the work, style of representation and criticism on the book which is of both personal and professional.

The epigraphs from films of the ancient Greek are here to remind the reader of the powerful role of artistic narratives in making trans-generational representation of legendary heroes as remotely sited in history as Achilles and Alexander the great to current and generations to come. Similarly, the epic nature of the characters and its being history of violence notwithstanding, the current ethnographic novel is partly considered as how much the author has approximated the lived experience of Zulu women in fictional narrative; that is, how Zulu women will be imagined in posterity.

Author's Design of Inquiry

In trying to organize and write this book, Rebecca Reyher had raised the following different but inter related questions she assumed would get near to answers in the utility of representing the lived experiences of Zulu women in its entirety against the big picture of Zulu social reality. In this regard the questions she raised include (Reyher, 1948, p. xii):

1. What did Zulu women do?
2. How did they manage lifelong marriage?
3. Were they happy?
4. Was polygamy a natural state of man?
5. Was it possible to love with one's body freshly and easily, capturing the spirit and taming it to its primary needs?
6. Were the heart and soul of the "primitive" woman different from the modern woman?

Throughout the book it looks that the writer directly or indirectly tries to navigate for responses probing questions and it is possible to say that the author used them as springboards from which she tries to show how the living styles and conditions of Zulu women looked like by then.

Biography of the author

Rebecca Reyher was born in 1897 in New York from a white family. She went to University of Chicago and earned B.A. degree in 1918; she also studied at the New York School of Social Work between 1920 and 1921. In 1915, she became a suffragette, a female activist in the first half of twentieth century who worked a lot to envisage ways by which women would have equal rights with men especially in relation to political elections (<http://Bancroft.berkeley.edu/Roho/projects/suffragist/>). The role, as a result, she began to play in such feminist movement was best evidenced when she became president of Chicago University Women's Peace Society.

In 1917 she got married to Ferdinand Reyher, a writer, but got divorced in 1933. From this wedlock she had a daughter. She died in 1987 at the age of 89. In general she was a famous feminist veteran suffragette, author and lecturer. The feminist outlook Reyher had developed for she could best be exemplified by the publications she had produced. Especially "Zulu Woman" (1948), "The Fon and His Hundred Wives" (1952) and "Search and Struggle for Equality and Independence" (1977) are some of her major works (Ibid).

A gimps Look at the Zulu

Rebecca, in this book, studied one of the life aspects of the Zulu ethnic group of South Africa. The Zulu are especially widely known for the fierce and tenacious struggle they had put up against the British colonial ambitions particularly under their famous king *Shaka*. It was, however, during the time of the unofficial King Solomon Dinuzulu that through the works of missionaries and other western institutions that the final political and military vestiges of the Zulu resistance to European power were liquidated (Reyher, 1948, p. ix). The Zulu constitute the dominant black peoples of South Africa. The book tries to deal with the patriarchal based polygamous marriage institution and the huge toll it had on the Zulu women through the personal stories of Christina Sibiya who was the first lady of King Solomon Dinuzulu.

Theoretical background

The theoretical background of any author hugely puts a mark on how s/he writes an ethnographic work. Regarding this Signe Howell argues that:

Ethnographic texts are ...created at the interface between the ethnographer as a personality and intellectual being, the people studied and interacted with, and the texts of previous ethnographers and theoreticians. We (ethnographers) have a duty to record as accurately as we (they) can observe events, actions, utterances (Howell, 1997, p. 111).

The first half of twentieth century in Europe (especially Britain) and USA was the period by which several women became actively involved in working to get the right of women to vote in political elections. It was, in short, a period of suffragettes. Since 1915 Rebecca Hourwich Reyher had thus become involved in such feminist oriented movements aspiring political equality for women. She even headed the New York office of National women's party in 1919. This shows that theoretically Reyher was a feminist who in her own ways worked a lot to redress the then existing political, economic, social and even cultural inequalities between men and women, and

for women emancipation from all forces of oppression that be. In general, George Ritzer (Ritzer and Goodman, 2003 , p. 317; Nugent, 1997) has put it as "...feminism is a new scholarship on women that implicitly or formally presents a generalized, wide-ranging system of ideas about the world from a women-centered perspective." And Rebecca Hourwich Reyher was not an exception to this.

Therefore, the dual influence of the feminist emancipator orientation of the author (as a woman and feminist activist) and the professional commitment of an ethnographic novelist to render the subject genuine representation are taken note of in analyzing the novel. In particular, the aspect of sacrificing one for the other or the art of striking fragile balancing, which could be as painstakingly difficult as walking on the sharp edge of a knife, between the two is one point of focus rooted in the subjective elements of the analyses.

Thus, unlike those category of literary critics avowing to text-centric interpretation represented in their famous cliché 'the author is dead', in this case even though the author is as good dead as Socrates her identity and persona is to be repeatedly resurrected to give witness to the nature of her work. Accordingly, the textual content analysis dealt with below is carried out in this spirit.

CONTENT OF THE BOOK

Narrative Representation of the Book

The book is structured in such a way that the author narrates what Christina Sibiya told her as her story and when necessary the author would try to corroborate the story with her personal observation and the documents she got from white South African government officials, missionaries and intellectual experts on "natives". That is, the author does necessarily not show herself up at the beginning or end of each chapter. Rather she keeps narrating the story of her "star" of the book until she would find it necessary to depict her own personal observation and understanding.

Brief summary of the book

Rebecca Hourwich Reyher, before getting involved in the task of organizing and writing this ethnographic novel, was a New York based Magazinst. Before coming to Zulu land of South Africa she ventured on some localities of South America and Asia (Reyher, 1948, p. xi). But it is this work of hers which stood best. In this book Rebecca H. Reyher wanted to show the marriage and life conditions of the Zulu women by presenting the entirely personal lenses through which *Christina Sibiya* looked out up on her life. Reyher tried to show that the story of Christina Sibiya was the story of many Zulu women (Reyher, 1948, p. x). In the Zulu society marriage life was/is instituted based

on a polygamous relation. That is, a man could marry as many women as he wished and could afford as long as he could pay the required *lobola* (bride wealth) (Reyher, 1948, p. 29). The book narrates the marriage life of Christina Sibiya who got wed locked to the unofficial king of the Zulu, Solomon Kwa Dinuzulu. It was in 1934 that Rebecca went to the Zulu land to write something on the lives of Zulu women. She had stayed there for eight months to study what she was after (Reyher, 1948, p. xii). As the title of the book indicates Rebecca wanted to view the lives of the Zulu women from the point of her character-Christina Sibiya.

Christina Sibiya was a daughter of Hezekiah (her father) and Elizabeth (her mother). She was one of the four children in the family. Hezekiah and Elizabeth got married under the supervision of the white missionaries who had made them enter into a commitment not to disrespect their marriage which was contrary to the marriage tradition of the Zulu land. In the Zulu land if a man could pay the necessary *lobola* (bride wealth) he could marry as many wives as he wished. Sibiya's father, however, wanted to detach himself from the commitment he had with his Christian wife Elizabeth. According to the white government's law, this action of Hezekiah would be taken as a crime against the state. But knowing this he left Elizabeth and married two other girls at the same time. Elizabeth was left alone to care for their four children. But thanks to the help rendered to her by the white missionaries, she managed to bring her children up well. She, however, greatly detested the Zulu tradition which allowed a man to marry many girls for she was the direct victim of it. She prayed to God that the same fate wouldn't fall on her girls (Reyher, 1948, pp. 20-).

Sibiya and her brother and sisters were given education in missionary schools separated from the Zulu girls and boys. Especially, Sibiya as the eldest child was supposed to grow in the Zulu way. But her confinement with the missionaries made her alienated from the Zulu traditional life. This made her mother feel happy. Sibiya pursued her education in the mission school and by age of fifteen she became a teacher. Her education, silence, good manner and above all her taste for European way of life began to arouse and captivate the interest of Zulu men living nearby. So men began to talk of a girl of decency and good manner and it spread too many *kraals* (villages in Zulu language). Many men became alerted. Above all men it was the Zulu king *Solomon Dinuzulu* who became fancied with the idea of getting locked in marriage with Sibiya. *Solomon Dinuzulu* (1898-1933) was the king of Zulu land who was famously known for his bravery; he had proved for gallantry against the expansion of European powers to Zulu land, as the Zulu people did so especially under their highly renowned leader, *Shaka Zulu* (Reyher, 1948, p. 26 ff).

Christina Sibiya was, taking lesson from the hardships and life miseries that her mother had come across due to the separation from her husband; in effect. She did not

initially want to get married in the Zulu traditional way. She even prayed not to see such a "bad chance" happen to her. But her prayers seemed to immaterialize when she faced the reality that the king of the Zulu really wanted to marry her. Sibiya was a daughter of a family possible to say with no social status, but Solomon was at the top of the social hierarchy of the Zulu society. Though it was glaringly possible to see huge social gap existing between them, King Solomon made his mind that to marry Sibiya and take her as his first wife. This story seems analogous to peasant fairy tales of the western world that a girl of peasantry origin got glued with a man of rich and distinguished family in wed lock (Reyher, 1948, p. 31 ff).

Though Christina at first loathed the thinking that she could face the same fate as her mother, the idea that the king wanted to marry her was almost impossible to resist. So when Solomon came in person to tell her what his best wishes were she fainted unable to believe what she heard (Reyher, 1948, p. 35). After days Solomon, taking the necessary steps and measures, took her to his *Kraals* as his first wife. Here started the real life of Christina as a woman. In the long marriage with King Solomon she gave birth to four two boys and two girls. But one of the girls died soon (Reyher, 1948, p. 41 ff).

Initially for Sibiya life in Solomon's *Kraal* seemed full of happiness. But this state began to change when the king started to bring one girl after the other from different villages as his wives. The king stated such action as Christina's duty, too. He, at one moment when he brought his second wife, told Christina:

Not only am I marrying this girl, but so are you. . . . We are making her our wife. You and she will be sisters, and will divide between you the work of looking after me. . . . I want you to be good friends as my wives should be. I do not want you to quarrel. If you do I shall punish you. . . . I want you to make her feel at all times she is well come (Reyher, 1948, p. 61).

