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FORM AND IMAGERY IN SHONA PROVERBS

G. FORTUNE

Department of African Languages, University of Rhodesia

IN THEIR RECENTLY published collection *Tsumo-Shumo, Shona Proverbial Lore and Wisdom*, M. A. Hamutyinei and A. B. Plangger have presented a well-edited list of some 1 600 Shona proverbs arranged according to theme in eleven chapters.¹ This welcome addition to our materials exemplifying Shona oral art provides a good source for the study of Shona thought and its expression. In this article it is the literary qualities of the proverbs which are studied in the main, under the two-fold aspects of form and imagery, in an attempt to discover the underlying principles of the art which have shaped them and which are responsible for their expressive power.

In regard to overt structural form, the proverbs fall into one of six types of sentence:

1. The greatest number, some 796 in all, 50 per cent of the whole collection, are single verbal sentences, that is sentences with a single principal verbal predicate.
e.g. 1350 Rina manyanga / hariputirwi mumushunje
(That which has horns / is not concealed in a bundle of grass)
2. The next group in terms of size, 25 per cent of the total, are single substantival sentences, that is sentences with a single copulative or stabilised substantive phrase as predicate.
e.g. 1065 Mwana washe / muranda kumwe
(The son of a chief / is a subject elsewhere)
(The remainder, 25 per cent of the total, consist of combinations of these two types of sentences. They are given in descending order of occurrence.)
3. Substantival and verbal (13 per cent).
e.g. 376 Chinokanganwa idemo / Chitsiga hachikanganwe
(What forgets is the axe / The faggot does not forget)

¹ *Tsumo-Shumo, Shona Proverbial Lore and Wisdom* Introduced, translated and explained by A. Hamutyinei and A. B. Plangger, Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1974, 500 pp. Rf\$6.50.

The collection contains 1 595 entries, but many of them are alternative forms or dialectal forms differing very slightly from one another. Examples in this article are quoted with the number they appear under in this work, and as bipartite, a form sometimes, but not always, indicated in the book. The translations, usually on the literal side to aid analysis, are my own. I would like to acknowledge the help of my colleague, Mr A. C. Hodza, in the elucidation of certain proverbs, as well as the inspiration derived long ago from studies of traditional Bantu Literature by my former Head of Department, Professor G. P. Lestrade. The first part of this article was read as a paper at a conference, Linguistics in Central and Southern Africa, held at the University of Rhodesia in December, 1975.

4. Verbal and verbal (8 per cent).
e.g. 680 Chinonyenga chinokotama / Chinosimudza musoro
chawana
(He who is courting bows down / He raises his head when
married)
5. Substantival and substantival (2,5 per cent).
e.g. 326 Vaviri vaviri / Wechitatu muzvinaguhwa
(Two are a pair / A third is a gossip)
6. Verbal and substantival (1,5 per cent).
e.g. 328 Muromo haupi / Chinopa maoko
(The mouth does not give / What gives are the hands)

No examples of *tsumo* with ideophonic predicates were found.

Shona proverbs are normally bipartite in form. Their meaning arises from the relationships between the structural forms of each part, and the grammatical and lexical items which are their exponents. Two main principles appear to control the relationships of the structures and grammatical items, namely correspondence and cross-correspondence. Similarly two broad principles control the choice of lexical items in each part, congruence and contrast. The particular expressive force of each proverb depends upon the interaction of these pairs of principles, an interaction in which both form and imagery combine.

1.0.0. Single Verbal Sentences

Of the proverbs consisting of single verbal sentences, the majority are single principal clauses with a subject (S) predicate (P) structural pattern. Others consist of combinations of verbal clauses.

1.1.0.

Of the single clauses, a large and interesting group (7 per cent of the total in the book) have relative verb phrases (RVPs) as subjects and principal verb phrases (PrVPs) as predicates.

1.1.1.

- e.g. 415 Atswinya / arwa
(One who has pinched / has fought; viz. Every little contribution counts)
- 438 Avengwa / anuhwa
(One who is hated / stinks; viz. Call a dog a bad name and hang him)
- 1066 Chafamba / chasvava
(One who has travelled / has faded; viz. Away from home one loses importance)
- 889 Pagara murimi / pagara mupopoti
(Where there lives a farmer / there lives a grumbler; viz. A farmer is never satisfied with the work done for him)
- 409 Akweva sanzu / akweva namashizha aro
(One who has pulled a branch along / has pulled along its leaves; viz. Inherit a wife and you inherit her children as well)
- 394 Dzafura churu chimwe / dzava nzivani
(Those that have grazed at one anthill / have become

acquainted; viz. Experience once shared unites people ever after)

- 568 Chiri pamuchena / chiri pamutenure
(What is on a poor man / is on a slope and not secure; viz.
Because of his bad luck, a poor man is ever in want)

1.1.2.

The above examples show that this type of sentence is capable of close structural correspondence between the two halves of the proverb since both consist of inflected VPs and, save for the essential contrast of relative versus principal tones, may show identical inflectional and VP patterns. Thus the two halves are front-linked and structurally parallel.

In poetry parallelism indicates the use, in successive lines or stanzas, of similar grammatical structures to repeat a single idea by means of a variety of images.

- e.g. Muno kufamba kunenge kukavira nyimo,
kutizira kuchinge kudyara nzungu,
kucheuka kukange kutsindire'shwa.
(You have a walk like the planting of ground-peas,
a run like the sowing of ground-nuts,
a turning as in the capture of termites).

In proverbs consisting of single sentences, parallelism appears to be used to state a relationship of implication, 'S implies P'. One action or state, for S is expressed as an agent acting in a certain way or being in a certain state, is shown as implying another. The affirmation of this implication, however, may also involve an ironic comment 'on the nature of things'. To pull a branch along, perhaps for firewood, involves one in pulling its leaves as well. We see, therefore, that congruent imagery used in statements such as 'S implies P' may be chosen so as to convey an ironic implication.

1.1.3.

In other examples where S is a RVP and P a PrVP there is a slight departure from strict correspondence of grammatical items and this accompanies a choice of contrasting, not congruent, lexical items.

- e.g. 601 Chitemura / chava kuseva
(One who used to eat stiff porridge dry / is now eating it
with relish; viz. His luck has changed)
596 Aiva madziva / ava mazambuko
(What were pools / have become fords; viz. Circumstances
have changed)

1.1.4.

In these examples, S and P contrast in two respects, that is both in regard to tense signs (/A-I/ versus /A-/) and lexical items. This double contrast makes for congruence and irony, and indeed the two proverbs in 1.1.3. are classic comments on the turn of the wheel of fortune.

1.1.5.

Where the sentence is negatively inflected, proverbs express negative implications in a predicate of present tense following upon an act or state performed or realised by a subject.

- e.g. 260 Ashamba / haanokorerwi
(One who has washed / does not have stiff porridge broken off for him, is not helped to food; viz. A cultured person is entitled to proper respect)
- 407 Afirwa / haaringwi kumeso
(One who is bereaved / is not looked in the face; viz. Actions or words made under stress of sorrow are not to be taken seriously)
- 36 Ateyera mariva murutsva / haachatyi mhapa kusviba
(One who has set traps in burnt grass / no longer fears his apron getting dirty; viz. A man must take the consequences of his actions)
- 82 Chafamba kamwe / hachiteyewi
(Something that has passed only once / is not trapped; viz. A single transgression is not taken serious account of)
- 166 Aguta / haaloneki
(One who has had his fill / does not bid farewell; viz. He leaves because he has nothing further to ask)
- 251 Apunyaira / haashayi misodzi
(One who has become emotionally upset / does not lack tears; viz. Exertion brings some reward)

Irony in these proverbs arises from the comparison of the lexical items in S and the negative implications in P. It arises from a certain wry awareness of 'the nature of things'.

1.1.6.

In certain proverbs the first half is a RVP in structure, but an adverbial complement (C), not S, in function.

- e.g. 221 Pachapwa madziva / miramba tichanyurura
(When pools dry up / we fish out the barbels; viz. The death of one man brings benefits to others)
- 147 Panodya ishe / varanda vanodyawo
(When the chief eats / the subjects eat as well; viz. The office of the chief benefits his people)
- 272 Panoda mwoyo / nzira haisviki
(Where the heart longs to be / the path never reaches; viz. A watched pot never boils)

1.1.7.

The RVPs are inverted, the complements in them being the logical subjects, e.g. *madziva* (pools) is the logical subject of */-chapwa/* (will dry up), but it does not control the subject prefix, cp. *pachapwa*. The result of inversion is structural cross-correspondence, the topics of each half of the proverb being contiguous at the centre while their predicates are at the confines. This is an arrangement favourable to contrast and to paradox, given the suitable lexical choices we find in the above examples.

