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Humanising and Harmonising Africans through Poetry: The Chirikure Chirikure Example

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Abstract

Tapping from Chirikure's poetry anthologies, this paper is a conscious engagement with Chirikure's contribution to humanization and harmonization of African people. It is stressed in this paper that Chirikure is a leading figure in repudiating existential nihilism. It is argued here that Chirikure's offerings reveal relentless commitment to 'setting afoot' new men and women who are subjects and not objects. Against this background, it is also observed in the paper that while Chirikure is able to see the indispensability of Afrocentric action for liberation and progress, he seems to "blame the victim for a crime" Achebe (2009) instead of the systems that are responsible for objectifying Africans. The paper is couched in and guided by Afrocentricity.

Key words: Poetry, Humanising, Harmonising, Afrocentricity

Introduction

Following myths about Africa and Africans created to serve colonialism, Chinua Achebe sees the role of his works set in the past as that of humanizing Africans who had suffered and continue to suffer objectification by the whites. He also rightly observes that a work of art that

celebrates dehumanization, which depersonalizes a portion of the human race cannot be called a great work of art. Against the background of expansionist Western capitalist imperialism, Africans are often objectified or dehumanized. It can therefore be argued that

humanization cannot be a preserve of works set in the past in so far as the neocolonial environments in which Africans find themselves after formal colonization are equally if not even more dehumanizing. This paper examines the humanizing vocation inherent in the poetry of Chirikure. It is argued in this paper that while Chirikure is an active member in the struggle for the humanization of the African in some instances he tends to blame the victims of the situation.

Humanization, harmonization and dehumanization: an African perspective

Gray (2001:90) observes that the meta-constants: humanizing and harmonizing constitutes the priority principle of Afrocentric thought and praxis. It is the priority principle because Afrocentric thought and praxis “strive constantly to humanize and harmonize,” They are the overarching omnipresent constants of Afrocentric thought and praxis. The principle is non-negotiable. He also stresses that any effort or product qualifying as Afrocentric demonstrates the intent to humanize African people. Any such effort also demonstrates a commitment to restoring and maintaining harmony within African persons and the African community, and thereafter, between the African communities, the

ecosphere, and all communities. By humanizing, Gray (2001) implies commitment to inviting African people to stand tall and realize their full potential. In this paper, it is Chirikure’s commitment to “encourage or equip African people to be fully human and to cultivate or create true harmony in his writing” that is under scrutiny. By fully human, Gray (2001:90) implies “being rewarded with profound humanness ...it is certainly about African people living life on human, humane terms now.” Freire (1997:26) observes the following on dehumanization:

Dehumanization, which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different) those who have stolen it, is a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human. This distortion occurs within history; but it is not an historical vocation. Indeed, to admit of dehumanization as an historical vocation would either lead to either cynicism or total despair. The struggle for humanization, for the emancipation of labour, for the overcoming of alienation, for the affirmation of men and women as persons would be meaningless.

Freire (1996) decidedly contends that

while both humanization and dehumanization are real alternatives, only the first is the people's vocation. He further observes that humanization is constantly negated, yet it is affirmed by that very negation. Freire (1996:25-26) observes that "it is thwarted by injustice, exploitation, oppression, and the violence of the oppressors; it is affirmed, by the yearning of oppressed for freedom and justice, and by their struggle to recover their lost humanity."

Against the backdrop of both endogenous and exogenous forces that impact on the post-independence life-world and given the dehumanizing nature of this environment humanization cannot be a preserve of literature set in the past. The world continues to pose serious challenges that tend to objectify Africans to the extent that humanizing the victims of the anti-life environment becomes particularly essential. It is argued in this article, therefore, that Chirikure's poetry is a voice of an African who sees value in the restoration of African dignity. His voice is a voice of humanization.