Solomon took many girls as his wives due to several reasons. Some of the factors for such obsession of Solomon in taking several wives at a time could be best understood by the following sentence:

Solomon honored house by taking a girl from it, for at any time he might raise the status to marriage and bind himself to that house in political alliance. Some of the girls were ambitious, inheriting the political sagacity and shrewdness of their men. They were willing to gamble on the chance they might be mother to a king, and they deliberately set out to captivate the king, in hope that he would marry them (Reyher, 1948, p. 59).

But Christina still held the favored position in his heart. The increasing number of wives, however, made him busy not to continue the kind of intimate relation he had with Christina before. The way he cared for, in times of trouble and holidays, Christina began to resent the other wives who began to entertain the fermentation of jealousy

and feeling of grudge. This greatly disturbed the king as some of them began to openly challenge and disobey the king. Some even committed adultery and tried to flee to where they came from. In other words, the king summoned himself to the task of resolving the feuds which developed among the wives; especially the feeling they had towards Christina was expressed by Solomon in such a way:

I have already told you about Christina, and how I took her, as a child wholly ignorant of the ways of grown-up people. She had been brought up by the missionaries. She did not know how to cut grass, or how to build a hut. You know how natives live; you are accustomed to work. ...I told you when you came here you have to respect and obey her. She has never said anything harmful of you to me nor to anyone in the kraal. Yet I know what you have been gossiping and string up trouble for her. ... I will not have that! ... I shall expect you hereafter to live in peace with Christina, and do nothing that may offend her. ...but if I hear anything further about this, you will be sorry for it (Reyher, 1948, p. 73).

Unable to resist such challenges posed to him by his many wives, Solomon helped by his drunkenness began to trash some of them with sham book. Thrashing was directed to many of his wives whom he thought were disrespectful of his *kraal* laws but Christina. Under the name of official leave the king started to repeatedly flee away from his wives for long. This especially made the king not to give usual special attention he used to give to Christina who was grief stricken by the death of her youngest son. He did not comfort her from her grief. When she asked him why he failed to do so, he seemed reckless. This made Christina ask the loyalty and integrity that her husband had to her and their children. On top of this, just like other girls Solomon began to thrash Christina (Reyher, 1948, p. 97 ff).

Finally lacking the courage to withstand such repeated physical and moral recession, Christina fled away from the King, first to her families and then to Durban where she stayed for three months as a housemaid in a white family home until she was summoned to appear in court to make clear why she abandoned her husband, King Solomon Dinuzulu. In the end, the court decided that Christina had to go the king's *kraal* and be judged in the Zulu way. But the trial took long and in the mean time Solomon died in 1933 and her son Sea price was made heir to the throne and remained on power until 1968 (Reyher, 1948, p. 181 ff).

ANALYSES AND EVALUATION OF THE BOOK

Methodological Construction

Before proceeding to identifying the research methods

that Reyher had employed, it would be better to say thing on the ethnographic research requirements. Signe Howell put it as:

. . . Ethnographers have their own basic requirements of the method stand. These demands are: to interact in the local language; to participate in daily as well as special events; to pay particular attention to the minutiae of social action and interactions, to the institutional, cosmological and materiality of daily and ceremonial life, to the qualities of significant object, to daily and ritual speech, and the dissecting of local categories and indigenous ideas and values; to evaluate cultural representations; to elicit patterns and paradoxes, underlying structuring principles and the forces of normative as well as interpretive significance of instances of breaches and idiosyncrasies (Howell, 1997, p. 115).

Rebecca Reyher, in developing and writing this book, had used the products of her field trips to the study area which took about eight months. In conducting field work she did not come in to touch with many local women. Rather she was focused on having strong and intimate relation with Christina so that she could be able to squeeze out the story of her target woman so as to make the story palatable and convincing. She collected the data for organizing this work by conducting in depth interview with her major character through a translator. In her own words, Reyher put it as:

We established a working procedure. Christina came and talked, slowly, sentence by sentence, while Eric (the white translator) translated. Occasionally we interrupted her to ask a question, but seldom. At first, she was awkward, over-dressed and self conscious . . . then she began to come in every day clothes and . . . the words flowed from her (Reyher, 1948, p. xiii).

There is nothing in the book that the writer was well versed in Zulu language. The interview Reyher had administered with Christina was qualitative and open-ended and it made Sibiyi sometimes, as to saying Reyher, felt free to speak out with little or no shyness. On top of such engaging, qualitative and open-ended interview, Reyher also used some information tapping mechanisms to cross check and augment what Christina had told her with the then existing living realities of the community. Thus she employed personal observation (Reyher, 1948, p. x).

Rebecca Reyher conducted an interview with Christina for a month, but she stayed in the Zulu land for about eight months. During such period of long stay she was able to see for herself the conditions of Zulu women in different life aspects and this had greatly helped her to analyze the information she squeezed out from Christina and develop it in to more convincing story. Likewise, she also consulted documents from the white South African

government offices for “natives”, also works and opinions of white officials of South African government and intellectual experts on “natives” (Reyher, 1948, p. xi).

Moreover, the method of organizing and writing the book Reyher had used can be talked of as inductive for the book tries to depict the life miseries and up-downs an individual female actor of the Zulu society had passed through and how this can be used in developing the bigger picture of the life of the many Zulu women.

Focus of the book

The book focuses on the individual actor of the Zulu-Christina Sibiya. By treating the life story and the womanhood of Sibiya the book attempts to see how polygamy had greatly affected the life of many Zulu women. In other words, as the book tries to depict the life story of a Zulu queen who finally decided to detach from centuries old polygamous tradition of the Zulu society, the narration is mainly based on the deeds and lived experience of a person to portray the condition of women and the treatment they received from their husbands. As has been discussed in the brief summary of the book above, Christina Sibiya had passed through the *ebbs* and *flows* of life. So the author wanted to show this life story of her protagonist as the base by which she would gauge the level of treatment the women of the Zulu received from their husbands. She at the same time also wanted to reassure the world that the life of Christina Sibiya could best exemplify the lives that the Zulu women were forced to face and lead. In many instances as the author in narrating the life of Christina she wanted to use this narration as binocular camera that could help her comprehend and even analyze the life miseries and challenges that the Zulu women were exposed to and how they dealt with them.

Style of representation

The writer dealt with what can be taken as the biography of a single woman and by doing so she tried to see the life of the Zulu woman from the vantage point of the life of Christina Sibiya. That is why the style of representation is individualistic. The book is an ethnographic novel. It tries to give the work an artistic value and so long as Reyher was not a professional ethnographer, she opted to use the mechanism of depicting the story in a novel way. This might have helped the author to come up with a somewhat better description of the story bearing in mind the down side of using novel writing for ethnographic works.

Moreover, the book narrates from third person point of view. As Reyher was not directly involved in the living styles and lives of the Zulu women, what she tells us in the book is assumed to be the point of view of Sibiya. That is in different pages of the book stories are present

in such a way that they are narrated by Sibiya *per se*. But this is not to deny the presence of crafting on the part of the author in re-arranging the stories in line with the questions she raised at the beginning of the work. Every story narrated in the book in one way or another is related to Sibiya so that they are presented from her point of view.

In addition, the tense the author had preferred to use in presenting Sibiya's story was past tense. It was in 1934 A.D. that Rebecca Hourwich Reyher went to South Africa and began to get acquainted with the different socio-economic miseries that they were exposed to. Particularly Reyher arrived in South Africa one year after the death of the unofficial Zulu king, Solomon Dinuzulu (Reyher, 1948, p. xii). Since 1930 rumors were circulating among the Zulu regarding the move away of Christina from her husband in particular and the Zulu polygamous marriage institution in general (Reyher, 1948, p. 191ff). As a result when Reyher came to the region these development of events were fresh in the minds of the Zulu. Thus, Reyher wanted to write something on this story by contacting the owner of the story. But as Reyher did not witness the story in person and since the story had happened before her arrival, she had to use past tense.

The approach in treating the story Reyher used is holistic approach. Holistic approach tries to present a story or an event of an individual actor of a society and then tries to induce, based on it, a story which could be taken as well encompassing and engaging for the whole or some part of the society. That is, though the story directly refers to an individual person or group of individuals, it could be taken as a story which is part and parcel of the life of many peoples in a society.

Accordingly, Reyher narrated the story of the first wife of the unofficial Zulu king, Solomon Dinuzulu, to show that her story was not hers only. It rather was and is still shared by the women of Zulu land in their marriage daily lives. The mental trauma, the psychological depression and the physical and social abuse that Reyher was subjected were taken not as the only problems of marriage life faced by Christina Sibiya. They were also the day to day encounters of the Zulu women. The beatings, sexual negligence, lack of affection from the husband, the society's negative attitude on women were similar experiences of the women of Zulu land (Reyher, 1948, p. 131ff).

Finally, however strong the view of Christina was in narrating the story; the author's voice sometimes is visible to notice. This may be due to the role Reyher had played as a writer in re-arranging and re-structuring the story in line with the information she had collected making use of other mechanisms.

CRITICISM

Ethnographers' Criticism

Though the book, *Zulu woman*, had contributed a lot for

the better understanding of the Zulu society in general and the marriage life of the Zulu women in particular, just like other ethnographic novels it is subjected to criticisms. One of the criticisms the book is exposed to is the idea of “double filtering” (Lowe, 1999, p. 208). Lowe argued that in organizing and writing the book, there exists “deliberate” manipulations both by the author and the story teller. That is, the story’s narration is subjected to selecting and arranging of materials by Christina and by the re-arranging and re-authority of Reyher.

He also argued that, though the book could be taken as a major work that can illuminate something on how the Zulu women led/lead their life, the “deliberate” manipulation of the sources and information by both the author and the story teller makes it difficult to take the book as comprehensive a material as that can depict the fuller picture of the marriage life of the Zulu women (Lowe, 1999, p. 208).