1.1.8.

Where the structural arrangement of clauses is corresponding and where lexical items do not contrast, consequence rather than paradox is conveyed.

- e.g. 1080 Pabva zino / rave vende
(Where a tooth has come out / there is now a gap; viz. Death destroys symmetry and leaves empty places)

- 397 Imbwa payadyira / haipakanganwi
(The place where a dog has fed / it does not forget; viz. Help given in time of need is remembered)

1.2.0.

In most cases of single verbal sentences, S is a substantive phrase (SP) with constituents other than RVPs. The majority of such sentences have negative inflected predicates, but some have affirmative alternative forms.

- e.g. 109 Chomukuru / hachikumbirwa
(The property of an elder / is not asked for; viz. Elders use their own discretion)
- 110 Chomukuru / anopa omene
(The property of an elder / he gives away himself)

1.2.1.

Where S consists of a full SP, namely nuclear substantive and substantive in agreement, balance is normally achieved between S and P.

- e.g. 257 Nzombe huru / yakabva mukurerwa
(A big bull / resulted from being nurtured; viz. Big results have small but indispensable beginnings)
- 705 Matende mashava / anovazva doro
(Pretty calabashes / sour the beer; viz. Attractive appearances conceal inner flaws. All is not gold that glitters).
- 382 Mwvochena / unobavisa
(A kind heart / gets one killed; viz. Kind hearts are soonest wronged)
- 742 Mviromviro yemhanza / inotanga shosha
(The onset of baldness / begins at the temples; lit. Small faults may result in serious crimes seemingly unrelated)

In these examples the only element of grammatical correspondence between S and P is the presence of the class affix at the beginning of each part, a form of front-linking. The proverbs are simple statements, and their aphoristic character must be sought, not in any special form, but in the comparison of the lexical items. The examples quoted each convey a paradox which arises from the expectations raised in the mind of a P of a particular kind in the context of S. These expectations, which are created by association, are not met by the P encountered. The shock of the unexpected accompanies the paradox, and the mind glimpses the deeper truth which on the surface appears absurd and which occupies the place of the superficial expectation. It should also be pointed out that the lexical items are compared, not individually, but as combined, being exponents of the constituents forming the constructions which are S and P. The total picture conveyed by S must be compared with the total picture conveyed by P for the effect to be achieved.

1.2.2.

Where S is not developed, the balance in all its aspects may hold between subject and verb on the one hand (S and V), and the rest of the predicate on the other, namely complements and adjuncts (C and A).

- e.g. 418 Chomungozva chinodyiwa / nowabata mwana
(Food from a nursing mother is eaten / by one who holds her child; viz. One good turn deserves another)
- 523 Nherera inoguta / musi wafa amai

- (An orphan eats his fill / on the day his mother has died;
viz. His future outlook is bleak)
- 176 Kandiro kanoenda / kunobva kamwe
(A small dish goes / whence comes another small one; viz.
One good turn deserves another)
- 478 Mapudzi anowira / kusina hari
(Squashes fall / where there are no pots; viz. Fortune favours
fools)

In these cases complements and adjuncts consist of RVPs and inflected RVPs, and thus involve verb phrase relationships. Cross-correspondence of grammatical structures involved in subject plus principal V in the first half being followed by relative V and its complements in the second enables the combined imagery of the first half to compare cross-wise with that of the second. Here in this situation, reminiscent of the chiasmus in 1.1.6., the lexical items are typically contrastive and the effect one of ironic paradox.

1.2.3.

A third type of verbal sentence seems to establish a balance between S and C, with ∇ a link supplying a relationship between the two which enables the comparison to be made. In such cases lexical items are contrastive and the proverbs ironic paradoxes.

- e.g. 349 Rambakuudzwa / akazoonekwa / nembonje pahuma
(Headstrong / was found / with a head wound)
- 74 Chivendekete / anoseka / Chimedure
(Cracked / laughs at / Broken; viz. The pot calls the kettle
black)
- 456 Chipitipiti / chakazvara / Chimwandamwanda
(Congregation / bred / Separation; viz. Familiarity breeds
contempt)

1.2.4.

The defective verbs /-ri/ (be) and /-na/ (be with) do not figure very prominently in simple affirmative sentences.

- e.g. 931 Unaki hwemukadzi / huri pamwana
(The beauty of a wife / lies in the child; viz. A good wife is
one who bears children)
- 934 Twemudhenhe / tune ushorwi
(Too little flour in the bin / brings contempt; People despise
an owner's improvidence or stinginess)

1.3.0.

Single sentences with negative predicates show the same kinds of balance as are found in affirmative sentences. Here, however, the semantic effect is conveyed by denying the predicate of the subject.

1.3.1. S balancing P

- e.g. 470 Nhamo yomumwe / hairambirwi sadza
(Another's trouble / is no reason to deny oneself food)
- 508 Matakadya kare / haanyaradzi mwana
(Former meals / do not satisfy a child; viz. Boasting of past
successes will not solve present problems)
- 758 Munongedzo / hauzvinongedzi

- (The index finger / does not indicate itself; viz. People are blind to their own faults)
- 196 Pakukutu / hapaurayi
(A hard bed / does not kill; viz. Discomfort need not rob a man of his own dignity)
- 633 Zviuya / hazviwanani
(Good people / do not marry each other)

As in 1.2.1. the aphoristic character of these sentences lies in the comparison of the lexical items. They convey paradox by the denial of something which, superficially, S would have disposed one to affirm. But the denial carries the deeper ironic truth. In the affirmative examples in 1.2.1. paradox arose out of an affirmation of contrasting items. Here it arises out of a denial of congruent items.

1.3.2. *S and V balancing C and/or A*

- e.g. 846 Nzou hairemerwi / nenyanga dzayo
(An elephant is not burdened / by its own tusks; viz. One should be equal to one's responsibilities)
- 759 Chidembo hachinzwi / kunhuhwa kwacho
(The polecat does not smell / its own stink; viz. People are blind to their own faults)

In these examples there is cross-correspondence of grammatical and lexical items. The lexical items do not contrast in these negative sentences as they do in the affirmative sentences in 1.2.2. The paradoxes arise from the denial of the seemingly obvious congruence.

1.3.3. *S balancing and related to C*

- e.g. 549 Murombo / haarovi / chine nguo
(A poor man never kills anything with a skin to it; viz. A man condemned by fate to be poor cannot rise above his condition)
- 533 Munhu / haarerwi / nebonde
(A person is not nursed by means of a sleeping mat; viz. Lying up is not enough to cure a sick person. Treatment is needed as well)

In these cases it would seem desirable to affirm the congruence of the lexical items chosen for S and C. The denial of this congruence and of the relationship indicated by the verb radical is paradoxical and conveys the deeper ironic truth.

1.3.4.

Comparing 1.2.1.–1.2.3. with 1.3.1.–1.3.3. therefore, it appears that in affirmative sentences paradox arises out of the affirmation of contrasts or seeming contradictions, while in negative sentences paradox arises out of the denial of seeming truisms. Both relationships are necessary for paradox, wit and irony — those of seeming and those of being.

1.3.5.

The defective verb stem /-na/ (be with) features frequently in negative single sentences.

- e.g. 266 Utsva hworurimi / hahuna marapiro
(A burn on the tongue / cannot be treated; viz. Some problems have no solution)
- 290 Hwahwa / hahuna mbuva
(Beer is no food for a journey)
- 802 Hapana mhου inokumira / mhuru isiri yayo
(No cow lows / for a calf not hers; viz. Everyone knows his own kin)
- 872 Hapana angagone / chisingagoneke naGone
(There is no one who can manage / what can't be managed by Mr. Manage; viz. No one can improve on an expert)

1.4.0.

In simple verbal sentences the constituent class of S consists of SPs with constructional pattern:

nuclear substantive +/- substantive in agreement

In most cases nuclear substantives are nouns, and the substantives in agreement are non-relative. Two examples in which S consists of a nuclear noun and a RVP in agreement are worth citing as showing two forms of the negative relative present inflection, one contemporary and the other archaic.

- e.g. 830 Mwana asingachemi / anofira mumbereko
(A child who does not cry / dies in the cradle; viz. One should give voice to one's complaints)
- 701 Nhenha isibi / inroya
(A beautiful girl who does not steal / will be a witch; viz. An attractive appearance hides an inner flaw)

Paradox is expressed by the seeming antithesis between S and P.

1.5.0.