Humanizing Vocation Unveiled

Chirikure is preoccupied with humanizing his subjects through his creative output. The humanizing vocation is striking in his poetry. He demonstrates commitment to

challenging self-depreciation and it is argued here that this is a manifestation of humanization. He unlocks the creative spirit of people who are overwhelmed by their life situations. His poetry reveals a victorious thought which is central in African philosophy of existence. This victorious thought is one that is referred to by Gwekwerere et al (2013:2) as the Afrotriumphalist perspective which is "an Africa-centred, life-affirming critical canon that foregrounds the necessity and possibility of going beyond the challenges that threaten the survival, freedom and dignity African people." Therefore, Chirikure is a committed writer in resurrecting African people from the incapacitating shackles of neocolonialism which dehumanizes and castrates them. He deconstructs self-depreciation and emphasizes the importance of active engagement in social processes as opposed to blind acceptance of life conditions. His poetry reverberates with echoes of "African movement from the periphery to the centre of the African struggle for dignified existence," Gwekwerere et al (ibid:3).

Untying the Shackles of Self-depreciation

Freire (1996:45) holds that self-depreciation is:

Another characteristic of the oppressed which derives from

the internalization of the opinion of the oppressor's hold of them. So often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything, that they are sick, lazy and unproductive -that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness.

Chirikure's writing reveals a deep understanding of the incapacitation that goes along with neocolonialism. His poetry reveals an understanding that neocolonialism is limiting and strips people of the confidence necessary for struggle. This paper is a reading of Chirikure's poetry as 'pedagogy of the oppressed,' (Freire, 1997). Chirikure's creative offering provides critical consciousness for Africans in as far as it challenges Africans never to accept the fatalistic logic of accepting their condition of being dominated as God-given. Through his writing, Chirikure stresses the point that if African people are to liberate themselves they need to be informed and knowledgeable of their mental occupation which implies a condition where a man allows another man to control his thinking. According to Belizaire (2008) it is a shame for a man to allow his thinking to be controlled by another man, for this is a threat to his manhood and a deadly poison to his right of existence.

In a world that continually poses challenges to the very fact of survival, Chirikure's poetry revolves around the importance of knowledge as the basis of any effort towards liberation of Africans. It is Belizaire (ibid:50) who reminds us that a "man without knowledge is weak and therefore unprepared to face the real circumstances of life. It requires knowledge to be mentally tough. It requires knowledge to defend, and it requires an ongoing acquisition of information for a black man to be an active combatant in the search for more humane life conditions. This implies that knowledge humanizes while lack of it dehumanizes. Knowledge is therefore necessary for transcendence. Through his poetry, Chirikure seems to underline the importance of self-confidence and self-respect. Like Nkosi (1965:109), Chirikure holds that:

Before Africans can make a contribution to world civilization it seems... axiomatic that they must achieve self-confidence and self-respect, and this confidence can only be achieved through economic and political power. A nation of paupers cannot contribute anything of worth to the world and the safety of such a nation among powerful nations of the world is greatly questionable.

In 'Simuka' (stand up) the poet challenges the people to transcend self-depreciation and 'fear of freedom.' Chirikure exposes the pathological fear that grips the dominated people which he sees as an impediment to struggle. His thesis is that oppression produces passive people who end up accepting oppression as a natural condition. It objectifies not only the dominated people in a society but the oppressor. 'Simuka' is therefore a voice of an African calling on fellow Africans to transcend object-hood brought about by powerlessness and become inevitable subjects who are actively committed to change life for the better. The poet holds the view that self-depreciation disempowers the dominated and in turn rewards the oppressor. Chirikure challenges the dominated whose self-esteem is at its lowest level to regain their self worth and begin to view themselves as masters of their own destiny. Chirikure challenges the people to conquer fear in line with Achebe's (2009) contention that fear and hate are two of humanity's most destructive and limiting emotions. Derived from a biblical story in Matthew 9 verses 1-8, the phrase 'simuka ufambe' (stand up and walk) challenges the people to intervene practically so as to liberate themselves from a state of domination which subjugates them and moves them to marginal sites. Self-depreciation is revealed in the

oppressed African in the poem's belief that he/she is born and exist for the oppressor. This is revealed in the poem 'Simuka' as follows:

*Kubvira paupwere
dzamara muguva
rumbo ndirworwo
ndakazvarirwa kutongwa
ndakazvarirwa kutongwa
(p.11)*

