

## Subversion, Resistance and Contestations

# African Social Studies Series

*Editorial Board*

Preben Kaarsholm (*Roskilde University*)  
Jeremy Prestholdt (*UC San Diego*)

VOLUME 50

The titles published in this series are listed at [brill.com/afss](http://brill.com/afss)

# Subversion, Resistance and Contestations

*The Politics of Names and Naming in Zimbabwe*

*Edited by*

Tanaka Chidora  
Zvinashe Mamvura  
Sheunesu Mandizvidza



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Cover illustration: 'Human face icons' – iStock.

The Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available online at <https://catalog.loc.gov>  
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2025947682>

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: [brill.com/brill-typeface](http://brill.com/brill-typeface).

ISSN 1568-1203

ISBN 978-90-04-74448-6 (paperback)

ISBN 978-90-04-74449-3 (e-book)

DOI 10.1163/9789004744493

Copyright 2026 by Koninklijke Brill BV, Plantijnstraat 2, 2321 JC Leiden, The Netherlands.

Koninklijke Brill BV incorporates the imprints Brill, Brill Nijhoff, Brill Schöningh, Brill Fink, Brill mentis, Brill Wageningen Academic, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Böhlau and V&R unipress.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher. Requests for re-use and/or translations must be addressed to Koninklijke Brill BV via [brill.com](http://brill.com) or [copyright.com](http://copyright.com).

For more information: [info@brill.com](mailto:info@brill.com).

This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

# Contents

- List of Figures and Tables VII  
Notes on Contributors VIII
- 1 Introduction: Names as Historical Archives 1  
*Tanaka Chidora, Zvinashe Mamvura and Sheunesu Mandizvidza*
  - 2 Names as Sites of Violence and Memory Erasure in Colonial Zimbabwe 17  
*Jacob Mapara and Nomalanga Mpfu-Hamadziripi*
  - 3 (Re)Naming the White Farm(er): Towards Subversion and the Modelling of a ‘Native Chronotope’ in Selected Zimbabwean Fictional Works 39  
*Sheunesu Mandizvidza*
  - 4 ‘The Dual-Faced Toponym’: Subversion and Contestations surrounding the Name Zimbabwe 62  
*Zvinashe Mamvura*
  - 5 Not Naming as Resistance: Yvonne Vera’s *Without a Name* (1994) 83  
*Tanaka Chidora*
  - 6 Naming and Remembering the Unsayable  
*Reflecting Gukurahundi through Onomastic Strategies in Christopher Mlalazi’s Running with Mother and Novuyo Rosa Tshuma’s House of Stone* 102  
*Gibson Ncube and Yemurai Gwatirisa*
  - 7 Caricaturing the Names “New Dispensation” and “Second Republic”: NoViolet Bulawayo’s *Glory* (2022) and the Thesis on Political Madness 121  
*Kundai Watson Fingson*
  - 8 Onomastic Palimpsests and the Discourse of Negative Political Propaganda in Zimbabwe 147  
*Sambulo Ndlovu*

- 9 From *IDEAS* to *SMART BUILDERS* against #Team ZANU–PF: Analysing Zimbabwe’s 2018 Election Manifestoes’ Acronyms and Their ‘Faces’ 169  
*Tsiidzai Matsika*
- 10 Decolonising Zimbabwean Music? Urban Grooves Artistes and the Politics of Naming in Post-2000 ZANUfied Zimbabwe 199  
*Tanaka Chidora and Doreen Rumbidzai Tivenga*
- 11 The Politics of Language in the Naming of Places and Streets in Chiredzi Urban and Surrounding Areas 225  
*Steyn Khesani Madlome*
- 12 A Linguistic Landscape in Motion: the SeSotho/SeBirwa of Gwanda Promotion and Visibility, a Case of Green Horse (Pitsi Etala) Bus Company 241  
*Liketso Dube*
- Index 263