The proverbs cited and examined thus far provide examples both of irony and paradox. Ironic implications are a feature of some of the examples in 1.1.1., 1.1.3 and 1.1.5.² In these proverbs the lexical items which are compared are in corresponding positions in each half of the proverb. They are also congruent, the first set implying the second. The implications are stated from a certain ironic standpoint, however, arising from an insight into the ambiguous nature of things.

1.5.1.

In 1.1.6. we have lexical items compared from cross-corresponding positions within each side of the proverb. The imagery is contrastive rather than congruent and we are aware of paradox. This is also the case in 1.2.1., 1.2.2., 1.2.3., 1.3.1., 1.3.2., and 1.3.3. In all these cases the expectation of an implication created by the first half of the proverb is not fulfilled. Instead another and unexpected implication is given and is seen to have a valid meaning.

1.5.2.

Irony rests on congruency of imagery and paradox on contrast. In both the expression of folk wisdom is aided by wit, 'a kind of verbal expression which is brief, deft and intentionally contrived to produce a shock of comic surprise'.³ Of course the wit of a proverb is not fully appreciated without some

² e.g. Nos. 438, 1066, 409, 569 in 1.1.1.; 601, 596 in 1.1.3.; 36, 166, 251 in 1.1.5.

³ M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 3rd edit., 1957), 'Wit, humor and the comic', 179.

reference to the real situations to which the metaphorical statements are relevant as vehicle to tenor. But wit must exist at the level of metaphor for the proverb as such to be witty. In ironic proverbs wit consists in the difference between a surface assertion and an underlying qualification, as for example in the English proverb, 'Fine feathers make fine birds'. In paradoxes wit consists in the co-existence of apparent, verbal absurdity and the profound underlying truth which is asserted.

1.5.3.

Of course not every proverb is aided by wit and a number of Shona proverbs are no more than saws, e.g. Nos. 1080 in 1.1.8 and 802 in 1.3.5. However, even though the element of wit be lacking from the comparison of lexical items, the expressive power of proverbs is aided by the deft interplay of form and imagery and by other features such as word-play in 872 in 1.3.5.

1.6.0.

The remaining cases of verbal single sentences consist of combinations of verbal clauses. The following combinations occur:

- (1) Principal and participial clauses
- (2) Imperative and participial clauses
- (3) Principal and consecutive clauses
- (4) Imperative and consecutive clauses
- (5) Infinitive and principal clauses
- (6) Infinitive and imperative clauses

Balance obtains between the two clauses in the sentence and the possibilities of comparison between lexical items, either in corresponding positions or cross-corresponding positions, is increased.

1.6.1.0. *Principal and participial clauses*

1.6.1.1.

- e.g. 675 Totenda maruva / tadya chakata
(We believe in the blossoms / when we have eaten the fruit;
viz. Promises are not to be relied on until they are performed)
- 891 Hurudza inofa / ichinzi inodya
(The rich farmer dies / being said to eat; viz. A person once
rich will not be credited with being poor)
- 488 Hove dzinokwira / dzine muronga
(Fish go upstream / having a channel; viz. Progress depends
on tried paths)

The meaning of the proverbs results from the collocation and comparison of clauses. In the above examples both clauses are front linked and show different kinds of structural relationship. On the basis of this structural relationship the relationships of corresponding grammatical and lexical items in each half result in a particular equilibrium proper to each proverb, the outcome of a particular combination of similarity and difference.

Thus in 675 the common structural element is the inflected verb phrase structure, and the common grammatical item is the first person plural subject prefix. The dissimilar elements proper to each half are the mood and tense

signs (principal immediate future: participial past) and the lexical items, exponents of the two VPs, *-tend- maruva* (believe in the blossoms) : *-dy-chakata* (eat the fruit).

These lexical items are compared as composite, not individual images, and they are set in a relationship of temporal sequence of immediate future : past. The normal temporal sequence past : future is reversed in the order in which these tenses occur in the proverb. This implied contrast aids the expression of the paradox which consists in the assertion that belief follows experience instead of preceding it.

In 891 the clauses are similar in subject and tense though differing in mood (principal present : participial present). Structurally they are different as the first consists of S and V while the second consists of V and C. Thus the lexical items in each half correspond crosswise. As composite images they do not contrast, however, since the paradox of the rich farmer dying is quite compatible with his being said to be eating his fill. The effect is ironical.

In proverbs which consist of more than a single clause we appear to have 'irony' in the extended sense described by Abrams in the book already referred to. He refers to the use of the term to refer to an 'ironic' awareness of opposite and complementary attitudes which is a characteristic of the greatest poetry. It is a feature of the wit which T. S. Eliot describes in the metaphysical poets and which consists in a certain equilibrium which implies the recognition, in dealing with any one kind of experience, of other kinds of experience which are possible.⁴ In Shona proverbs other than the simplest the dichotomy of wit between irony and paradox gives way to 'irony' in this wider sense arising out of a presentation of complementary situations through a comparison of two clauses or sentences. Indeed this irony could be said to be present in the examples in 1.1.1.-1.1.5. which involve the comparison of verb phrases.

It is unnecessary to deal in such detail with every proverb whose structural form and collocation of images it is desired to illustrate. These analyses have been given to show that the meaning of each proverb does depend upon the balance of a number of forces — rhythmical, structural, grammatical and lexical — related in various ways, and that the full exposition of a witty proverb would require subtlety of insight and skill in description. The balance of the proverbs reflects the 'equilibrium' referred to by Eliot and their 'ironic' awareness of opposite and complementary attitudes, allied to their perfection of form, make them great poems in miniature.

Proverb 488 is similar in structure to 891. Its point appears to rest on the contrast between the free moving fish, which symbolises youth, and the channel along which it is forced to go if it would swim upstream. The proverb is applied to youth with its unrealised potential and its fresh outlook being directed along tried ancestral paths. The coincidence of the tenses in

⁴ T. S. Eliot, 'Andrew Marvell' [1921] in *Selected Essays* (London, Faber, 3rd edit., 1951), 303.

each part, present : present, reinforces the meaning that success depends upon the presence of the channel.

1.6.1.2.

- e.g. 867 Mhuno hainwi mvura / muromo usina kunwa
(The nose does not drink / if the mouth has not drunk; viz. Elders take precedence over juniors)
- 353 Zviururwi zvinofara / kana kondo afa ziso
(The frogs rejoice / when the hammer-head has lost its eye; viz. When the cat's away, the mice do play)
- 150 Pasi nyimo / makunguo aizodyei?
(If there were no ground-peas / what would the crows eat? viz. A proverb addressed to a rejected suitor, 'If I were not here / you would have found another girl to woo')

These proverbs differ from those in 1.6.1.1. in that each clause has its own subject. These subjects, though contrastive, are also correlative, viz. *mhuno* (nose) : *muromo* (mouth), *zviururwi* (frogs) : *kondo* (hammer-head), and *nyimo* (ground-peas) : *makunguwo* (crows). The structurally similar clauses in 867 and 353 dwell ironically upon these relationships. In 150 the structurally transposed clauses turn the relationship of indispensability between ground-peas and crows into an ironic denial of indispensability in regard to an unloved suitor.

1.6.2. Imperative and participial clauses

- e.g. 16 Tsvaga zano / iwe une rakowo
(Seek a plan / when you have one of your own)
- 42 Tenda muchero / wadya zvinogadza mwoyo
(Be grateful for the fruit / having eaten to satisfaction; viz. Do not count your chickens before they are hatched)
- 57 Usapedzera tsvimbo kuna vanamakuwe / idzo hanga dzi-chauya
(Do not use up sticks on go-away birds / while the guinea-fowl have yet to come; viz. Do not waste your time or substance on trifles)
- 93 Rega kuyera nyoka negavi / iyo iripo
(Do not measure a snake with string / while it is present itself; viz. Do not substitute false imitations for the real thing)

These examples show the relationship of tenses between clauses as important for the proper effect to be gained by comparing lexical items meaningfully collocated in verb phrases and clauses. In 16 and 42 paradox arises from the contrast of VP lexical items arranged in corresponding positions. In 57 and 93 negative imperative clauses followed by affirmative participial clauses set forth contrastive images in cross-corresponding positions. The result is congruence since the contrast is negated. The irony is that of awareness of complementary situations.

1.6.3. Principal and consecutive clauses

Combinations of principal and consecutive clauses are rare, though instances of the consecutive with conditional meaning are found. They are rather banal.