(Since birth
Till death
Nothing changes

I was born to be ruled
I was born to be ruled)

Chirikure views self-depreciation as debilitating because it breeds puppets who dance to the tune of the oppressor rather than produce resistant people. Self-depreciation reduces the oppressed to objects. By challenging blind acceptance domination the poet sees value in transcendence of being to become makers of history and not incidents of history. He challenges people not to be afraid of freedom as implied by the oppressed's fatalistic belief that they exist for the oppressor (*ndakazvarirwa kutongwa*). The humanizing vocation is evident in the concept of rising and walking in so far as the poet emphasizes going beyond the precarious condition through struggle. His poetry is an act of humanization because he is able to understand that oppression must never be bowed down to. Chirikure

contests the inanimation of dominated peoples by the oppressors and in 'simuka' he invites the oppressed to move to the centre. Chirikure restores the confidence and dignity of people who are fearful of freedom. Echoing Freire (1997) the poet underlines the idea that:

...the oppressed having internalised the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom. Freedom would require them to eject this image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility. Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift [...] It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion'

He resurrects the hopeless victims of oppression to regain belief in themselves as follows:

Semaonero ako
Panyika pano
Vekutonga ndevapi?
Simuka ufambe
Simuka ufambe (p.11)

(As you see it
 On the whole Earth
 Who was born to rule
 Stand up and walk
 Stand up and walk)

To the poet passivity is fertile ground for poverty because inaction breeds suffering and cannot be accepted as a

way of life. He castigates negation of action with all the impunity that it deserves. In the poem, the poet observes that oppression results in 'thingification' of the oppressed because it allows the oppressor to be the sole actor. Fromm (cited in Freire, 1996:41) holds that oppression reduces people to 'things' to imply dehumanization:

The pleasure in complete domination over another person (or other animate creature) is the very essence of the sadistic drive. Another way of formulating the same thought is to say that the aim of sadism is to transform a man into something inanimate since by complete and absolute control the living loses one essential quality of life-freedom.

In 'Hope Dzangu' (Sleep) Chirikure observes that in the face of different challenges facing the African people it is necessary that people transcend self-depreciation and instead replace it with profound hope and optimism necessary to guarantee and give impetus to struggle against such ills as expropriation of Africa's resources. The poet is against pacifist attitudes to life. It is a wake-up call to the people that self-depreciation leads to the demise of the African race. Chirikure observes that

passivity is deep seated in the minds and bodies of the people such that it threatens their ability to be agents. Echoing Fanon (1968: 106), Chirikure seems to observe that to achieve freedom African people “must first decide to wake up and shake themselves, use their brains and stop playing the stupid game of the Sleeping Beauty.” Chirikure underlines the fact that a prerequisite for bettering the life of the African people is agency. The African has to rise to the occasion as an active participant in social processes. The poet seems to be reminding oppressed people that “the battle-line against hunger, against ignorance, against poverty, and against unawareness ought to be ever present in the muscles and the intelligencies of men and women,” Fanon (1968: 203). He captures laziness and passivity or inaction as follows:

Hope!
Hope ndidzo dzoita titsakatikire
mudzikirira
Hope dzatakarega dzichitipinda
mukati metsinga. (p.38)

(Sleep!
 Sleep is what has made our life degenerate into nightmares.
 Sleep which we allowed to be deep seated in our minds and bodies.)

The poet exposes the magnitude of pacification that goes with domination of the oppressor. Chirikure castigates such leaders for failing to lead the people in such a manner that they realize their potential and liberty. Chirikure exposes the extent of passivity among the dominated which locks their creative spirit. The poet reveals that inaction is a sure way to the ontology of defeat. The poet is against a nihilistic vision to life and presents vigilance and proactiveness as necessary ingredients to a fulfilling life. The poem demonstrates awareness to the necessity of the people’s “struggle to become free subjects and to participate in the transformation of society,” Freire (1996: 11). The poet sounds a warning against inaction as follows:

Tichamera mhoni nemamota
mumakotsi,
Tichidai kuswerodedemara,
tichinyinurira zviroto,
Tigozoridzirwa ngoma yemariro
naivo vatorwa,
Tichivigwa muguva rakadzika-
dzika kwazvo!(p.38).