The other point of criticism is the problem of taking Christina’s story as largely told in her own voice for sometimes the narrative voice subsumes Christina’s view point in Reyher’s (Lowe, 1999, p. 207). Most of the time the common problem with ethnographic works, if done on the behalf of a certain market oriented institution, is that for the sake of marketability or commercializing the book authors are tempted to write something based on the trend of the market. As a result authors make their voice sometimes visible in their ethnographic works. Reyher’s work is not an exception to this. Though Reyher (Reyher, 1948, p. 5) claimed that the work is of largely Sibiya’s voice, it is possible to see her huge influence in developing the story. One of the research methods she used to organize this book is personal observation and tapping of information for some official documents and consultation of experts on “natives”. As a result these helped Rebecca Reyher to put her visible marks on the book.

Moreover, the book is not taken as purely of scientific work. Since Rebecca Hourwich Reyher was not a professional ethnographer or anthropologist, some scientific mechanisms of developing and organizing the book are missing. This makes the work, due to the nature of the narration used is somewhat similar to novels, less scientific (Langness, 1965, p. 14). It is, on the other hand, argued that the style of narration used is so vivid that it can somewhat show the social order of the Zulu in a clear way.

Some critics also hold that sometimes some stories are better told and narrated when they are presented in an ethnographic novel style than when they are put in the style of professionals of a more serious penetration. And Reyher’s work can best exemplify this idea (Woodson, 1948, p. 372). Woodson even went far to suggesting that the aim of the author is to “fathom, if possible, the mind of the African women; in other words, to see the world from her (Christina’s) point of view, and possibly for a moment to think black” (Woodson, 1948, p. 372).

The author also tacitly jumps in to the conclusion that the whole Zulu women were subjected to the “unwanted” practice of polygamy and they suffered a lot from this marriage institution. But to some critics it is difficult to take polygamy, though generally allowed, as widely practiced among the Zulu since it was mainly practiced by the royalty and the well-to-do only. It can also be taken as a social practice which was/is used to gauge the social as well as economic status of a man (Woodson, 1948, p. 372). Since taking a girl as a wife requires a man to pay a *lobola* (bride wealth), it would be difficult for every man of the Zulu land to have any girl he wanted at any time. The *lobola* to be paid to the girl’s father since 1869 was amounted to be 10 heads of cattle was beyond the reach of economically average and below Zulu man. As a result only the well –to-do; and the royalty could afford to have as many wives as they wished since they could pay to the fathers of would be taken wives (Binns, 1975, p. 194).

For Binns, *lobola* is not a harmful cultural practice and it does not happen without the interest of the Zulu women. Zulu women, according to his argument, prefer to be married using the *lobola* tradition for it would help them realize how important they are to their family and to ensure that they are equal to one another. That is, the *lobola* paid for the bride father is taken by the women that they have huge value in the family so that not to lose such family value women may get interested in *lobola* tradition. *Lobola* also serves as a leveler between and among women of different social, political, economic and even physical appearances (Binns, 1975, p. 195).

Personal criticism

This section of the paper deals with the personal criticism I have towards the book. First, the author did not have deep knowledge of the local Zulu language. She conducted intensive interview with the story teller through an interpreter and a guide. This could have obstructed the author to fully grasp every bit of information with minimum problem of understanding. Moreover, the interpreter she used was not from the Zulu. He was a white South African. Judging from the then existing political, socio-cultural and economic lives of South Africa, it would be difficult to regard him as honest to provide the information from the Zulu points of view. Moreover, the interpreter used was a man who might have made Christina Sibiya felt uneasy particularly when talked with some issues such as sexuality, personal habits, family matters, or questions that may involve reasons for secrecy. Langness argued that there are problems in working with an interpreter (Langness, 1965, p. 37). For example it may appear problematic to talk to a third party about certain areas of human behavior such as sexuality, personal habits, family matters, or questions that may involve reasons for secrecy. The problems even become pronounced if a male interpreter is used to work

with women.

The author also used some words, if seen from a professional point of view, which has negative orientation. The words include: "heathen" (Reyher, 1948, pp. 20, 141), "pagan", "barbarous", "primitive", "savage" and "tribe" (Reyher, 1948, p. 54).

Some of the sentences below show Reyher had used some unnecessary words, if seen from a professional point of view, which could have a derogatory implication.

1. *Living in a home devoid of anything but primitive necessities, where a mother cherished but one hope, to raise her children above the barbarous state of her friends and neighbor...* (Reyher, 1948, p. 26).

2. *At fifteen she was as innocent of the essential mores about her as if she had been a member of a different race. Docile, good-tempered, she was a Christian puritan in a pagan land, a stranger among her own people* (Reyher, 1948, p. 28).

3. *Chaotic and unformed as his dreams of Zulu empire were, he (Solomon's father) was determined that the women whom he would bring to his Kraal to be the mothers of his ever-expanding family, would be Christians, above simple savagery, mud-caked and lice-ridden* (Reyher, 1948, p. 33).

Moreover, the writer repeatedly makes use of the word "native". Though she admitted that she did not understand the negative orientation of the word when she was writing the book, her excuse could not be taken for granted. During the time when she conducted her research in the Zulu land she was able to notice that the white government of South Africa had put in to practice race-based administration policy which had resulted in the implementation of segregating, discriminatory and stigmatizing policies of blacks and whites of the country in their different walks of life. The writer tried to show how this racial discrimination was rife when she was there (Reyher, 1948: p.x). This shows us that the then government of the country used the word "native" not to mean indigenous, as Reyher assumed to be, but to mean peoples who are inferior to the whites of the region in any aspects of life. In general, the word had a derogatory implication.

Deliberately or not the writer in attempting to depict the socio-economic and politico-religious life of the "natives" she might have got blinded by her own culture in understanding the culture of the Zulu especially of the Zulu women. Though Langness argued that it would be difficult for an ethnographer to be completely free of ethnocentrism (Langness, 1965, p. 21; Lengermann and Brantley, 1990), works have to be done in addressing this problem in minimizing the impact of being ethno-centered on the research to be carried so as not to produce a biased study.

Moreover, the writer seemed to be hugely influenced by her theoretical orientation which may have somewhat inhibited her understanding of the realities of her study

group only from the point of women. It would also have been better if the writer were to see the views of male members of the society on such appalling condition of women (Howell, 1997: 110).

The other personal criticism on the work of Reyher is that it would be better if she were to use a comparative research method to see the differences between the polygamous marriage institutions to which the Zulu women were subjected with the concubinage of the western world. Regarding this Signe Howell has clearly put the importance of an act of comparison to an ethnographic work as:

No good ethnography is self-contained. Implicitly or explicitly ethnography is an act of comparison. By virtue of comparison ethnographic description becomes objective. ... it becomes a universal understanding to the extent it brings to bear on the perception of any society the conception of all others (Howell, 1997, p. 4).

Therefore, despite the multiple positive contributions the author's work does have to its name, nonetheless, from the above stated major points of the critical review of other academics and myself it is instructive of taking serious note of the ethical and epistemological considerations of ethnographic research methodology. Personal or group (as in being feminist) experiential emancipator zeal and benign commitment to the same notwithstanding, slacks in this respect do cast unfavorable shadows on the works of enthusiastic and committed persons as the case is with the work of Reyher addressed here.

Perhaps, this work might have lasting effect of its own on how the future generation will understand the Zulu Women or perhaps it might not so be; but the point of vital concern is that the slightest possibility of the former to happen in a long run might have the effect of epic proportion, unless critical reviews like the ones referred above and this work are side by side provided for future generations' scrutiny otherwise.

At last, the whole discussion boils down to what extent the themes raised by the epigraphs at the beginning of the paper, the salient features of both historical (as in the epic stories of Achilles and Alexander the great) and ethnographic representations, the life Zulu Women represented by the narrative of Sibiya's life history? Could it stand for the life of Zulu women as the epics do stand for their periods? Have it approximated the entirety of the lived experience of Zulu Women as an ethnographic work? On account of the reasons detailed herein above, the book is hardly qualified in either of the dimensions.

REFERENCES

- Binns C (1975). *The Warrior People: Zulu Origins, Customs and Witchcraft*. London: Robert Hale and Company.
Declich F (2001). *When silence makes history: gender and memory of*

- war violence from Somalia. In I. W. Scgmidt. Padstow, Cornwall: TJ International. *Anthropol. Violence* pp.161-176.
- Faraday A, Plummer K (1979). *Doing Life Histories*. *Sociol. Rev.* 27(4):773-798.
- Howell S (1997). *Cultural Studies and Social Anthropology: Contesting or Complementary Discourses?* In S. N. (eds.), London: Pluto Press. *Anthropol. Cult. Stud.* pp.103-125.
- Langness L (1965). *The Life History in Anthropological Science*. New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, Inc.
- Lengermann MP, Brantley NJ (1990). *Feminist Sociological Theory: The Near Future Prospects*. In G. R. (Ed.), New York: Columbia University Press. *Frontiers Soc. Theory* pp.316-344.
- Lowe C (1999). *Zulu Woman: the Life and Story of Christina Sibiya*. Dec.1999, *Afr. Stud. Rev.* 42(3):206-209.
- Nugent S (1997). *Brother, can you share a paradigm?* In S. N. (eds.), London: Pluto Press. *Anthropol. Cult. Stud.* pp.1-10.
- Payne J, Payne G (2004). *Key Concepts in Social Research*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Petersen W (Director) (2004). *Troy* [Motion Picture].
- Reyher RH (1948). *Zulu Woman*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ritzer G, Goodman JD (2003). *Sociological Theory*(6th Ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.
- Stone O (Director) (2004). *Alexander the Great* [Motion Picture].
- Woodson C (1948). *Zulu Woman*. *J. Negro Hist.* 33(1):371-372.

Review

Decolonizing place-names: Strategic imperative for preserving indigenous cartography in post-colonial Africa

Nna O. Uluocha

Department of Geography, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria.