- e.g. 797 Ukama hahusukwi nemvura hukabva
(Kinship is not washed with water and disappears; viz. Even

- quarrels do not destroy kinship and its obligations)
 540 Kana shumba ikashaya nyama / inodya uswa
 (If a lion lacks meat / it eats grass; viz. Beggars can't be choosers)

1.6.4. *Imperative and subjunctive or consecutive clauses*

- e.g. 435 Chikomo, shata divi /rimwe ritambire pwere
 (Small hill, be difficult on one side / and on the other children will play; viz. A bad man will have some redeeming features)
 870 Chirere / mangwana chigozokurerawo
 (Care for it and it will care for you tomorrow; viz. Care for your child that he may care for you)
 437 Muroyi, royeru kure / ugowana anokuviga
 (Witch, bewitch far away / that you may find someone to bury you; viz. Live in peace with your neighbours)
 237 Usaguta / ukasunda dura
 (Do not get so full / as to overturn the barn; viz. Do not be improvident)

Proverb 435 is a good example of cross-correspondence. S, V and C correspond crosswise in each half through the use of the inverted inflection in the second. Cross-linking and the contrast of the verb radicals and their subjects all contribute to the semantic effect of two complementary sides in equilibrium. Proverb 870 also expresses complementary opposition, by the use of different underlying grammatical relationships and their grammatical exponents in corresponding positions. In the first half the relation of /chi-/ to /-rer-/ is object to verb radical, whereas in the second it is subject to verb radical.

1.6.5. *Infinitive and principal clauses*

In these sentences the infinitive clauses are circumstantial in nature and indicate the conditions or circumstances in which the situation expressed by the principal clause follows. In some cases the relationship between the two clauses is one of correspondence as when they share a common subject.

- e.g. 981 Gondo kuengerera / raona zumbu
 (If an eagle circles round and round / it has seen a fowl-coop; viz. Continued presence is prompted by an ulterior motive)
 72 Zizi kurungwa munyu roti, 'Ndava hukuwo'
 (If an owl is seasoned with salt / it thinks, 'I'm a chicken now too'; viz. A person is out of place in company with people with whom he has nothing in common, though he may strive to appear as one of them)

Here the proverbs convey implications or consequences based on the congruence of the lexical items as collocated. However, satire may be conveyed owing to the incongruity of the lexical items within each clause. The irony in 72 consists in the outward incongruity of the first clause passing into the inner incongruity of the owl's conception of itself.

Other relationships may obtain between the two parts.

- e.g. 243 Mwana muduku kubvuma rwendo / rwake ruri mberi
 (If a child agrees to an errand / his own errand lies ahead; viz. One will endure inconvenience if one's interest is involved)

- 227 Kurera imbwa nomukaka / mangwana inofuma yokuruma
(Bring up a dog on milk / it will bite you first thing the next
day; viz. One may spoil others by over-indulgence)

In these examples there is cross-correspondence between the complements of the infinitive clauses and the subjects of the principal clauses, and between the subjects of the infinitive clauses and concords in the principal clauses. This cross-correspondence ably supports the contrast between the lexical items in the clauses so that the proverbs issue as ironic paradoxes.

- e.g. 126 Benzi kunge riri rako / kudzana kwaro unopururudza
Let a fool be your own (kin), his dancing you'll applaud;
viz. Though others may laugh at the efforts or faults of your
own children, you will find grounds to encourage them)

This is a proverb with structural cross-correspondence, the complements of each half juxtaposed at the centre. The possessive stem of each complement relates it to the subject of the complementary clause, *rako* (your own) to /u-/ (you), and *kudzana kwaro* (his dancing) to *benzi* (fool). Thus the fool and his kin are drawn together from both parts of the proverb, a structural feature which reinforces the meaning of the proverb which is concerned to bring out the force of family loyalty. Lexically the two halves of the proverb are congruent at first, *benzi* (a fool) to *kudzana kwaro* (his dancing). However, there is very little in the first half to balance /-pururudz-/ (applaud), the corresponding verb radical being /-nge/ (be), an auxiliary in the infinitive predicate *kunge riri rako* (being yours). This lack of correspondence supports the irony. Applause is seen to be unmotivated because of a lack of lexical equilibrium.

1.6.6. Infinitive and imperative clauses

- e.g. 46 Kubaya, tange hama, vatorwa vakutye
(When killing, first set on your kinsmen, so that strangers
may respect you; viz. Be impartial if you would be respected)
- 447 Kurera imbwa, rera inoruma, igokudzivirira mupfumvu
(If you rear a dog, rear one that bites, that it may protect
you in time of danger)

In these two examples the first two clauses correspond structurally but contrast lexically. They leave the mind in suspense until the paradoxes are resolved by the addition of a further clause.

In 46 there is correspondence of verb phrase structure in the second two clauses but lexically there is contrast and grammatically there is cross-correspondence. The attack by the second person singular as subject on kinsmen as object elicits respect by the unrelated as subject for the second person singular as object. The second paradox resolves the first for the second person singular is now related meaningfully to the whole of humanity, kin and non-kin, in complementary ways. The balance of the proverb which rests on two paradoxes is reflected in the admirable morality of the application that one in authority who favours his kin at the expense of others forfeits respect. The same meaning is conveyed in this proverb.

- viz. Mhondoro kurura, inotanga wayo
(When a lion-spirit goes wild, it sets on its own (kinsman))

Proverb 447 is simpler than 46 as the contrast is between the second person singular and a dog as respectively subjects and objects. The paradox of the first two clauses is resolved by the further lexical contrast in the second two, that is between *-rum-* (bite) and *-dzivirir-* (protect) in juxtaposed and cross-linked verbs at the centre of the proverb. It is also resolved by the grammatical cross-correspondence between the second person singular and the dog as subjects and objects respectively. The action of the second person singular subject which produces the dog that bites returns on the second person singular object as protection in danger. But there is very little wit here.

The raising and resolution of suspense is a frequent device in proverbs of all kinds.

- e.g. 1447 Chenga ose manhanga / Hapana risina mhodzi
(Keep all the pumpkins / There is none without a seed)

2.0.0. Single Substantival Sentences

2.1.0.

Of the *tsumo* which are single substantival sentences the largest group, 10 per cent of the whole collection, are those in which the predicate is a stabilised infinitive VP. With predicates of this kind, the subjects are (1) infinitive VPs; (2) infinitive clauses; and (3) other types of substantive phrase.

2.1.1.

Tsumo consisting of subjects and predicates which are infinitive VPs and which are substantives by rank shift present the relationships between these two constituents in a number of fairly straightforward ways. S implies or involves P as a means to an end (cp. 5), as an exemplification or realisation (cp. 185), as a reason (cp. 22), as an implication (cp. 67) or as a result, sometimes paradoxical (cp. 145).

- e.g. 5 Kuziva mbuya / huudzwa
(To know one's in-laws / means being told — who they are; viz. Wisdom comes from others)
- 185 Kudada kwavari mugomo / kukumbira vari pasi mapfiwa
(Arrogance of those on the hill / is to ask those on the plain for hearth-stones; viz. It is arrogant, not humble, for those who have plenty to beg from those who have little)
But cp. 891, 1.5.1.1.
- 22 Kuramba nyama yechidembo / hunge uine yetsuro
(To refuse the flesh of a polecat / means you have that of a hare; viz. Refusal of a gift implies you have no need of it. But accept a gift, no matter how humble, if you need it to live)
- 164 Kuchengeta imbwa yomweni / kuda mwene wayo
(To look after the dog of a stranger / is to love its owner; viz. Love me, love my dog)
- 67 Kurava mbudzi nedzisipo / kurava nedzava matowo
(Counting even absent goats / means counting even dead ones, lit. those which have become hides; viz. Do not rely on something of which you are not certain)
- 162 Kupa / kuturika
(To give / is to hang up; viz. Giving to help others is a good investment)

- 145 Kubikira mweni / kumudzinga
(To cook for a stranger / is to get rid of him; viz. Do not be too ready with help for others if you wish to retain their presence or their respect)

Since both the subjects and the bases of the predicates in these sentences are infinitive VPs, there is much scope for the play of lexical and grammatical correspondences. In this way they are like the sentences examined in 1.1.0. where S consists of a RVP and P of a PrVP. In all of the above we have structural correspondence. In some of them the corresponding lexical items clearly contrast and the result is a paradox, e.g. Nos. 5, 185, 162 and 145. In others the composite lexical items in each half are congruent as in Nos. 22, 164 and 67 and the implications are ironic.

2.1.2.

In sentences where S is an infinitive clause, namely an action with a specified subject, the meaning of the proverb at the level of image and metaphor is more specific.