(We will develop blisters and boils at the back of our heads
 As we wallow in docility

To the extent that foreigners
will beat the symbolic drum
for death on our behalf
And we will be buried in a
very deep grave indeed.)

and the leader and failure by the leader
to observe complementarity and
respect for the people is disastrous for
it will be faced with resistance and
resultant downfall of the leader. The
persona says:

Chirikure is conscious of the fact that
“nothing is more powerful than an
individual acting out of his conscience,
thus helping to bring the collective
conscience to life,” (Cousins in Pointer,
(2001:225). He adopts a collective voice
to emphasize the importance of unity of
purpose. The line ‘*lusimbe nehope hazvina
mukoho*’ (laziness and passivity do not
reward) in the poem ‘Mandigona’ is an
affirmation of the importance of hard
work as opposed to assuming the
position of the acted upon.

*Iwe! Hatizvidi isu
zvekufurufushwa! (p.63).*
(You! We do not want to be
troubled!)

By the assertion, the persona is
humanizing those suffering under the
yoke of oppression. It is an expression
of the oppressed people’s will to resist
the antics of a despotic leader. In
challenging the shackles of self-
depreciation, Chirikure is aimed at one
prime goal; to enable Africans’ to realize
that they are subjects and not objects. He
understands that breaking the chains of
mental occupation is a prerequisite for
purposeful human agency.

In ‘*Hezvoko!*’ Chirikure emphasises that
political leaders who take society for
granted without paying due respect to
the people risk facing the wrath of the
people’s resistance. The poet attacks
leaders who marginalize people and
render them ineffective beings. Chirikure
stresses that “attempting to liberate
the oppressed without their reflective
participating in the act of liberation
is to treat them as objects which must
be served from a burning building, it
is to load them into the populist
pitfall and transform them into
masses which can be manipulate,”
(Freire,1996:47). The poem emphasizes
complementarity between the people

Chirikure’s intent to humanize and
harmonise Africans is also evident in
the poem ‘*Musha watsakatika?*’ (Look
to Yourselves). In the poem, Chirikure
exposes the irony in the people’s
abstraction from the home implied in
the assertion ‘*musha watsakatika.*’ The
poem is hinged on the idea that the
home is inseparable from the people
and hence to say the home is
destroyed is to imply that the people
are destroyed. Chirikure provides
critical consciousness to the people
because he facilitates a better

understanding of their own condition. The poem provides for self introspection on the part of marginalized and objectified people in as far as it allows the dominated to understand their situation better. The persona says:

*Mashaiwa dzimwe nyaya here?
Hanzi musha watsakatika!
Musha watsakatika nhai?
Aizve! Musha wacho chiiko?
Handiti musha wacho ndimi!
(p.17)*

*Is it that you have no other stories?
You say the home has been
destroyed!
The home has been destroyed?
Alas! What do you mean by home?
You are the home!*

The overarching idea in the above is that self-depreciation is the incubator of poverty. In the poem, Chirikure aims at converting people from passive acceptance to active participation in the search for freedom. He castigates self-depreciation and instead involves himself "in the ongoing struggles in the age of neo-colonialism and imperialism," (Muponde 2000:83). Chirikure provides knowledge necessary for agency and transcendence. Other than providing critical consciousness necessary to restore confidence in the oppressed, Chirikure also sees value in struggle to bring about liberation.

Positive Action and Liberation

The concept of positive action is attributed to Kwame Nkrumah. By positive action, Nkrumah means "the sum of those forces seeking social justice in terms of the destruction of oligarchic exploitation and oppression." Such action is revolutionary. In fact, Chirikure sees meaning in struggle as opposed to negative action which is a negation of struggle. His poetry demonstrates the intent to humanize Africans in as far as he moves the people to the centre as opposed to peripherising them, which is a manifestation of dehumanization. His poetry is a call to resistance and struggle. Against this background, it is stressed that the poet "[...] fights to give impetus to life, and to shape history itself [...]. He is capable of struggle" Muponde (2000:87).