Received 26 June, 2015; Accepted 8 August, 2015

Indigenous cartography existed in various forms in pre-colonial Africa. Unfortunately, the indigenous cartographic heritage of the continent suffered a major setback during the period of imperialism and colonialism. A foremost threat to the traditional cartographies of the African people has been the colonization and deformation of original local geographical names. As an enduring legacy, toponyms are revered by the people for their cartographic, cultural, ethnographic, social, historical, linguistic, economic, political, spiritual, intellectual, scientific and geographical significance. The distortion of the toponyms is a serious threat to the indigenous cartographic heritage and cultural identity of the people. This paper, therefore, x-rays the importance and indigenous cartographic role of African toponyms. The processes of place-name deformation in Africa and the cartographic implications of such deformation are discussed. The paper equally identifies place name decolonization, which is currently going on in some African counties, as an essential strategy for reinstating, preserving and promoting the indigenous cartographies of Africa. Some probable challenges to the decolonization process are also identified. The paper charts the way forward by outlining a number of steps that could be taken to restore the continent's distorted place-names to their original form, for the preservation of indigenous cartography in post-colonial Africa.

Key words: Indigenous cartography, toponym, Africa, place-name distortion, decolonization.

INTRODUCTION

A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches ...

A good name is better than precious ointment ...

(Proverbs 22:1 and Ecclesiastes 7:1 – *The Holy Bible*)

Pre-colonial Africa had a rich indigenous cartographic culture. Although map making as we know it today was

not so common, the people of Africa, nonetheless, displayed their cartographic dexterity and geographical knowledge mostly through oral cartography and performance cartography. One potent means by which they effectively encoded and communicated cartographic and geographic information was by the use of toponyms

E-mail: uluocha65@yahoo.com, nuluocha@unilag.edu.ng

Author agree that this article remain permanently open access under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

(names of places and other geographical features). Thus in vintage African societies place-names were not just chosen arbitrarily; they were carefully chosen to convey specific and useful meanings to the people. This explains why Africans still cherish and attach much significance to local toponyms. Toponyms are an integral component of the cultural identity of a people.

Over a considerable length of time, a good number of African geographical names were deformed. Some were replaced with alien names, while some others became victims of a wave of Romanization and linguistic mutilation perpetrated by some extraneous forces and characterized by orthographical and pronunciation deformations. In particular, the balkanization and eventual colonization of Africa seriously affected local geographical names (Roden, 1974; Okpala-Okaka, 1995; Mbenzi, 2009; Snodia et al., 2014), as well as the indigenous cartographic traditions of the people. By colonizing African indigenous toponyms they were consequently stripped of their original linguistic meanings and value, as well as their cartographic, historical, cultural and scientific significance and functions.

The large-scale deformation or corruption of local African place-names by extraneous forces, especially during the eras of voyage/exploration and colonization, has been widely acknowledged and reported in literature. Thus far, however, little or no effort has been spared to x-ray the indigenous cartographic role of African toponyms, the cartographic implications of the deformation of indigenous African place-names, and hence, the cartographic imperativeness of decolonizing the names. These are, therefore, the intellectual lacunas this research endeavour set out to address.

Generally, this paper is a modest attempt to lend a scholarly voice to the increasing global call for due recognition and preservation of indigenous cartographic heritage. Basically, the paper argues that place-name decolonization is a most potent strategy for restoring and preserving indigenous cartographies in post-colonial Africa. The discussion on place-name decolonization as presented in this paper is an unpretentious contribution to the broader contemporary decolonization or post-colonial discourse on the African continent (Yai 1984; Pissarra 2009; Jimoh (URL)). The discussions presented in this paper are mostly hinged on four premises namely, (i) African indigenous place-names have been significantly distorted, especially during the colonial era; (ii) African local toponyms bear and convey indigenous cartography of the people; (iii) the distortion or 'colonization' of African indigenous toponyms is tantamount to deformation or erosion of a significant part of the indigenous cartography of various African traditional societies; and (iv) the decolonization and restoration of deformed indigenous African toponyms will invariably result in the restoration, preservation and promotion of the rich indigenous cartographic legacy of Africa and Africans.

In particular, the paper gives a general overview of the

importance of toponyms. With some examples, the paper equally draws attention to the processes leading up to the ruination of African toponyms; it also stresses the indigenous cartographic implications of such ruination. Efforts by various African countries at restoring their indigenous place-names are also briefly discussed citing some examples. Importantly, the paper highlights the need for the restoration and preservation of Africa's indigenous cartographic culture, and underlines place-name decolonization as a strategic imperative for achieving this goal. Some potential challenges to effective toponym decolonization in the continent are examined; suggestions on how to possibly circumvent the challenges and install lasting structures for preserving indigenous cartography are also proffered.

Significance of toponyms

Generally, names are of immense significance in African societies. Toponyms fulfill the task of identifying localities thereby distinguishing them from one another (Ormeling, 2007). Although the basic function of names has been that of providing a useful label to things so that they can be differentiated, they however also have sentimental, literary, religious and cultural significance (Snodia et al., 2010). Place-names are required in everyday business. On a daily basis, we use them to describe our surroundings and to tell others where we have been or where we plan to go. Geographical names are used to explain places and events. They are also useful as brand names, as symbols, for educational purposes, for transportation, as a symbol for sovereignty (if the names are in your language, the area should be yours). More so, they serve as cartographic labels that can be used for orientation, navigation, recreation, and reference points. Besides, place-names link us to the landscape, and by so doing give useful insight into a people's traditional way of life.

Geographical names are in several ways very crucial to the sustenance of national cultural identity as well as socio-economic development. Hardly can one find any human spatial activity that does not involve the use of place-names. Like other types of name, place-names are part of the oral literature of the local people. Linguistically, they aid pronunciation and also serve as important links to some other documents and information.

Geographical names are equally a great repository of knowledge; invaluable geographical, historical, socio-cultural and scientific knowledge is stored in them. Knowledge of the origin of place-names can shed light on the history and settlement of a country. In other words, place-names have the propensity of revealing the identity of those who settled in a place and when they did. The study of toponyms, therefore, can unveil important facts about the past, thereby yielding information concerning the history, religion and civilization of the first occupants

of the places concerned (Fasi, 1984). For instance, by leaning heavily on oral traditions and an understanding of the meaning and functions of place names, Nast (2005) was able to determine the nature and extent of power and activities of royal concubines in pre-colonial Kano society in Nigeria between the 16th and 20th century. Furthermore, as noted by Lawal (1992, 17), "Place names that are used in the lore of Nigerian society have historical significance. They do remind people of the places passed through during the period of migration. They ... signify important historical events. In land disputes, place names have been very useful in finding solutions to entitlement to land and have offered some explanations to the course of migration. Place names could be used as a source of information about the demographic structure of the past."

A place-name imparts a certain character on a place. Thus, place-names can also provide a glimpse of the lifestyle led by the people. For instance, geographical names can suggest that a people were "settlers rather than ferocious raiders". In other words, place-names could be used to judge the way of life associated with a people – sedentary or nomadic. Those who led a sedentary life more than those who lived a nomadic life established settlements and gave them enduring names.

Local place-names could act as primordial evidence of the language of a people; and thus help to preserve the language and culture of such people. Ancient place-names can equally give an idea of the political or administrative influence an area once had on some other areas. It was commonly the practice in the days of yore that the subordinate or servile regions would give names to some places in the language of the ruling (feudal) or overseeing state. Similarly, place-names could serve as a reflection of the geographical spread or extent of settlements founded by invading powers, since such settlements bear names in the language of the invaders.

Toponyms are also necessary for other purposes such as trade and commerce, transportation, communication, regional and environmental planning, science and technology, successful conduct of elections and censuses, provision of social amenities and services, tourism, disaster management, search and rescue operations, etc. (SAGNC, 2002). A list of place-names is quite useful to telecommunication outfits and indeed other public and private organizations engaged in location-based or logistics/distributive business ventures and services.

Since the history of mankind began toponyms have always played crucial roles in effective state administration and military expedition. There is a strong link between place-names and environmental/landscape knowledge. Historically, a study of the names of places and topographical features can reveal much about how people viewed and related with the land. In the literary world, novelists and playwrights are often ably aided by geographical names to create the effect of realism in their works.

Indigenous cartography and toponyms

In their *Introduction* to Volume 2, Book 3 of the *History of Cartography*, which they edited, David Woodward and Malcolm Lewis declared that "Maps are seen through many different eyes." As a consequence, therefore, they went further to identify three broad yet overlapping categories of cartography: "cognitive or mental cartography", "performance or ritual cartography", and "material or artifactual cartography". A look at the indigenous cartographic landscape of Africa reveals the fact that the continent has always been involved in all three categories of cartographic endeavour; the emphasis, though, has more often been on cognitive and performance (social) cartography, rather than material cartography. Various indigenous communities both within and outside Africa have their own cartographic traditions, which are frequently stored within songs, stories and rituals; thus they are generally performative and process in nature (Johnson et al., 2006).

Indigenous cartography is a form of knowledge. It is that aspect of indigenous knowledge system (IKS) that deals with the identification of landscape places, features and events, including their form and spatial location, distribution, relationship and pattern. At least within the African context, indigenous cartography is frequently verbalized. The indigenous peoples of Africa largely practiced oral cartography rather than the contemporary hard copy or digital cartography we are so used to. Nonetheless, the deftness with which the indigenous people verbalized their cartographic or geographic knowledge created an incredible and indelible mental map in the minds of recipients of such information.

Pre-colonial Africa had flourishing traditional cartographies, the legacies of which still endure till date. In their separate works, Bassett (1998), Maggs (1998), and Uluocha (2010) have tried to draw attention to the various indigenous ways by which Africans mapped their worlds. Although it is hardly acknowledged on maps, academic literature, or some other official documents, the fact, however, remains that indigenous knowledge generally, and indigenous cartographies in particular, played a vital role in the various efforts of imperialists to map their newly acquired African territories. European and Arab explorers and colonial governments in Africa relied heavily on local informants and some other local sources for their acquisition of geospatial information eventually used in producing territorial maps of Africa. In particular, European travelers and explorers in Africa solicited and used both ephemeral and permanent maps constructed by the local residents (Bassett, 1998).