# Figures and Tables

## Figures

- 2.1 Map of Rhodesia 24
- 8.1 *Mwonzorewa* memes 156
- 8.2 *Mwonzorewa* meme 156
- 8.3 *Thokošanu* meme 158
- 8.4 *EDiot* meme 159
- 8.5 *EDiot* and *Zanoid* memes 160
- 8.6 *Poo tin* meme 162
- 8.7 UMP abbreviation troll 164
- 8.8 ZESA abbreviation troll 165
- 12.1 Front of Bus No. 01 251
- 12.2 Back of Bus No. 01 252
- 12.3 Bus No. 03—Holokile Ntate 253
- 12.4 Bus No. 08—Kgotso Ebe Lelona 254

## Tables

- 4.1 Names of towns in the Mthwakazi Republic 75
- 4.2 Names of provinces in the Mthwakazi Republic 76

## Notes on Contributors

### *Tanaka Chidora*

lectures in the Department of Literary Studies at the University of Malawi and is also a research fellow at the University of the Free State (South Africa). In 2021, he received the Humboldt postdoctoral fellowship to research on violence, memory and literature in Zimbabwe. His monograph will be published in 2026. He has a PhD in English from the University of the Free State and has further research interests in popular culture, world literature, transculturality, populism, speculative fiction from Anglophone Africa and Afrodiasporic writing. He is also a creative writer. His first collection of poems, *Because Sadness is Beautiful?* was published in 2019 and the manuscript of his forthcoming debut novel, *Born Location*, was longlisted for the Island Prize. Additionally, he is the Co-chief Editor of *Matatu: Journal for African Literary and Cultural Studies*, and Associate Editor for *Kairos: Journal of Critical Symposium* and *Feminist Encounters*.

### *Yemurai Gwatirisa*

is Adjunct Lecturer of German in the Department of Education and Language Skills, Faculty of Health and Education at Botho University in Gaborone (Botswana). She completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule-Aachen University (Germany). In 2023, she was awarded the African Peacebuilding Network Individual Research Fellowship by the Social Science Research Council. She is an intercultural trainer and trainer of trainers for Goethe Institute Johannesburg's Pre-integration—Living and Working in Germany (AMIF) Programme. Her research interests are in memory culture, cross- and intercultural studies, the teaching of German as a foreign language, gender and literary studies. She is a co-author of the textbook for German language learners in Africa, *Und jetzt WIR*, which is currently being used in many schools in Africa.

### *Liketso Dube*

is a lecturer at Great Zimbabwe University. His research interests are in language policy, indigenous languages promotion, language policy and rights, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Onomastics and IsiNdebele/IsiZulu literature and culture. He holds a PhD in African Languages and Literature, Master of Education Degree in Curriculum and Arts, a Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree in African Languages and Culture and a Diploma in Education.

*Kundai Watson Fingson*

graduated with a PhD in English in the Department of English at the University of the Free State (Qwaqwa Campus). He is also a Junior Lecturer of English as a Medium for Learning and Teaching in the Department of Education at the same university. He has publications on the legitimization of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwean literature. His research interests include the political/politicised constitutions of Zimbabwean nationhood, hegemonic discourses and the intersection between African cosmologies and madness/mental illness in African Literature.

*Steyn Khesani Madlome*

is a full-time senior lecturer at Great Zimbabwe University in the Robert Mugabe School of Heritage and Education, HOD for Languages, Media and Communication Department, and UNISA Research Fellow, Department of African Languages in the College of Human Sciences. He holds a PhD degree in Xitsonga, Masters of Arts in Xitsonga, and BA Honours in Xitsonga from the University of Venda (RSA), Bachelor of Arts degree (Mathematics, Xitsonga and Philosophy) from Great Zimbabwe University and a Diploma in Education from Mutare Teachers College. Madlome is currently a Research fellow at the University of South Africa (UNISA). His areas of research are onomastics, translation and interpreting studies, linguistics, culture, indigenous knowledge systems, sociolinguistics, African languages Technologies and digital humanities. He is comfortable with both quantitative and qualitative methods of research. He does some consultancy work in translation, voice-overs, transcription, editing for NGOs and Governmental institutions and has taken part in language planning matters in Zimbabwe as a member of the National Languages Advisory Committee (NALACO).