'*Hakurarwi*' (we shall not sleep) is an attack on the leadership, which, according to the poet, has failed the people. The poem reveals resolve in resisting and fighting for positive transformation. The title, '*Hakurarwi*', implies relentless commitment to positive action until the problems affecting society are solved. The poem is about people who decidedly resist subjugation. It is a resistance which says, "No to scorn of man. No to degradation of man. No to exploitation of man. No to the

butchery of what is most human in man: freedom," (Du Bois in Gordon, 1997: 210). Echoing Malcolm X, Chirikure seems to reiterate the indispensability of struggle to achieve freedom equality and justice "by any means necessary," to use Malcolm X's popular phrase. Chirikure stresses that no matter how the powerful in society can descend on the people, struggle remains the only solution. A great sense of agency and urgency manifests in the poem. The collective voice in the poem demands "we want freedom by any means necessary; we want justice by any means necessary. We want equality by any means necessary," (Malcolm X, 1992:37). This finds resonance in the following lines:

*Gore rino hakuvatwi
tisina kuzvigadzira
Rino gore hakurarwi
tisina kuzvipedza
Hatingaregi uchiwondonga,
takangotarisa
Hatingaregi uchibvoronga,
takangonyarara
Hatingaregi uchiwondomora,
takangodzvondora
Hatingaregi uchibvonyonga,
takangoduka. (p.9).*

(This year, we shall not sleep
without sorting it out
This year, we shall not sleep
without finishing it
We cannot passively allow
you to destroy

We cannot allow you to
devastate while we remain
silent
We cannot allow you to
destroy and we remain mere
spectators.)

The poem depicts people who cannot afford to be mere spectators in the face of various ills bedeviling society. To the people concerned, inaction is not an option in the context of destructive and deplorable leadership and Chirikure maintains that the actions of the leader can only be met with positive action. The poet presents people who realize that their liberation is only possible in the context of struggle. The Africans in the poem are subjects who demonstrate willingness to actively engage with the challenges posed by the leadership in their life-world. A passive attitude to life is deemed an anathema to the positive transformation in life. In other words, the poem revolves around the idea that liberation is not donated to Africans by anybody but that it is wrested by them. wa Mutahi in wa Ngugi, (2003: xi) holds that:

We can pride ourselves in our
history of struggle from the tip
of the cape to the
Mediterranean, from the Red
Sea to the Atlantic Ocean. But
we must at the same time be
cognizant of the real dangers
that we face today and

appreciate the fact that we are
the ones to solve the problems
for ourselves.

Chirikure immerses his art in the African history of struggle in that the Africans in the poem are makers of history and not incidents of history. In 'Hakurarwi' Chirikure demonstrates the life-affirming understanding that inaction is disempowering and is to occupy peripheral positions as opposed to the centre.

'Hazvigoni' (It is Impossible) is a satirical poem which attacks leaders who engage in 'unfinished business.' What motivates the poet's scorn are the populist machinations of the leader who does not pursue development projects to completion. The poet exposes the leader and "[...] aligns himself with the struggle for a just world..." (wa Ngugi, 2003:19):

*Usati wasimuka watogara
Usati wagara watosimuka
Usati watanga watopedza
Usati wapedza watotanga*

*Zviringwa zana nemakumi
Musoro uchingova mumwe
Minda gumi neinoraudzira
Badza richingova rimwe*

*Iwe!
Hazvigoni! (p.19)
(Before you stand up you sit
down*

Before you sit down you have
stood up
Before you start you have
finished
Before you finish you have
started

You come up with numerous
programmes
Just for yourself
You have many farms
With only one hoe

You
It is impossible!

The words "Iwe!" and "Hazvigoni!" suggest that the people can no longer accept the leader's unfinished and unrewarding businesses. They cannot afford to be spectators. These are emphatic in the sense of avoidance of blind acceptance of the leader's antics. Chirikure seems to be attacking leaders whose projects are never beneficial to the people but are opportunities for cheap politicking on the part of the leader.