Toponyms are particularly key components of indigenous cartography. Generally, place names are very important in mapmaking, especially the production of topographical, administrative (geopolitical), physical, township, tourist, geological and other general maps. No map is complete without place-names. Map makers use

toponyms and their lettering for various purposes (Robinson et al., 1995, 406-407). Such functions include encoding the sounds that are the names of the features shown on the map; identifying landscape features and localities and thus distinguish them from one another; indicating the location of points (e.g. cities); showing the hierarchical order of geographical features; etc. Similarly, local place-names are essential components of indigenous cartography. They are used in oral, graphical and performance cartographies. As in the case of the Hawaiians, for instance, indigenous people use place-names as mnemonic symbols to encode their knowledge of the environment; the use of place-names in daily ritual performances like stories, chant, song and dance by the Hawaiians is considered a conscious act of re-emplacing genealogical connections, re-creating cultural landscapes, and re-generating cultural mores (Louis, 2004).

In topographic cartography all toponyms tend to be interpreted as symbols of physiognomic objects presented on topo maps. Physiognomic objects comprise natural and artificial physical objects, such as relief forms, water bodies, forests and other vegetation types, buildings, settlements, roads and so on. Naming a place or a geographical object is a powerful way of individualizing that place or object. Toponyms are also used to identify social and cultural objects. Hence, indigenous place-names equally denote a sense of culture.

Place names are widely recognized as essential in consistently and accurately referring to a place to prevent confusion; they are also commonly regarded as providing the most useful geographical reference system in the world. In the oldest pre-cartographic and pre-geodetic land documentation, toponyms were used as symbols of the place occupied by an object on the Earth's surface (Golaski, 2002). Thus, they defined, by description, where state frontiers and estate borders ran, as well as the position of different objects on land. Toponyms that have inherent geographical connotations are, in a sense, linguistic maps.

That toponyms play a very significant role in cartographic representations is indeed an age-long fact that is never in doubt. As noted by Golaski (2002, 4), "Toponyms used as symbols of the place occupied by an object on the Earth's surface, were used in the oldest pre-cartographic and pre-geodetic land documentation. They defined, by description, where state frontiers and estate borders ran, as well as the position of different objects on land. In this manner objects were identified many times over down the centuries." Cartographically, toponyms constitute fixed points of reference on maps; they are therefore, vitally important in the cartographic construction of landscape. The power of place naming in the construction of historical and contemporary geopolitical landscapes has been explored. Their classical work in this area has led Vuolteenaho and Berg (2009, 4) to submit that "In essence, ... the mapping of toponyms has formed an ancillary form of knowledge-

production in the service of a wider scientific-geopolitical project of knowing the world as accurately as possible as part of the process of controlling its spaces."

Indigenous African place-names have an enormous treasure of geographical information and knowledge inherent in them. In a typical traditional African society, place-names are used to succinctly describe geographical phenomena. Roden (1974)'s account of the use of place-names to identify various geographical conditions and features in Uganda typifies what is obtainable in a classic African society. As observed by Roden (1974, 82):

"A very prominent group of Ugandan place-names are those which describe or imply the physical characteristics of an area. Relief, climate, soils, hydrology, flora and fauna all feature in names throughout the country. Often the description is in terms of the suitability of an area for human activity – the fertility of the soil, the presence of water, reliability of rainfall, suitability for a particular crop, a river or swamp which endangers life, the occurrence of a tree or grass species of value for house building, tool making and handicrafts, and the presence of clay for pottery are all frequent examples. Other names suggest the type of land use, describing a prominent crop, the presence of grazing land and so on."

Geographical names are present in every map; although their role is largely complementary in nature. Toponyms play an even greater role in indigenous or performance cartography. Toponyms are vitally important elements of the verbal maps (or oral cartography) of the indigenous peoples of Africa. In Africa places are named descriptively either to give an idea of the nature of the topography or geographical setting, inform about the location, topology, hierarchy, orientation and spatial relationship of landscape features, or to indicate ownership, commemorate a community hero or notable event. In other words, embedded in every indigenous African toponym is also an indigenous cartographic sense. Simply put, place naming is a form of indigenous cartography, at least within the African context. The local people used toponyms to give verbal graphic descriptions and illustrations of the location of local resources as well as the history, geography and ethnic settlement patterns of their place.

Moreover, place-names are used to literally communicate vital spatio-temporal information on identity or description of geographical phenomena, location, direction/orientation (both spatial and temporal), relationships, forms and shapes, patterns, magnitude (size), hierarchy, numerical values, proximity, apparent height or depth, temporal dimensions, and so on.

Given the central role toponyms play in indigenous cartography, therefore, any significant distortion of the indigenous geographical names is tantamount to a mutilation of the unique indigenous cartography of the affected local people. The destruction or deformation of local place-names is a spatial and cartographic injustice; it amounts to tampering with the geographic knowledge

and cartographic heritage of the indigenous people. When indigenous place-names are deformed, the namescape component, which is a key element of the oral cartography of native people, is tainted. Arguably, when a local toponym is corrupted, deformed or replaced, it loses its meaning partially or totally, and its cartographic and other functions will be significantly affected.

ALTERATION OF AFRICAN LOCAL PLACE-NAMES

Early European and Arab explorers and settlers in Africa relied so much on maps, local histories, and interviews with local residents to get their linguistic information on local place-names. In the process, some of the indigenous place-names were significantly transformed – some were truncated while some were replaced outright. For example, writing specifically on hydronyms, Hudson (2013, 85) notes:

“When David Livingstone named Victoria Falls after his queen, he was well aware that the mighty cataract on the Zambezi already had a name. The Scottish explorer recorded in his journal that the African people who lived in the region called the waterfall Mosi-oa-Tunya, translated as ‘The Smoke That Thunders’. No doubt, the falls had long been known by a name, the surrounding area having been occupied by humans since the Palaeolithic era. Like Livingstone, some explorers recorded local names for waterfalls seen on their travels. Sometimes these names were retained, ...; more often they were replaced by European names.”

Obviously, some of the currently existing toponyms in Africa are but foreign misnomers for some indigenous African monikers. Even a cursory look at any administrative or physical map of Africa will reveal the fact that several of the place names of African countries, cities and physical features “are of non-African origin” (Yai, 1984, 40). For example, country names such as Nigeria, Central African Republic, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cameroon, Swaziland, etc., as well as city names like Lagos, Freetown, Monrovia, Libreville, etc., and names of physical features such as Victoria.

Lake, River Nile, Mount Kilimanjaro, etc., are all of foreign origin. Unfortunately, most of the foreign toponyms that places and features bear in Africa today are locally and linguistically incomprehensible – the local people simply do not know or understand what those non-indigenous place names mean.

Certain processes were involved in the deformation of the indigenous namescape of African communities. Löfström and Pansini (2011) identify essentially two situations that have often led to a large process of naming: colonization and revolution. In both cases there is usually a new power which needs to establish itself; and giving new names to places is one of the practices by which this new power asserts itself and gives visibility to its establishment.

Undoubtedly, colonialism played a very major role in the deformation of African indigenous place-names. According to Batoma (2006, 3), “Some of the names bestowed by European or Arab colonialists on African people and places tell more about the colonial mind of the namers and of their intentions than about the named African reality. This has been the case for example with European eponyms given to African places. Famous examples of toponyms are country names such as Ivory Coast [now Cote D’Ivoire], Rhodesia [now Zimbabwe], Sierra Leone and Upper Volta [now Burkina Faso], and city names such as Brazzaville, Dar-es-Salaam, Freetown and Leopoldville [now Kinshasa]. Another less brutal but more insidious means of colonial acculturation was the imposition of foreign spelling or orthography on African names.”

The cultural and language contact between Africans on one hand and the Arabs and Europeans on the other, is reflected in the place names of the African countries. Raper (2005) particularly identifies some of the effects the contact between Southern Africans and Portuguese, Dutch, English, French, and German had on South Africa’s toponyms, such as: (i) older names were altered, adapted, translated (wholly or in part), and supplanted; (ii) hybrid forms, with part of the name in one language and another part in a different language, came into being; (iii) many names were spelt in different ways by different people and at different times; (iv) some individual places came to bear more than one name, bestowed by different language groups. The variety of forms and spellings resulted in a measure of confusion and some problems in communication, with a concomitant wastage of time, expense and energy.

The North African region was equally not spared by the wave of local toponym deformation during the colonial epoch. Weghli (1998) alludes to the corruption of a large number of Amazigh place-names by the French and the Spaniards during their colonization of Algeria and Morocco. Furthermore, and rather curiously, “In the post-independence era, ... the governments of these [North African] countries ... gradually have been replacing Amazigh names by Arabic ones. They also have altered the spelling and the phonetics of some Amazigh names to conform to the Arabic language. In some other cases, the alterations went so far as to derive Arabic names from Amazigh ones, resulting in names with absurd meanings. Perhaps a formidable example of this type of alteration is the case of “Amechras,” name of a Kabyle village, which was deformed to give “Mecht Arras,” meaning “head-comb” in Arabic” (Weghli, 1998, 12).

The distortion or replacement of indigenous place-names in Africa was not only done through the instrumentality of imperial political administration but also through missionary activity by both the Muslim and Christian missionaries. In Northern Africa many local names were replaced with Arabic ones (Weghli, 1998). Similarly, in some districts in Uganda (Roden, 1974) and

several other places across Africa proselytized by White Christian Fathers, numerous existing place-names were simply replaced by more “Christian” alternatives.