- e.g. 9 Dzvinyu kuzamba zuva / huona bako
(For a lizard to bask in the sun / is to have a cave in view; viz. If you venture into danger, be sure you have a means of escape)
- 818 Mbudzi kudya mufenje / kufana nyina
(For a goat to eat cabbage-tree leaves / is to imitate its mother; viz. Like father, like son)
- 687 Kakara kununa / hudya kamwe
(For an animal to get fat / is to eat another one; viz. One man prospers at the expense of another)

The predicates express the implications of the subjects in each case. The relationship between composite lexical items is congruent, and the proverbs carry a note of irony arising out of the awareness of complementary situations and their relationship.

The following proverbs, one interrogative and the other negative, are interesting for their form.

- e.g. 574 Nhonhongora kudya chayo / kukumbirirei uchi kudondi?
(A big bee eating its own store / why ask for honey from a small one? viz. It is arrogant for a rich man to beg from a poor man)
- 579 Chura kugara mumvura / handi kunwa
(For a frog to live in water / does not mean to drink; viz. Do not be misled by appearances into making rash judgements)
- cp. Kurembera kwedamba / handi ndiko kuwa
(The hanging of a wild orange / is not its fall)

The proverbs in 2.1.1. and 2.1.2. make use of infinitive VPs as subjects and predicates. Thus a pair of structurally identical frames are juxtaposed for comparison. As a result the distinctive lexical units proper to each frame stand out as well as their mutual relationships.

- e.g. 1 Ku-pedz-a nyota / ku-end-a padziva
(To quench thirst / is to go to the pool; viz. If help or

- information is wanted, one should go to an expert or an eye-witness)
- 24 Ku-ramb-a dzvuku / ku-on-a jena
(To reject a red one / means seeing a white one; viz. Do not refuse or reject anything unless you have something better)
- 145 Ku-kokw-a kwasamusha / ku-kokw-a kwavagere naye
(The invitation of a village head / is the invitation of those who dwell with him)
- cp. Ku-konw-a kwedare / ku-konw-a kwamambo
(For a court to be convinced / means the chief is convinced)

Halliday's terms, theme and rheme, are apt labels for the two halves of such sentences. The theme expresses the topic, and the rheme a comment on that topic.⁵

2.1.3.

In the third type of sentence with a stabilised infinitive VP as predicate, the subject is a non-infinitive SP. Once again the predicates are expressed as implications of the subject and the relationship between the two halves is ironic.

- e.g. 43 Matukirwo ababa / kunema mwana
(The way a father is scolded / is to chide a child in play; viz. Reproof is best conveyed indirectly)
- 163 Mutsa worutsoka / kuperekedza ziso
(The stupidity of the foot / is to accompany the eye; viz. It is stupid to accompany someone on some errand from which one cannot profit oneself)
- 966 Pfini yenyoka / kungoruma icho isingadyi
(The spite of the snake / is just to bite what it cannot eat; viz. It is gratuitously evil to inflict pain for no reason)

In most cases of this type, S consists of a noun and a possessive.

One can see that the proverb is the result of a marriage of form and meaning which differs in every case. The form is chosen from a limited number of sentence types and involves the juxtaposition of two constituents, each with its own internal structure and its structural relationship to its fellow. These constituents with their internal and external grammatical relationships are lifted into a new dimension by exponents lexically related in certain typical ways but with subtle variations so numerous that clumsy descriptive terms such as confirmation, contrast, paradox and so on are nothing more than approximations. The tiny proverb encloses a world of meaning on the metaphorical level alone quite apart from its applications. The variations of its structural form are numerous, but those of its lexical form are vastly more numerous.

2.2.0.

Similar to the predicates in 2.1.0. are the stabilised compound nominal constructions (CNCs) with VPs as constituents. These constructions differ from infinitive VPs in class prefix and in other syntactical ways.

- e.g. 20 Ziriwo rechembere / ziramba-waravira
(The unattractive relish of an old woman / is refused only

⁵ cp. M. Berry *Introduction to Systemic Linguistics: Volume 1: Structures and Systems*, (London, Batsford, 1975), 77.

after tasting it; viz. Do not be put off by appearances)

- 139 Maramba-kukombwa / maramba-hweni
(One who won't be surrounded / is one who won't be visited)

20 and 139 are internally front-linked and consist of two similar frames for comparison. Similar frames facilitate the comparison and relation of what they contain, the lexical and grammatical items.

2.3.0.

The *tsumo* in the next group contrast in structure with those in 2.1.3. for the predicates are stabilised SPs while the subjects or topics, which follow them in an inversion of normal word order, are infinitive phrases or clauses.

- e.g. 636 Idambudziko rehope / kurota kwawakarambwa
(It's a sleep that brings no benefit / the dreaming of a rejected lover; viz. It is no good crying over spilt milk)
- 522 Igangaidza-mukwenyi / mhezi kuvavira mudumbu
(It's confusing to the scratcher / for a pimple to itch inside his belly; viz. Some situations cannot be helped)

The effect of this inversion, which involves the assertion of an enigmatic, general predicative phrase which creates suspense, and which is followed by the insertion of the topic, turns the force of the assertion into a particular direction and has the effect of a subtle and humorous thrust. Comments are thus made on human foibles and quirks of all sorts.

- e.g. 94 Mazvokuda / kufa namaronda enyora
(It's a deliberate choice / to die from the wounds of tattoo marks; viz. Consequences of our own choice can't be blamed on others)
- 724 Chigare chenda / kudya akaitakura
(It's the louse's wont / to bite the one who bears it; viz. A comment evoked by ingratitude)
- 695 Made echakata / kutsvukira mumuti kuti ndiposherwe
(It's the trick of the wild plum / to redden on the tree and so to become a target; viz. A comment on women's wiles or vanity)
- 317 Mwoyochena ndowei / bere kugarira munhu akafa?
(What kindness is it / for a hyena to mount guard over a dead man? viz. A comment on an offer of help not entirely disinterested or which is hypocritical)
- 135 Ishungu dzomotana waswera padare / kuramba nemhandire seane meno
(It's the ill-nature of an old man at the meeting place / to begrudge others even mealie grains as if he had the teeth to munch them; viz. A comment on meanness)
- 518 Urombo hwayo mhembwe / kufa iri pamusungo
(It's hard luck on the duiker / to die while in the snare; viz. A comment on stupidity in one who could have helped himself)
- 400 Manenji / kuona kamba ichitamba nembudzi
(It's a marvel / to see a leopard playing with a goat; viz. A suspicious comment on something which appears unnatural)

2.3.1.

These proverbs are similar to those mentioned by Jack Berry as *blasons populaires* of which he quotes a single Hausa example:

'Katsina, home of genteel poverty, one eats
a dimesworth of groundnuts and washes one's
hands.'⁶

They are also like the sayings of Sam Weller in the *Pickwick Papers* who had 'an endless store of humorous illustrations apposite to the various incidents of life'.⁷

2.4.0.

In the next group of *tsumo*, the predicate consists of a stabilised SP of which the nucleus is a pronoun followed by qualificatives or nouns in apposition. All express an ironic paradox, the more pointed because of the presence of the nuclear pronoun which contributes definiteness.

- e.g. 84 Kwadzinorohwa matumburira / ndiko kwadzinomhanyira
(Where they are kicked in the belly / is the place to which they
run; viz. Harshness attracts more than kindness, for example
it is held that women are attracted to harsh men)
- 234 Vataitururira matohwe / nhasi ndivo votiseka maparapadzwa
(Those for whom we got down snot apples / are the ones
who laugh at our bruises today; viz. Kindness is not repaid
by respect)
- 590 Kangoma kanoririsa / ndiko kanotsemuka
(The little drum which sounds the loudest / is the one which
splits; viz. When a fashion or a man's popularity is at its
height, it is then that it is about to fade)
- 729 Chidziva chakadzikama / ndicho chinogara ngwenya
(The quiet pool / is the one in which the crocodile lives;
viz. Do not underestimate an enemy. It is the thing you despise
that kills you)
- 909 Chigarisano / ndicho chine mhosva
(What leads to living together is what leads to accusation;
viz. Familiarity breeds contempt)
- 1119 Muto wetsenza / ndiwo mumwe
(Soup made from tuber roots / is one and the same; viz.
The attraction of variety, for example in women, is an
illusion)
- 874 Mugoni wepwere / ndiye asinayo
(The one who can manage a child / is the one who has none)

This group of proverbs is reminiscent of those in 1.3.3. We appear to have in each case a balance between two substantival constructions with the stabilised pronoun as fulcrum stating an identity between the two. This identity is supported by the concordial agreement of the two constructions. The paradoxes are conveyed by the lexical contrasts which accompany the assertion of identity.

2.5.0.

In the next group the predicates consist of stabilised RVPs. The images employed are wittily ironic.