*Zvinashe Mamvura*

was awarded an Alexander von Humboldt Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Department of African Studies, Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany (2019–2022). He is a research fellow in the Department of African Languages at the University of South Africa. His research interests include Onomastics, Memory Studies, Gender Studies, Sociolinguistics, Language Planning and Policy and African Cultural Studies. His recent publications appear in the following journals: *Urban Geography*, *Urban Forum*, *African Studies*, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, *Geopolitics* and *GeoJournal*. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7856-918X>

*Sheunesu Mandizvidza*

holds a DPhil in English. His research interests and areas of publication cover diverse areas of (auto)biography, life writing, the interface of literature and history in exploring the Land Question in Zimbabwe, and African, Diasporic and Comparative literature. His interests also extend to the interface between literature and history in reading memory and trauma in Zimbabwean. Sheunesu is currently working on a special 'Writing Zimbabwe' project which will culminate in the recording of the lives of important national figures. He currently teaches in the Centre for Communication Studies at Midlands State University (MSU) in Zimbabwe.

*Jacob Mapara*

is a professor and the Director of the Institute of Lifelong Learning and Development Studies at Chinhoyi University of Technology, Zimbabwe. Dr. Mapara has research interests in indigenous knowledge, onomastics and decoloniality. He endeavors to celebrate the diversity of human cultures, hence his stand against mono-culturalism, mono-lingualism and mono-epistemology. Mapara is a firm believer in the co-creation of global knowledges. He has written and researched extensively in the areas of indigenous knowledge and living heritage. Mapara is a holder of a Doctor of Literature and Philosophy (DLitt et Phil) Degree in African Languages from UNISA.

*Tsiidzai Matsika*

is a lecturer in the Languages, Literature and Culture Department at the University of Zimbabwe. She is a research fellow at the University of the Free State in the English Department. She holds a PhD in English from the University of Free State. Her PhD thesis looks at the politics of sustainability as reflected in Zimbabwean political texts. She has worked on policy analysis, language, gender and sustainable development issues. She is passionate about advocacy in policy and gender issues. She teaches modules on literature and gender, governance and development and research methods to undergraduate and postgraduate students.

*Nomalanga Mpfu-Hamadziripi*

is Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics with twenty-four (24) years' experience in university teaching, training, research and administration. She holds a PhD in Linguistics from the University of Oslo, Norway, a master of arts degree from the University of Zimbabwe and a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher and Tertiary Education from the Great Zimbabwe University. She is the Director of the Teaching and Learning Institute and Associate Professor of

Communication Skills at Marondera University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology. Her publications include books, dictionaries, book chapters, journal articles, a monograph and reference manuals.

*Gibson Ncube*

lectures at Stellenbosch University. He has held fellowships supported at Oxford University (UK), Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (South Africa), the National Humanities Center (USA) and Leeds University Centre for African Studies (UK). He has published widely in the fields of comparative literature, gender and queer studies as well as cultural studies. He was the 2021 Mary Kingsley Zochonis Distinguished Lecturer (African Studies Association UK). He sits on the Editorial Boards of the following journals: *Journal of Literary Studies*, the *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, the *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, the *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, the *African Journal of Gender and Religion* as well as *Imbizo: International Journal of African Literary and Comparative Studies*. He is the current Editor-in-Chief of the *South African Journal of African Languages* and the French Book Review Editor of the *Canadian Journal of African Studies*.

*Sambulo Ndlovu*

is a professor of linguistics at the University of Eswatini and Great Zimbabwe University. He is also a Research Associate at the University of South Africa. He holds a PhD in linguistics from UCT, and his research areas are onomastics, socio- and anthropological linguistics, and cultural studies. His latest books are *Naming and Othering in Africa: Imagining supremacy and inferiority through language* and *Onomastic Performatives: Names and naming from an anthropological linguistic perspective*.

*Doreen Rumbidzai Tivenga*

is a lecturer at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa, where she also received her PhD in English Literary and Cultural Studies. Her research interests include urban youth cultures, performances and identities, youth literatures, popular and celebrity culture and the new media. Doreen has presented papers at both local and international conferences, and has published and co-published book chapters and articles in peer-reviewed journals on the relationship between music, youth identities and the contemporary Zimbabwean experience, the role played by the new media and popular culture in addressing political injustices in contemporary Zimbabwe, literary depictions of South African youth experiences in the post-apartheid era and life narratives in the context of the corona virus pandemic in South Africa.