Arguably, the Romanization of indigenous African toponyms equally played a major role in the deformation of some of the names. The term ‘Romanization’ as used in this paper, is a method of transliteration or transcribing of names (personal names and/or place-names) in the characters of the Roman alphabet. In simple terms, Romanization is a phonetic spelling system that involves writing names (or some other words) the way they sounded (to the hearer), using the Roman alphabet. Unfortunately, Romanization of local place-names by non-indigenes hardly conforms with or observes the orthography and diacritic symbols as would normally be used by the indigenes to alphabetize the names. As a result, the names are deformed or corrupted.

Through the process of Romanization, several African colonial place-names were transferred from native African languages to certain European languages by phonetically rendering the place-name in their own language, creating at best a close approximation. The African colonizers simply wrote down African toponyms using their own (the colonizers’ language) spelling for the sounds. For instance, the British colonizers anglicized names of towns and cities in colonies by penning down local African place-names using English language spelling for the sounds; and this was how, for instance, Oka (in Anambra State, Nigeria) became Awka, and Kadoma (in Zimbabwe) became Gatooma. Similarly, Mputu (Mozambique) was corrupted to Maputo (Portuguese); Coomasie (Ghana) was anglicized to Kumasi, same for Muqdisho (Somali) which was changed to Mogadishu (English), while Siteki (Swaziland) was deformed to become Stegi. In fact, the name Swaziland itself was a colonial rendition of the original name Bakamswati (which means ‘the people of Mswati’).

Toponymical deformation has often been a characteristic feature of imperialism. Cornevin (1984, 77) alludes to the fact that “The colonial powers gave names to places on maps and in official gazettes which were not always the same as the indigenous names.” Unscrupulous deformation of indigenous toponyms by the colonial powers seemed to be a naked display of their pseudo psychological sense of superiority over the colonized people. The colonialists believed that their advantageous position conferred on them what J. L. Calvet (cited in Yai 1984) called “the right to give a name”. More so, their aboriginal name changing inclination seemed to have been further bolstered by Winston Churchill’s one time declaration that “Everybody has a right to pronounce foreign names as he chooses”. The corruption or outright replacement of local names by the invaders was conceivably a reflection of what Pongweni (1983, 87) cited in Snodia et al. (2010, 26) rightly describe as the “linguistic prejudices and cultural chauvinism of the colonizers”.

Similarly, the colonizers used the place-name changing process to send a strong political message to the indigenous people, namely that they (the colonizers) were fully in charge. Apparently subscribing to this line of thought Snodia et al. (2010, 23) while reflecting on the situation in colonial Zimbabwe (formerly Southern Rhodesia) note:

“For the [British] settlers, the [English] names were a very effective way of entrenching and perpetuating white hegemony in the country [Southern Rhodesia]. .. This was a clear message that as a defeated people, the locals had lost all freedoms, including the freedom to an identity that the local names represented... The settlers used names for subordinating and assimilating the indigenous people, by undermining the use of their culture bound African names and thereby eroding the African value system, identity and self esteem.”

The alteration of African toponyms during the colonial time followed certain identifiable common processes. For instance, reflecting on the changes in geographical names in some parts of Igbo-speaking South-Eastern Nigeria, Okpala-Okaka (1995) identified three forms of place-names deformation during the era of colonization. These are:

i) Anglicization – this has to do with wrong transcription of local names into English spellings for easier pronunciation, e.g. Nawfia from Nne-Ofia, Awka instead of Oka, Nawgu instead of Nogu, Orifite from Ora-Ifite.

ii) Corruption – this is a deliberate change of a name to a nickname, or dropping of a letter (alphabet) from the spelling of the original name and replacing or not replacing the dropped alphabet with another, for easier pronunciation. Examples include Ozubulu from Ozo-Ubulu, Abagana from Mba-Agana.

iii) Truncation (or contraction) – this is the cutting of a single or compound name into two parts and retaining (using) the first part and dropping the rest, for shorter pronunciation. For example, Ibeku from Ibekume-Nwaonyeozo, Utuh from Utuh-Mbadike, Opi from Opinato, Leja from Leja-Ugwoke, Aba from Aba-Ngwa.

Colonial rule in Africa equally meant that certain European language(s) such as English, French, or Portuguese, etc., also became the official language of administration, education and communication in each of the affected countries. This development seriously affected African toponyms and by extension indigenous cartography in Africa. As rightly observed by Ormeling (2007, 121), “It is obvious that maps as part of the language of administrative infrastructure constructed [by the colonizers] will tend to be carried along with this trend [i.e. adoption of a foreign lingua franca], and that toponyms will suffer in this process. This introduction of official national unitary languages in multilingual countries [such as most African countries] poses a severe threat for the survival of many toponyms of minority language areas, as it will also affect existing names.”

The current versions of several place-names in the African continent are quite alien to the people. Since the names lost their original spelling and pronunciation, they also lost their original meaning and, hence, a vital aspect of their cartographic function. Table 1 contains few examples of indigenous African place-names that were deformed, corrupted, or replaced by foreigners.

Efforts at Restoring African Indigenous Toponyms

Across Africa the corruption of local toponyms is considered an act of injustice. There is, therefore, a generally felt dire need to correct the past injustices with regard to place names (Mbenzi, 2009, 1). In several post-colonial African countries, efforts have persistently been made to restore some place names to their pre-colonial indigenous names. In reality, there are only a few countries in post-colonial Africa that still retain their colonial names. The place-name restoration attempts in Africa are aimed at recording and promoting the use of indigenous names in lieu of their foreign or corrupted versions. Consequently, naming and renaming of places have continued to feature prominently in several African countries after independence. According to Batoma (2006, 3),

“During the period following the colonial era many leaders of the newly independent African countries started a process [sic] of de-nomination and/or re-nomination destined to restore to Africa its authentic identity. This process consisted of a restitution of original names to African places and people or the bestowing on these social entities of new African names. Although in most cases the name change was the result of the implementation of a top-down decision taken on behalf of the people, there have been some countries such as South Africa where some name changes have occurred as the result of a democratic process.”

In Namibia, the municipal authorities and various communities after independence began renaming places that bore colonial names after the national leaders (Mbenzi, 2009). Similarly, some towns in Zimbabwe which had retained local names but in corrupted form during the colonial era had these corrected to reflect the correct Shona pronunciation and to also restore their historical significance (Snodia et al., 2014). Most of the places named by the Belgians in the Democratic Republic of Congo have been reverted to their original indigenous names (Cornevin, 1984). Similarly, in post-apartheid (i.e. post 1994) South Africa intensive efforts are still being made to reinstate geographical names to their aboriginal forms; this is part of the broad decolonization process initiated in the country (Guyot and Seethal, 2007; Koopman, 2012; Duminy, 2014).

In Nigeria there have been persistent calls from various quarters since independence in 1960 for the country's name as well as those of cities, towns, streets, and some

other infrastructure, which are of foreign origins, to be changed. The debate on the renaming of the country took a rather dramatic turn lately when the issue was introduced and strongly canvassed at the country's recently concluded three-month National Conference organized by the federal government. Interestingly, of all the avalanche of new indigenous names so far proposed for the country, the one that seems to enjoy the nod of most advocates is “Republic of Songhai” or “United States of Songhai”, after the ancient Songhai Kingdom in West Africa. Municipal authorities in several Nigerian cities have been embarking on the renaming of some streets and other facilities bearing colonial appellations. For instance, in 2010 the authorities of Calabar South Local Council in Cross River State embarked on a street renaming project. Some of the streets in the area bearing foreign names were rechristened after some indigenes as a token of recognition and acknowledgement of their contributions to the development of the area. Justifying why the project was initiated, the Chairman of the Council stated that “the renaming of some of the streets in the area became necessary as some were named after colonial masters and had long lost their meanings while some had no meaning or bearing whatsoever” (www.thewillnigeria.com). Renaming of streets and some other public infrastructure bearing foreign designations is also common in Lagos, the largest city in Nigeria (Adebanwi, 2012).

The indigenous place-name restoration story is virtually the same in every post-colonial country in Africa. Table 2 contains a list of some foreign place-names in various African countries that were either restored to their original (indigenous) versions or replaced by new indigenous names, thus reflecting the widespread attempts made across the continent to restore, preserve, promote and use local toponyms.

Cartographic Imperativeness of Decolonizing Indigenous Place-Names

Indigenous place name restoration is quite significant from a cartographic perspective. If the indigenous cartography of once colonized territories is to be restored and preserved, then their deformed local toponyms must necessarily be decolonized. In a sense, place-name decolonization is a renaming process that involves returning adulterated native toponyms to their original form. In other words, place-name decolonization is an attempt to eliminate garbled, derogatory or erroneous names and, by so doing, restore the indigenous cartography of the natives. Cartography and toponyms are inseparable.

Cartography – be it cognitive, performance, or material – is a powerful tool for conferring uniqueness, legitimacy and a sense of dignity on any society, and the most potent force by which cartography achieves this feat is

Table 1. Some deformed, corrupted or replaced indigenous African toponyms.