- e.g. 395 Hukwana inodya / ndeiri pana mai

⁶ J. Berry, *Spoken Art in West Africa* (Univ. of London, S.O.A.S. Inaugural Lecture, 1961), 13.

⁷ *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1967) 878.

- (The chick that feeds / is the one that is close to its mother; viz. Humility is more profitable than pride)
- 117 Chitende chinorema / ndechine mhodzi
(The gourd which is heavy / is the one which has seeds; viz. Respect is accorded to inner qualities rather than to outward appearance)
- 242 Kure kwegava / ndokusina mutsubvu
(Far for a jackal / is where there is no *mutsubvu* fruit tree; viz. The attractiveness of any work depends upon one's interest)

2.6.0.

In the next group the subject consists of a RVP which balances a stabilised SP.

- e.g. 259 Chakafukidza dzimba / matenga
(What covers houses / are the roofs; viz. A peaceful exterior may hide trouble inside)
- 491 Chawira pasi / mudzimu wembwa
(The fallen scrap / is (due to) the dog's ancestral spirit; viz. It is a piece of good luck)

2.7.0.

The final group of *tsumo* in this section with a recurrent structure consists of sentences in which neither S nor P have VPs as nuclei.

- e.g. 498 Nzira / masanga
(Paths / mean meetings; viz. One learns different ways by meeting others; or, A common solution or aim may be reached by different paths)
- 923 Gore / musandu
(Every year / is a change; viz. No one year is the same as any other)
- cp. Gore harizi / pakaza rimwe
(No year comes from / where another came; viz. Opportunities do not come twice)
- 1065 Mwana washe / muranda kumwe
(The son of a chief / is a subject elsewhere)

Where S is not developed, S and the stabilised substantive may balance a phrase which qualifies the latter. Cp.1.3.2.

- e.g. Mai musuva / usingasehwi mumuto
(Mother is a morsel / but not dipped into gravy; viz. Some persons are sacred, and not for common use)

3.0.0. Substantival and Verbal Sentences

The *tsumo* which exemplify the third structural type consist of two sentences, the first substantival and the second verbal. Thus the balance is between sentences of two different hierarchies.

3.1.0.

The *tsumo* of this group are of two types, those which make use of correspondence and front-linking; and those which make use of cross-correspondence and cross-linking.

3.1.1.

In a number of examples the second sentence expands the first by front-

linking, the subject prefix of the second sentence agreeing with the subject of the first.

- e.g. 924 Muromo chipfuto / Unopedza matura
(The mouth is a weavel / It consumes granaries; viz. It is necessary to be provident in regard to one's crops)
- 787 Mukuwasha mukuyu / Haapere kudyiwa
(A son-in-law is a fig-tree / He never stops being consumed; viz. Payment of the bride price may go on over a long time)
- 13 Chirema ndechina mazano / Chinotamba chakazendama kumadziro
(A cripple is one who has sense / He dances while leaning against the walls; viz. A person must come to terms with his limitations)
- 594 Zuva igore / Rinodoka rava namarevo mavi namavuya
(A day is a year / It ends with its fill of bad and good news; viz. Much can happen in one day)
- 278 Muroyi munhu / Kubayiwa anochemawo
(A witch is human / When pricked she too cries; viz. No person, no matter how much he boasts, is invulnerable)
- 52 Zino irema / Rinosekerera warisingadi
(The tooth is a fool / It smiles at one it does not like; viz. A smile can hide all sorts of inner feelings)
- 588 Mbiri matende / Inoputsika
(Fame is a fragile gourd / It breaks; viz. One's reputation will be destroyed if one does not take care of it)
- 592 Ugaro mwena / Kutevedza hunoguma
(Life is a hole in the ground / Follow and it comes to an end; viz. Everyone is mortal)
- 811 Mwana wengwe mwana wengwe / Kuona chikara haatizi
(A leopard's cub is a leopard's cub / If it sees a wild beast it does not flee; viz. A chip of the old block)

S2 develops, explains or elucidates S1 and to this end it makes use of front-linking. The relation between the two sentences is similar to that which obtains between the two halves of the proverbs in 2.3.0. S1 is a general statement, enigmatic and raising suspense in the mind. S2 develops the latent meaning in S1 by an analogy of which apt wit and irony are often the characteristics, and which again arise from the contemplation of two complementary aspects. One of these is suggested by the subject of S1 and the other by the predicate of S1. S2, though front-linked to the subject of S1, which through front-linking is also the subject of S2, actually develops the thought in the predicate of S1. So S1 is repeated in S2 in a complementary manner, the proverb holding both the enigma and the elucidation in balance.

In two of the examples, 592 and 811, S2 contains a circumstantial infinitive V.P. S1 and 811 exemplifies a frequent device, namely the repetition of an identical construction in S and P.

- e.g. 963 Mwana wenyoka mwana wenyoka / Haana muduku
(A young snake is a young snake / It is never too small; viz. A poisonous snake may be lethal even from birth)

3.1.2.

Tsumo of a second sub-group exemplify development or illustration of the

kind noted in 3.1.1. but without front-linking. In many cases S2 has its own expressed subject.

- e.g. 986 Musikana chihambakwe / Asvika anokanda chibwe
(A girl is a cairn / Whoever comes adds a stone; viz. It is natural for girls to be courted)
- 821 Mhembwe rudzi / Kuzvara mwana ane kazhumu
(A duiker is one of a species / If it bears a child, he will have a tuft on his head; viz. Like father, like son)
- 542 Kuneta kwomukuyi / Sadza rinodyiwa navagere
(Tiredness is for the grinder / The porridge is eaten by those who sit around; viz. One may sow and another will reap).

A circumstantial infinitive VP is a common feature of S2.

- e.g. 107 Rukova rwizi / Kuyambuka unokwinya nguo
(A brook is a river / When crossing you tuck up your clothes; viz. A humble disposition is required to overcome difficulties)
- 564 Wegudza ndowegudza / Kufuga gumbeze rinotsva
(One meant to have a bark blanket is one meant to have a bark blanket. If he puts on a woolen one, it gets burnt; viz. Misfortune dogs the unfortunate)
- 674 Chako ndechako / Kuseva unosiya muto
(What is yours is yours / When you dip a morsel of sadza, you can leave the gravy behind; viz. One can rely only on what is one's own, one's kinsmen or one's property)

This sub-group includes a long series of *tsumo* of which the following is typical.

- Tsapata rukukwe / Hazvienzani nokuvata pasi
(A worn out mat is still a bed / It is not like sleeping on the ground; viz. Half a loaf is better than no bread)

In these examples development and ironic elucidation is achieved without front-linking. The thought expressed by S2 is indeed suggested by the predicate of S1 but it is less an analogous echo of S1 and more of an independent statement. The subject of S1 on the one hand, and its predicate together with S2 on the other, still represent two complementary situations or aspects on which the proverb is the ironic comment.

- e.g. 256 Chidokodoko chirere-muviri / Chikuru chinouzouya wakora
(A very little is sustenance for the body / More will come later when it is fat; viz. From small beginnings come great things)

3.2.0.

Cross-correspondence is the feature of the second group of *tsumo* consisting of a substantival and a verbal sentence. Further this cross-correspondence is of two kinds. In the first a constituent of the predicate of S1 is linked to the subject of S2 or to an adverbial complement. In the second the subject of S1 is linked to the predicate of S2.

3.2.1.

The first kind of cross-correspondence relates the two sentences at the heart of the proverb by cross-linking. At the same time there is contrast of lexical items at the heart of the proverb.

- e.g. 740 Chibwe chiremera chavari kure / Vari pedyo vanotamba nacho

- (A stone is a heavy thing for those who are afar / Those who are near treat it as a plaything; viz. A chief is respected by strangers while his own nephews joke with him)
- 34 N'ai kwadzwo ndedzomuचेचे / Dzumukuru dzinoreva kudya
(Genuine yawns belong to the child / Those of an adult betoken food; viz. Children are ingenuous, adults devious. They convey their meanings, for example when complaining, in an indirect way)
- 239 Kure ndokuna amai / Kune mukadzi unofa wasvika
(Far is where mother is / Where wife is you risk death to reach; viz. The difficulty in any venture is relative to one's interest)
- 684 Nzou mutupo pana vanhu / Paseri ava machikichori
(An elephant is taboo in public / In private it is delicious food; viz. Outward respectability may cloak secret self-indulgence)

In these proverbs the ironic contemplation of complementary situations is conveyed by contrast, not by analogy. Contrasting lexical items occur in cross-corresponding positions, yet are linked to one another by concordial agreement.