'Chimwoto' (Revenge) is a poem which exposes the extent of exploitation and plunder of African resources that has rendered the African people destitute. The poem depicts an individual who, having borrowed fire with all the confidence that firewood would not be a problem, suddenly realizes that there is no more firewood, which is a source

of energy and subsequently a source of life.

*Nhasi ndoita dziva dziva nemapani
Ndenge rombe rinotanda botso
Huni ndawana angova makwande
Nemiti minyoro chaiyo
yanyangariswa (p.13).*

(Today I wander up and down
the bare land
Like a destitute
There is no firewood
The land has been deforested).

What Chirikure is emphasizing is that “the Garden of Eden is in decay and inadequately suitable for [human] habitation,” (Mazrui, 2004: 1). Having noticed that the situation is so bad that it cannot be tolerated, Chirikure sees hope in struggle to realize a more liberated identity:

*Ndiani akambomona shambakodzi
negwande?
Ndiani akamboita zhara
akasamuka chibhebhenenga?
Ndingatora ngozi ndarwira
zvangu, changu here?
Hezvo Chimwoto! Ndouyako
mutakati!*

(Who on this earth has ever
prepared sadza with bark?
Who on this earth has gone
hungry without expressing
discontentment
Can I invite trouble for
fighting for something which
is rightfully mine

Struggle is the only option!
Here I come, you Oppressor!)

Chirikure observes that it is crucial that people realize that their freedom is only a reality through struggle against the oppressor and exploiter. The poem ends with profound optimism for the victim has resolved to engage in “a hand to hand struggle,” to use Fanon’s (1968) phrase. The poet realizes that agency is “an indispensable first step towards securing economic independence and integrity,” (Nkrumah in Eze 1998:90). Underlying the poem ‘Chimwoto’ is the fact that people realize that freedom is only made possible by utilizing the mind and hands. The necessity of positive action to a liberated identity marks Chirikure’s poetry. Chirikure seems to understand that ultimately positive action that is aimed at seizing power is the panacea to Africa’s problems. The line “Hezvo Chimwoto! Ndouyako Mutakati!” (Struggle is the only option! Here I come you Oppressor) emphasizes commitment to struggle in order to transform society by regaining political as well as economic power which guarantees a more humane society which is defined by political sovereignty, economic power, full democracy, transparency among many other issues.

All in all 'Chimwoto' is an attack on the predatory and exploitative tendencies of powerful people in Africa as well as hegemonic capitalist world which thrive on exploitation and in the process breed vulnerability and untold suffering. It is wa Thiong'o (1981:24) who reminds us that:

Neocolonialism means the continued exploitation of Africa's total resources and of Africa's labour power by international monopoly capitalism through continued creation and encouragement of subservient weak capitalistic economic structures, captained or overseered by a native ruling class

The poet seems to argue that as long as the imperialists continue to exploit and plunder Africa's resources, Africans are further dehumanised. In view of Mazrui's (2004) observation that Africa is not in adequate control of its own resources it can be argued that the African is enslaved by the imperialist world system and hence the need to engage in a struggle to change the scheme of things so that Africa's resources can primarily benefit the African. The poet is committed to the search for ways to overcome dependence which is essential in a bid to humanise. Dependence dehumanizes because Africans are rendered vulnerable to

manipulation while on the contrary sovereign existence is humanizing.

Nhamo Yakuda (When poverty befalls you) is a stern warning to Africans in dire times never to submit to the ontology of defeat. It is poem about and of struggle. The poet is clear that difficult life situations must not be bowed down to but faced head on. p'Bitek (1986) observes that problems, crises and challenges are facts of life and have to face head on. Resilience in the face of threats to humanity is the *modus operandi* and *sine qua non* of African existence. Chirikure sees being overwhelmed by life situations as entrapping. The persona says:

*Usambofa wazviita kana kamwe
zvako*

*Kuregera nhamo ichiperera
murudo newe! (p.54)*

(Do not ever do it
Don't let poverty fall deeply in
love with you.)