Original (Indigenous) name	Deformed (foreign) version	Remarks
Suurveld (S/A*)	Albany	
Olifantshoek (S/A)	Alexandria	The name was changed in 1873 to Alexandria, after Alexander Smith, a Scottish minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in Uitenhage
Amandelboom (Afrikaans)	Williston	Amandelboom is Afrikaans for 'almond tree'
ChiShona ku dzima (Zim*)	Gadzema	ChiShona ku dzima means "to put out (fire)"
Jahunda (Zim)	Gwanda	The corruption to Gwanda is reputed to have occurred at the hands of one Andy Nicholson, who could not manage the true pronunciation and so called it Gwanda
Senka (Zim)	Gwelo	Gwelo is a corruption of the word iKwelo meaning "the steep place"
Marondera	Marandellas	
tshona langa or emtshonalanga (Zim)	Mashonaland	The phrase 'emtshonalanga', which means towards the setting sun, was corrupted into Mashonaland by those Europeans who neither understood the meaning nor succeeded in mastering the pronunciation
Chirinda or Cherinda (Zim)	Selinda	
Mutari (Zim)	Umtali	Umtali is a corruption of the ChiManyika word mutari meaning piece of metal. The reference is probably to the findings of gold in the old Penhalonga alluvial diggings
Tshwane (S/A)	Pretoria	
Polokwane (S/A)	Pietersburg	
Makhado (S/A)	Louis Trichardt	Makhado (named after King Makhado Ramabulana who was the King of Vhavenda from 1864 to 1895 in South Africa), was renamed Louis Trichardt by the colonialists
Musina (S/A)	Messina	Musina [meaning spoiler], is a Tshivenda word for copper. When colonialists conquered Venda Kingdom which included Musina, they misspelt and thus corrupted the name Musina into Messina
Mhlambanyatsi (S/A)	Buffelspruit	
Marapyane (S/A)	Skilpadfontein	
Mbhongo (S/A)	Allemandsdrift (or Almansdrift)	
Mokopane (S/A)	Potgietersrust	
Bela-Bela or Belabela (S/A)	Warmbaths	Bela-Bela (a Sesotho word meaning "hot spring" or "bubble bubble", in reference to the hot water springs in this area) was changed to Warmbaths
Modimolle (S/A)	Nylstroom	Modimolle literally means "the forefather's spirit has eaten"
Abela (S/A)	Abel	Abela means "to give"
Umzinyathi (S/A)	Buffalo	
Umbongintwini (S/A)	Ezimbokodweni	
Otjomuise (Namibia)	Windhoek	
Garibeb (Namibia)	Karibib	Garibeb means "place of farming activities"
!Usa-!khōs (Namibia)	Usakos	!Usa-!khōs means "place of holding one's forehead"
Anfa (Morocco)	Casablanca	Anfa is a Berber (Tamazight) word meaning "little hill"
Mezghenna (Morocco)	Mazagan (Eur) or Al Jadida (Arabic)	Mazagan is the European-corrupted form of Mezghenna
Asafi or Asif (Morocco)	Safi	Asafi (Asif), which means "river" in Tamazight was corrupted by the French to become Safi
Adrar n Idraren	Daren	Daren is the Arabicized name for the Atlas. The original Amazigh name is "Adrar n Idraren," meaning "mountain of mountains."
Amugdul (Morocco)	Mogador (Eur) or Essaouira (Arabic)	

Table 1. Contd.

Fas or Saf or isaffen	Fez or Fes (Eur)	Isaffen means rivers
Tagourart (Algeria)	Gourara	Tagourart means "castle"
Louata (Algeria)	Laghouat	Laghouat derives from "Laguanta," which is a Latin deformation of "Louata."
Asif n Isaffen (Morocco)	Oum Rbia (Arabic)	Asif n Isaffen means "river of rivers"
Sala	Sale (French)	Sala means "rock"
Tiniri (Algeria)	Tenere (French)	Tiniri means "desert."
Tin n rif (Canary Island)	Tenerife (Spanish)	Tin n rif means "that of the rif"
Titawin	Tetuan (Spanish)	Titawin means "springs" in Tamazight
Tanga (Tunisia)	Tinja	Tanga means "wave" in Tamazight
Tilmas (Algeria)	Tlemcen (French)	Tilmas means "water holes"
Taggurt (Algeria)	Touggourt	Taggurt means "door"
Dahomey	Benin Republic	
Al-Araish (Morocco)	Larache (Spanish)	
Ar-Ribat	Rabat (French)	Ar-Ribat means "the camp"
Talmist (Algeria)	Tlemcen (French)	
Asif wansifen (Morocco)	Oumm Arrabi (Arabic)	Asif wansifen is a Berber name meaning "river of rivers"
Ar-Rommani (Morocco)	Camp Marchand (French)	Ar-Romman means "pomegranate tree"
Tiffelt (Morocco)	Tiflet (French)	Tiffelt is a Berber term for "pepper"
Tittawin (Morocco)	Tetuan (Spanish)	Tittawin is a Berber name meaning "the springs"
Walili (Morocco)	Volubilis	Walili means "bay tree" in Berber
Ìlú Èbá-Òdàn (Nigeria)	Ibadan	Ìlú Èbá-Òdàn means the town at the junction of the savannah and the forest vegetation in Yoruba
Kanaba (Nigeria)	Calabar	Kanaba in Efik means survival of the fittest, or only the strong survive and live in the land of promise
Àkún mi rẹ (Nigeria)	Akure	Àkún mi rẹ in Yoruba means my string of beads has snapped
Agbadagreme (also Ogbaglee, Gbagleme or Gbagle), Nigeria	Badagry	Agbadagreme is a Yoruba term which refers to farm of Agbede, or a farmland near the swamp
Eko (Nigeria)	Lagos	Eko is a Bini name meaning war or military camp
Ubinu (Nigeria)	Benin City	Ubinu in Bini means land of inexhaustible resources
Igwe-Ocha (Nigeria)	Port Harcourt	Igwe-Ocha in Igbo means bright skyline
Ibani or Ubani (Nigeria)	Bonny (Portuguese)	

place-names. Since toponyms are more or less indispensable elements of cartography, restoring the indigenous toponyms of the once colonized African people equally means restoring their indigenous cartography and unique identity.

When local toponyms are defaced, the indigenous cartography of the affected society is directly inflicted a lasting injury. Hence, restoring indigenous place-names is about healing the injured cartographic culture of the local people. In other words, by decolonizing local toponyms the indigenous cartographic heritage of the people is restored and preserved.

Returning to original place-names goes a long way to preserving cartographic cultures and fixing wrongs. As rightly observed by Johnson (2007, 111), "Recovering

and using Natives' practices of mapping ... promote cultural survival and sovereignty."

Potential Challenges

Decolonizing indigenous African place-names is not an exercise conceived to be without some challenges. Nowhere in the world has reconstruction of former namescapes ever enjoyed a hitch-free, smooth ride; there are always some hiccups to contend with. The formal process of reclaiming the indigenous place-names may face some political, social, practical and financial obstacles. The programme could prove to be complicated and costly. The following are some of the potential

Table 2. Some foreign place-names changed to local ones in post-colonial Africa.

Foreign name (Old)	Local name (New)
Gold Coast	Ghana
Northern Rhodesia	Zambia
Southern Rhodesia or Rhodesia	Zimbabwe
Nyasaland	Malawi
Upper Volta	Burkina Faso
Stanleyville (in Democratic Republic of the Congo)	Kisangani
French Sudan	Mali
Malagasy	Madagascar
J. G .Strydom International Airport, Windhoek, Namibia	Hosea Kutako, International Airport
Talstreet (in Windhoek, Namibia)	Mandume Ndemufayo
Bülow Street (in Windhoek, Namibia)	Frans Aupa Indongo Street
Lourenço Marques (in Mozambique)	Maputo
French Guinea	Guinea
Portuguese Guinea	Guinea-Bissau
Livingstone (in Zambia)	Maramba
Salisbury (in Zimbabwe)	Harare
Gatooma (in Zimbabwe)	Kadoma
Marandellas (in Zimbabwe)	Marondera
Umtali (in Zimbabwe)	Mutare
Gwelo (in Zimbabwe)	Gweru
Sipolilio (in Zimbabwe)	Chipuriro
Shabanie (in Zimbabwe)	Zvishavane
Inyanga (in Zimbabwe)	Nyanga
Fort Victoria (in Zimbabwe)	Masvingo
Que Que (in Zimbabwe)	Kwekwe
Marandellas (in Zimbabwe)	Marondera
Hartley (in Zimbabwe)	Chegutu
Lake Mcllwaine (in Zimbabwe)	Lake Chivero
French Somaliland	Djibouti
Bemersdorp (in South Africa)	Manzini
Camp Boucheron (in Morocco)	Al Gara
Fort Lamy (in Chad)	N'Djamena (capital city of Chad)
Camp Monod (in Morocco)	Sidi Allal A-Bahraoui
Port-Lyautey (in Morocco)	Al-Qunaytira
Mogador (in Morocco)	As-Sawira
Camp Christian (in Morocco)	Azzuhaylija
Camp Boulhaut (in Morocco)	Benslimane
Basutoland	Lesotho
Bathurst	Banjul (capital city of Gambia)
Bechuanaland	Botswana
Belgian Congo, Congo Free State	Democratic Republic of Congo

Source: varied.

challenges that could make the place names decolonization process an uphill task.

- There is still the lack of a coordinated movement to rename places and landmarks in most African countries.
- Political opposition may equally arise from some quarters to forestall the renaming project. Some political

pressure groups may vehemently oppose the renaming project, rather preferring the maintenance of the status quo.

- Changing the name of a place could also face some logistical and fiscal challenges. There would necessarily be the need to replace existing maps, signs and legal documents to reflect the new changes in geographical

names. New cartographic documents are needed to record the change. The drawing of a new map corresponds to the production of a new spatial knowledge in which toponyms are included and by which toponyms can be modified (Löfström and Pansini, 2011). Such a replacement may require significant financial outlay.

- The renaming exercise has the potency of engendering public confusion. A cross-section of the public may not readily or easily adapt to the new changes in place-names. Some others, including the international community, may be in a dilemma as to which of the names to use in official papers.

- There is also the possibility of the name-change phenomenon suffering a major setback owing to outright rejection or apathy on the part of a cross-section of the society who may not readily see any justification for such a programme.

The Way Forward

Admittedly, over the years some form of decolonization of place-names has been taking place in various countries of post-colonial Africa. Nevertheless, the rechristening of some places and features in some African countries, particularly urban centres, is largely sporadic, uncoordinated and ad hoc in nature. A robust, synchronized and comprehensive place-name decolonization process would necessarily be required. Each affected country needs a well-articulated national toponymical policy and a corresponding institution fully backed with appropriate legislation and charged with the responsibility of restoring and maintaining the integrity of native geographical names. Besides, national projects to research, reinstate, document, disseminate and preserve indigenous place-names should be initiated by each country.