3.2.2.

The second kind of cross-correspondence is expressed by a repetition of radical morphemes, not concords, at the beginning of S1 and the end of S2, as also by contrasting images at the heart of the proverb.

- e.g. 722 Chinogova ruoko / Muromo haugovi
(What gives away is the hand / The mouth does not give away; viz. Deeds speak louder than words)
- 544 Chakaenzanwa ibvudzi / Upfumi hahuna kuenzanwa
(What is shared out equally is hair / Wealth is not shared out equally; viz. People, though sharing a common nature, differ in their natural gifts and in their outlook)
- 586 Chinokokwa upfumi / Urombo hunozvika
(What is invited is wealth / Poverty invites itself; viz. Prosperity is acquired by arduous effort whereas poverty comes of itself)
- 926 Chinokura usipo imombe / Munda unokura nokuvandurirwa
(What grows in one's absence is a beast / A field grows by being renewed; viz. For success, unremitting labour is required)

The repetition of the radicals, like that of the concords in 3.2.1., is in the context of semantic contrast, again at the heart of the proverb, between the predicate of S1 and the subject of S2. In 3.2.2. the contrast is aided by contrasting grammatical items attached to the common verb radicals, viz. the contrast of affirmative : negative in 722 and 544; that of passive : active reflexive in 586. In 926 the contrast is aided by the accompanying verbal constructions indicating absence versus presence. In all of these ways irony is achieved.

3.2.3.

In some cases a contrast occurs similar to that in 3.2.1. and 3.2.2. but without

any linking or repetition. It is conveyed by semantic cross-correspondence and contrast.

- e.g. 537 Chigere ibwe / Muti unowa
(What abides is the stone / The tree falls; viz. No man should boast about his life or his strength)
- cp. 1387 Ane marengenyā / haacharike moto
(One who wears rags / does not jump over a fire)
- e.g. 539 Wakagarika ngewakafa / Mupenyu pfumo riri mushure
(The one at peace is the one who is dead / As for the living, a spear is poised behind him; viz. Mortal man is always vulnerable to death)
- 763 Ibangano muchateya / Kuzondoona kwava kwomumwe chete
(It is cooperation while you are still setting the trap / But as for going to inspect it, there is only one person; viz. A man seeks the help of others when commencing an enterprise, but when he reaps its fruits, he keeps them for himself)
- 703 Kuona roro kutsvuka kunze / Nyamba mukati makadyiwa namakonye
(To see a *roro* fruit, it is red outside / Yet inside it has been eaten by worms; viz. An attractive exterior may hide a repulsive interior)

4.0.0. Verbal Sentences

The next type of *tsumo* consists of two verbal sentences.

4.1.0.

As in 3.0.0., the *tsumo* of this group are of two types, those which make use of correspondence and front-linking; and those which make use of cross-correspondence and cross-linking.

4.1.1.

In the first sub-group of this type, as of the former, S2 expands S1 by front-linking and thus exemplifies correspondence. As in 3.1.1. S2 develops the thought expressed by the predicate of S1 in reference to the subject of S1.

- e.g. 1097 Dare harizonzi munhu / Rinozonda mhosva
(A court does not hate the man / It hates the crime; viz. A court should be impartial)
- 709 Mhosva inorondwa / Hakuna mhosva yakaita honye
(A case is tracked down / No case ever developed a worm; viz. The claims of justice do not lapse through the passage of time)

Mere front-linking, however, does not appear to be a very prominent feature of this structural type. In several striking instances it extends to parallelism of structure with complementary images in corresponding positions.

- e.g. 178 Kandiro enda / Kandiro dzoka
(Little dish go / Little dish come back; viz. One good turn deserves another)
- 505 Chaza masakati charamba ndima / Chaza usiku charamba hope
(That which came during the day prevented weeding / That which came during the night prevented sleep; viz. One way or another, one is bound to suffer)
- 581 Nhasi chinene / Mangwana chinewe
(Today it is my turn / Tomorrow it is yours; viz. Do not

- mock at anyone in trouble, or take advantage of them. You may be in their shoes tomorrow)
- 893 Pane danga pane mombe / Pane hundi pagara hurudza
(Where a kraal is there are cattle / Where chaff is there lives a good farmer; viz. Every effect must have a cause, and every achievement requires effort)
- 1069 Rwomuranda rwakoneswa norwashe / Rwashe rwakoneswa nemvura kunaya
(The subject's journey was prevented by the chief's / The chief's was prevented by the rain; viz. There is no one without a superior)
- 1093 Chapadare chakakandwa parurimi rwavapfuuri / Chomumba chiri mumhepo
(A matter arising in court is thrown to the tongues of passers-by / That arising in the home stays in the air within; viz. In regard to public affairs one may speak openly, but not about domestic affairs)

These proverbs draw out analogies between complementary aspects of life, and these converge into a single, more generalised attitude which combines both.

4.1.2.

Parallelism of structure without front-linking, but in which different but corresponding images express the same idea, also expresses analogy or two sides of a complementary situation pointing to one conclusion.

- e.g. 495 Musungusungu wakakunda mowa / Muzukuru wakakunda mwana
(Black nightshade tastes better than wild spinach / A nephew is more favoured than a son; viz. Relations between a man and his sister's son are more relaxed than with his own son who, ironically, is the nearer to him)
- 650 Chembere yoshayika / Bere rorutsa imvi
(The old lady is missing / The hyena is vomiting grey hairs; viz. There is no smoke without a fire)

4.1.3.

Some examples of proverbs consisting of two verbal sentences are reminiscent of analogous examples treated in 3.1.2. S1 is parallel or tautologous in structure, while S2 develops an aspect of the predicate of S1 or provides an exemplification of it. S1 is a truism but takes on meaning when developed by S2. The examples found of this kind of proverb are not conspicuous for wit.

- e.g. 526 Ane ganda ane nyama / Hazvienzane nowakabata hwohwa
(One who has some skin has some meat / It is not as with him who holds only a mushroom; viz. Half a loaf is better than no bread)
- 170 Chisi chako hachibatsiri / Unodya wakaringa kumusuwo
(What does not belong to you is of no use / You eat facing the doorway; viz. One cannot enjoy stolen property, or use borrowed goods with a relaxed mind)

In many cases the subject of S1 is a relative VP, the predicate of S1 involving a repetition of the VP, but principally inflected.

- e.g. 4 Charovedzera charovedzera / Gudo rakakwira mawere kwa-sviba

(One who is used to something is one who is used to something / The baboon climbed the precipice in the dark; viz. We do easily that to which we are accustomed)

- 771 Chiripo chiripo / Ndarira imwe hairiri
(What is there is there / One bracelet does not tinkle on its own; viz. Nothing happens without a cause, or Two witnesses are necessary to be believed)

4.2.0.

The most striking proverbs of this type are those with cross-linking concords coupled with semantic contrast. These are similar to those of 3.2.0. and have ironic effect.

4.2.1.0.

The first kind of cross-correspondence relates the two sentences at the heart of the proverb by cross-linking.

- e.g. 680 Chinonyenga chinokotama / Chinosimudza musoro chawana
(The suppliant bows down / He raises his head when he has got what he wants; viz. Suppliant humility is replaced by surfeited pride)
- 860 Kugocha kunoda kwaamai / Kwomwana kunodzima mwoto
(Roasting requires (the action) of the mother / That of the child puts out the fire; viz. Correction is meted out to the young, never to the old)

Constituents may be transposed and normal word order departed from to achieve cross-correspondence and semantic contrast.

- e.g. 343 Inotanda yomunyepi / Younyerere haitandi
(It chases, does the boaster's (dog) / The modest man's does not chase; viz. Boasting achieves more than performance)
- 647 Nzanga inokura yerema / Yomuchenjeri inoparara
(The village of the fool grows / That of the clever man breaks up; viz. The quiet achieve more than the talkers)

Here, as in 3.2.1., the comparison of sentences with lexical items in cross-corresponding positions results in the ironic contemplation of two complementary aspects of a subject.

4.2.1.1.

Cross-linking by concords at the heart of the proverb may be accompanied by repetition of the same verb radical. Contrast is injected by means of verbal inflections (affirmative : negative as in 389), verbal extensions (active : passive as in 766) or by contrasting complements (as in 1063). However, the ironic effect is the same as in 4.2.1.0. though the technique of contrast is slightly different.