The poem is clarion call to Africans never to surrender but soldier on and work towards improving their life conditions. He is against passivity which he sees as only working to entrench the sufferings of the people. Against that background, it can be argued that Chirikure is "part of a living history of struggle. And without struggle there is no life, there is no movement," (Ngugi, 1981:124). Chirikure reiterates

African philosophy of existence which is hinged on human agency as an indispensable aspect of ontological existence. Douglass (in Gordon, 1997: 2) observes the following:

The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims, have been born out of earnest struggle. This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did and it never will.

The poet is able to see that dire times demand the emergence of actors who are creatively engaged in solving life problems. He sees Africans as agents who are active and not passive who are masters of their destiny. Closely related to the poem, *Nhamo yakuda* (When poverty befalls you) is a poem called *Zvikange Zvagozha* (when the going gets tough) in which the poet instructs Africans to embrace and utilize their heritage of struggle and become subjects and not objects. Chirikure's intent in the poem is aptly captured in the words of Karenga (2006:159) that 'whatever the condition and the situation with

human beings in any part of the world, African people must be seen as players on the world stage, not as second citizens.' Resistance and creativity are emphasized as follows:

Zvikange zvagozha
tinotsungisa dzisimbe

Zvikange zvagozhesa
tinotsungisa dzisimbe

Zvichinge zvazogozhezesesa
mbariro dzemusoro dambu
tose tomuka zvigeven'a
(p.31)

When the going gets tough
we struggle

When it gets even tougher
we struggle harder

When it gets extremely hard
we become impatient
we do all it takes to free
ourselves

In the poem, Chirikure stresses that Africans are people who are not only capable of action but react as the situation demands. Chirikure emphasises both agency and transcendence which are "both expressions that underscore the need for positive participation and contribution in life to overcome life-threatening forces and attain victory," (Muhwati, 2010). The poem is against surrender no matter how dire the situation may be.

Rwendo Rurefu (Long Journey) is a call to African people to defend their heritage because it is when they are rooted in their heritage that life is meaningful. The poet understands that defending heritage must be understood to be a process and not an event. He invites people to rally behind all those who stand for defence of African heritage and form a formidable force for the progress of Africa. He invites people to be in concert in struggle by joining hands in defending their heritage of struggle:

*Dai iwe neni, isu vana
vanyamunhu
Dai tachimira mumashure
memagamba aya
Tinonge chose chatinokwanisa*

*kurwisa nacho
Tiponde ponde titsike tsike, timare
mare...
Muvengi aita tirase nhaka yedu
Ngatiyeukei-
Rwendo rurefu runotoda
manyatera (p.19)*

I invite you my dear
compatriots peoples of Africa
To stand behind these great
heroes
To use any kind of tool we can
use
To destroy ...
The enemy who has made us
lose our heritage
Let us remember a long
requires resilience

Chirikure invites African people to the journey of struggle to defend their heritage and subsequently their identity and dignity. In the poem, he sees value in learning from the ideas of all the Afrocentric thinkers and leaders of all kinds who stand for the liberation of Africa and Afro-Americans together given the commonalities between the two groups. He understands that the ideas of such thinkers and practitioners as Kwame Nkrumah, Steve Biko, Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Ngugi wa Thiongo, Ali Mazrui, Chinua Achebe among many others humanise African people and as such the poem is hinged on rootedness in the ideas of African intellectual to make life more meaningful. The poem revolves around building upon the life-affirming cultural and historical legacies of Africans.

Conclusion

Chirikure's poetry reveals that struggle is germane to liberation from both endogenous and exogenous forces that dehumanize Africans. The paper has demonstrated that one of the overarching intentions of Chirikure is to humanise and harmonise Africans. He begins with denouncing self-depreciation on the basis of confidence, positive action follows. However,

Chirikure seems to peripherise the machinations of the oppressors which are ideological and repressive and are responsible for the dehumanization. Therefore, Chirikure's authorial gaze reveals the centrality of a humanizing vocation in a world that continues to pose serious and complex existential challenges. Despite the seemingly insurmountable politico-economic and cultural challenges which dehumanise Africans, Chirikure demonstrates that humanization begins with restoring confidence by transcending self-depreciation. He sees Africans as actors and not passive recipients. It is poetry of transcendence. Chirikure is therefore an active member in humanising Africans whose survival is heavily threatened by hegemonic capitalism.

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