Various stakeholders including the native people should, as much as possible, be consulted and carried along in the decolonization exercise, to drastically reduce potential frictions and hence ensure success. As noted earlier some people might be in doubt, dilemma or confusion as per which name to use in official documentation. A conceivable way out of this confusion could be to write the local names alongside their foreign versions on maps, signs and other official documents. New place names maps of various African communities, similar to the *Menominee Place Names Map* (Vine, 2013, cited in Ripp, 2014), should be created to show the names, places and landforms in both the foreign and original local languages. Local place names are place-based knowledge, an aspect of traditional knowledge, which must be recognized, respected, promoted, protected, preserved, and transmitted. One sure way of achieving all this is to map the indigenous place names in their original form.

A formidable research team of experts comprising geographers, topographers, toponymists, historians,

cartographers, linguists, onomasticians, etymologists, ethnologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and transcribers would be needed to restore the places renamed or imposed by the imperialists to their original African names. The team should identify, collect, record and preserve the aboriginal geographical names. Moreover, the team would be expected to unearth the etymology of the local toponyms and also resolve the several inconsistencies that dog the continent's place-name orthography. Indigenous communities should have the right to decide on their toponyms. This would be in line with recommendation 4b of the United Nations (1968) article 4d, which provides that geographical names should be recorded in the form in which they are known locally, together with the locally accepted generic names, with their correct orthography and pronunciation. Without a doubt, given the sheer size and linguistic diversity of many African countries, the task is quite enormous and promises to be a most daunting one; yet it is doable. Clear-cut guidelines for the recording and use of aboriginal place-names would need to be worked out.

A National Geospatial Data Infrastructure (NGDI) should be established by each African country, and a standardized geographical names databank should be a major component of the NGDI. To this end, the government of each nation should set up a Geographical Names steering committee whose sole responsibility it would be to collate, indigenize (where necessary), sort, standardize, manage, and publish a comprehensive, up-to-date and authentic digital multisensory list of the indigenous place-names of all the extant place-names in their country. No documents act as much a repository of toponyms as geographical gazetteers, name indexes, maps and atlases. Consequently, geographical gazetteers containing the comprehensive name lists for a country in which each name is accompanied primarily by information on location, and also by data on variant names, the etymology (history) of name or of place, orthographies of the names and possibly other items should be published. Moreover, new series of large-scale topographical maps as well as atlases of each country detailing the restored original names alongside their foreign versions should be compiled.

The restored indigenous place names should also be enshrined in official documents and added to school curricular and school atlases. More so, a Dictionary of Indigenous African Place Names would need to be compiled.

Conclusion

When place-names are despoiled they lose their original cartographical, geographical, historical, linguistic, and socio-political meanings, significance and functions. And this is exactly what has happened to many African indigenous place-names. The call for decolonizing the

continent's native geographical names as espoused in this paper is in tandem with the spirit and doctrine of African renaissance currently pervading the entire continent. The benefits of place-names are quite legion. By and large, place-names are essential to asserting and maintaining a people's socio-cultural and historical heritage, expressing their indigenous geographic and cartographic knowledge, stamping their peculiar identity as well as ensuring socio-economic development. The defaced or foreign toponyms are a symbol of imperial imposition which tends to whittle down the richness of the African peoples' culture and heritage. It is still possible to right the wrong; the indigenous cartography of Africa and Africans must be preserved; and this can be effectively achieved by reverting to the original place-names. Decolonizing and mapping indigenous place names will not only help in preserving the indigenous place names and cartography of Africa, but also the languages and traditional cultures of various native African societies.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

REFERENCES

- Adebanwi W (2012). "Glocal naming and shaming: Toponymic (inter) national relations on Lagos and New York's streets". *Afr. Affairs* 111(445):640-661.
- Bassett TJ (1998). "Indigenous Mapmaking in Intertropical Africa." edited by David Woodward and G. Malcolm Lewis, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. In *The History of Cartography Volume Two, Book Three: Cartography in the Traditional African, American, Arctic, Australian, and Pacific Societies*, pp.24-48.
- Batoma A (2006). "African Ethnonyms and Toponyms: An Annotated Bibliography". Iowa Research Online. Accessed October 13, 2014. <http://ir.uiowa.edu/ejab/vol10/iss1/1>. Electronic J. Africana Bibliography, Vol. 10.
- Cornevin R (1984). "The Standardization of the Spelling of African Names: toponyms and ethnonyms." Paris: UNESCO. In *African Ethnonyms and Toponyms* pp.68-79.
- Duminy J (2014). "Street renaming, symbolic capital, and resistance in Durban, South Africa". *Environment and Planning D: Soc. Space* 32(2):310-328.
- Fasi ME (1984). "Toponymy and Ethnonymy as Scientific Aids to History." Paris: UNESCO. In *African Ethnonyms and Toponyms* pp.18-22.
- Golaski J (2002). "Characteristic features of toponym objects and their dynamics." Paper presented at the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Berlin, 27 August-5 September 2002.
- Guyot S, Seethal C (2007). "Identity of place, places of identities, change of place names in post-apartheid South Africa." *South Afr. Geogr. J.* 89(1):55-63.
- Hudson BJ (2013). "The Naming of Waterfalls." *Geogr. Res.* 51(1):85-93.
- Jimoh BO (2014). "Decolonizing the disciplines: a historical study of revolutions and paradigm shifts in ifa as a divination theory of knowledge." Accessed July 19. http://www.cbaac77.com/6_international_conference/Balogun%20Ola_dapo%20Jimoh.pdf
- Johnson JT, Louis RP, Pramono AH (2006). "Facing the Future: Encouraging Critical Cartographic Literacies In Indigenous Communities." *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 4(1):80-98.
- Johnson KL (2007). "Writing Deeper Maps: Mapmaking, Local Indigenous Knowledges, and Literary Nationalism in Native Women's Writing." *Stud. Am. Indian Literatures* 19(4):103-120.
- Koopman A (2012). "The post-colonial identity of Durban." In *Names and Identities*, 133-159, edited by B. Helleland, C.-E. Ore and S. Wikström, Oslo Stud. Lang. 4(2).
- Lawal AA (1992). "The Traditional Methods of Preserving History and Culture." Lagos: Nigerian National Commission for UNESCO. In *Popular Traditions of Nigeria*, pp.10-22.
- Löfström J, Pansini V (2011). *Toponyms and Cartography: Historical Perspective and Linguistic Challenges*. Accessed August 25, 2014. http://icaci.org/files/documents/ICC_proceedings/ICC2011/Oral_PresentationsPDF/D4-Toponyms_on_maps_and_on_GeoDB/CO-374.pdf
- Louis RP (2004). "Indigenous Hawaiian Cartography in Search of Common Ground." *Cartographic Perspectives* 48:7-23.
- Maggs T (1998). "Cartographic Content of Rock Art in Southern Africa." In *The History of Cartography Volume Two, Book Three: Cartography in the Traditional African, American, Arctic, Australian, and Pacific Societies*, 13-23, edited by David Woodward and G. Malcolm Lewis, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mbenzi PA (2009). *The Management of Place Names in the Post-Colonial Period in Namibia*, United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, Working Paper No. 67.
- Nast HJ (2005). *Concubines and Power: Five Hundred Years in a Northern Nigerian Palace*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Okpala-Okaka C (1995). "Changes in Geographical Names: a case study of some Local Government Areas in South-Eastern Nigeria (Part 1)" In *Proceedings of the 17th Annual Conference*, Minna, October 31 – November 4, pp.84-88. Lagos: Nigerian Cartographic Association.
- Ormeling F (2007). "Minority Toponyms – the Western Europe Experience." In *Ormeling's Cartography*, edited by E. Heere and M. Storms, 117-124. Netherlands Geographical Studies.
- Pissarra M (2009). "Decolonizing art in Africa: some preliminary thoughts on the relevance of the discourse on decolonization for contemporary African art, with particular reference to post-apartheid South Africa." (Accessed July 19, 2014). <http://www.asai.co.za/forum.php?id=73>.
- Raper PE (2005). *New Dictionary of Southern African Place Names*, 3rd Edition. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers.
- Ripp M (2014). "Mapping Menominee Culture: the process of ethically recording language." (Accessed September 2, 2014). http://blogs.nelson.wisc.edu/badrivercapstone/wp-content/uploads/sites/112/2014/04/Ripp_MappingMenomineeCulture.pdf
- Robinson AH, Morrison JL, Muehrcke PC, Kimerling AJ, Guptill SC (1995). *Elements of Cartography*, 6th Edition. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Roden D (1974). "Some Geographical Implications from the Study of Ugandan Place-names". *East Afr. Geogr. Rev.* 12:77-86.
- SAGNC (South African Geographical Names Council) (2002). *Handbook on Geographical Names*, Pretoria: Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology.
- Snodia M, Muguti T, Mutami N (2010). "Political Dialoguing Through the Naming Process: The Case of Colonial Zimbabwe (1890-1980)." *J. Pan African Stud.* 3(10).
- Snodia M, Tasara M, Nicholas M (2014). "Deconstructing the Colonial Legacy through the Naming Process in Independent Zimbabwe". *J. Stud. Soc. Sci.* 6(1):71-85.
- Uluocha NO (2010). "A Synopsis of Nigeria's Indigenous Cartographic Heritage." *Cartographic J.* 47(2):164-172.
- United Nations (1968). *Report of the UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names*, London (1967).
- Vuolteenaho J, Berg LD (2009). "Towards Critical Toponymies". In *Critical Toponymies: the contested politics of place naming*, 1-18, edited by Lawrence D. Berg and Jani Vuolteenaho, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
- Weghliis A (1998). "Amazigh Toponymy". *The Amazigh Voice*, 7(2):12-15.

Yai O (1984). "African Ethnonymy and Toponymy: reflections on decolonization." Paris: UNESCO. In African Ethnonyms and Toponyms, pp.39-50.



African Journal of History and Culture

Related Journals Published by Academic Journals

- Educational Research and Reviews
- Philosophical Papers and Reviews
- Journal of Fine and Studio Art
- Journal of Languages and Culture
- Journal of Music and Dance
- Journal of Media and Communication Studies

academicJournals