- e.g. 389 Potsi haarwirwi / Anorwirwa ndiPiri
(Number One is not fought over / He who is fought over is Number Two; viz. Action may not be taken against an offence until it is repeated)
- 766 Dindingwe rinonakirwa richikweva iro / Kana rokwehwa roti,
'Mavara angu azara ivhu'
(The cheetah enjoys pulling the other along / When it is pulled it says 'My spots are covered in dirt'; viz. One objects to treatment which one metes out to others)

- 1063 Gombarume kudze soro / Kukudza dumbu wonge wave chana
(Master, have a big head / If you have a big belly you become like a child; viz. It is more important to have the intelligence to work for food than the mere appetite to enjoy it)

4.2.2.

Cross-correspondence similar to that in 3.2.2. is expressed by a repetition of radical morphemes, not concords, at the beginning of S1 and at the end of S2. This is accompanied by semantic contrast at the heart of the proverb and aided by contrastive inflections of the repeated verb radical.

- e.g. 547 Kunokanganwa mudyi wenyemba / Muoreri wamateko ha-
akanganwi
(The one who forgets is the eater of the beans / The one who gathers up the shells does not forget; viz. One who causes an injury may forget but the victim will not)

4.2.3.

In some cases a contrast occurs similar to that exemplified in 3.2.3. without any linking or repetition. It is conveyed by semantic contrast in cross-corresponding positions.

- e.g. 48 Chinono chine ingwe / Bere rinodya richifamba
(Caution characterises the leopard / The hyena eats as he walks; viz. No time like the present)
- 421 Chawawana idya nehama / Mutorwa ane hanganwa
(Eat what you have with a kinsman / A stranger forgets; viz. Blood is thicker than water)
- 714 China manenji hachifambisi / Chinomirira kuti mavara aonekwe
(A wonderful thing does not hurry away / It waits for its marks to be seen; viz. A criminal will always be caught because he will repeat his crime. A startling or terrible event will normally give previous warning of its likely occurrence)

4.2.4.

Finally, there may be repetition of all the lexical items of S1 in S2 but in reverse order. This sort of repetition is only possible when S1 and S2 are of the same type, either both verbal or both substantival.

- e.g. 602 Chaikanya chototsa / Chaitotsa chokanvawo
(The one who used to eat sadza dry now dips it into relish / The one who used to dip it into relish now eats it dry; viz. The wheel of Fortune goes round and rôles are reversed)
- 603 Nzanga seka dumba / Dumba seka nzanga
(Village laugh at shack / Shack laugh at village; viz. The wheel of Fortune goes round and rôles are reversed)
- cp. Aive madziva ave mazambuko / Aive mazambuko ava madziva
(What were pools have become fords / What were fords have become pools)

All these proverbs convey the same meaning by means of the device of repetition in reverse. By this device the two 'complementary situations' are mirror images of one another, a fit subject for irony. (Only the first half of the last proverb is given in *Tsumo-Shumo*, No. 596.)

5.0.0. Substantival Sentences

As in the case of *tsumo* of types 3 and 4, those of 5 may be divided into those which exemplify correspondence and those which exemplify cross-correspondence between the balancing halves.

5.1.1.

Tsumo of the first sub-group exemplifying front-linking and parallelism of structure with complementary images in corresponding positions.

- e.g. 634 Chakata iri pasi ndeyavanhu vose / Asi iri mumuti ndeyo-wagona kukwira
(The fruit on the ground belongs to everyone / That on the tree is for him who can climb; viz. Do not take anything for granted unless it is in your possession)
- 757 Mbavha imbatwa / Mbavha-rutsoka ishamwari
(A thief is one caught (red-handed) / A thief (suspected by a) footprint is a friend; viz. No one must be presumed guilty unless witnessed committing a crime)
- 330 Kutaura kudzikisira / Kuita makata
(Speech is like going downhill / Action is like going uphill; viz. Deeds not words)
- 372 Kufa izuva rimwe / Kuora igore
(Death is one day / Corruption a year; viz. Beware of what may harm you and have long-lasting consequences)
- 29 Kureva ndokunei? / Kutarisa kurevawo
(What has speech got? / Looking is also speaking)

The effect of these proverbs is to emphasise the complementary aspects of one topic if the subject of S1 is also that of S2. Where S1 and S2 have different but complementary subjects the view broadens to compare different aspects of mortality (as in 372) or communication (as in 29).

5.1.2.

There are one or two examples of proverbs which show parallelism of structure without front-linking. These are analogous in form and meaning to those in 4.1.2.

- e.g. 191 Ishe ndishe / Muranda muranda
(A chief is a chief / A subject is a subject; viz. One's manner of acting should accord with one's position in society)
- 577 Heya baravara ndiwo magariro / Kutuka mwene wechisvo ndiwo mano?
(A shaven head is a way of life / Is it wise to scold the owner of the razor; viz. Do not offend your benefactors, you may need their help again)

5.1.3.

Many of the *tsumo* of this type exhibit development of S1 by S2 without linking or close semantic correspondence or contrast. S2 throws light on an apparent tautology or unlikely paradox, or some hidden aspect of S1 which becomes significant in the light of S2.

- e.g. 179 Chitsva chitsva / Munamba wejenachena
(What is new is new / It is white porridge made with bee-stings; viz. New ways attract a following)

- 426 Vaviri vaviri / Wechitatu muzvinaguhwa
(Two people a pair / A third is a slanderer; viz. To keep a secret three are too many)
- 741 Kungotya nyanga dzezizi / Nyamba manhenga
(It's just fear of the horns of an owl / Whereas they are feathers; viz. Do not be ruled by appearances)
- 327 Chipa-muchena / Kupfuma mudzimu wake
(It is help to a poor man / Riches are his spirit's affair; viz. A poor man will not emerge from his poverty, though he is helped, since that is his lot)

5.2.0.

Other *tsumo* of this type exhibit cross-correspondence by cross-linking and semantic contrast.

5.2.1.

The first kind of cross-correspondence relates the two sentences at the heart of the proverb by cross-linking.

- e.g. 431 Chirungurira ndechowadya maradzwa / Chowerinopisa isvoto
(Indigestion is the complaint of one who has eaten left-overs / That suffered by one who eats warm food is pain in the stomach; viz. Some offences are easier to bear than others)
- 999 Chembere ndeyembwa / Yomurume ndibaba wavanhu
(An old one as such is (when it is) a dog / When it is a man he is the father of people; viz. Accord respect to the old)
- cp. Chembere ndeyembwa / Yomunhu inofa ichigurukuta
(Mere old age belongs to a dog / When human the old die grumbling; viz. Accord respect to the old)

These proverbs are among the most ironic in the whole collection. 431 appears to imply that the wrongs that really hurt and really cause a fight come from persons and relationships from which one expects most pleasure and support. The alternative to 999 derives the claim of the aged to some consideration over and above that given to a dog from the fact that they can grumble. Once again the proverbs convey irony by an 'awareness of opposite and complementary attitudes'

- e.g. 980 (This should read) Ane mhuri kwayo ndeane ndume / Ane mhurikadzi vaeni
(One with a real family is one who has boys / One with a family of girls has strangers; viz. Women members of a family marry into their husband's clan and leave their parents)
- 618 Rombe ngerichaenda / Rodzoka ndimambo
(The beggar is the one who goes away / On his return he is a chief; viz. One who shows initiative is often ridiculed. But if he succeeds, he will be praised)

5.2.2.

The second type of cross-correspondence is shown by the use of contrastive lexical items, mainly nominal since both S1 and S2 are substantival, both at the heart of the proverb and at its confines, and in cross-corresponding positions. As in the case of 3.2.2. and 4.2.2. irony is achieved by the comparison of two complementary sides of a topic not indicated by cross-linking.

- e.g. 713 Chembere masakati / Usiku imvana

(An old woman by day / At night still able to bear; viz. We may show one side of ourselves in public and another in private)

- 928 Chinokura choga isango / Munda kukura huona tewe
(What grows on its own is a forest / For a field to grow is to see a master)

5.2.3.

A complete change of attitude is conveyed by making S1 and S2 mirror images.

- e.g. 1027 Kwamairidigikira ndiko kwomoringa benya / Kwamairinga benya ndiko kwomoridigikira
(Where you used to visit is where you now turn up your nose / Where you used to turn up your nose is where you now visit; viz. People are fickle in their loyalties, and their friendship is swayed by a change of fortune)

6.0.0. Verbal and Substantival Sentences

Examples of this type of proverb are very few. *Tsumo* of this type also show a dichotomy of form, some exemplifying correspondence and others exemplifying cross-correspondence.

6.1.0.

Tsumo exemplifying correspondence, like those in 3.1.0., are found with and without front-linking.

6.1.1.

Correspondence with front-linking and semantic contrast in corresponding items.

- e.g. 535 Atandavara aguta / Apfunya ndowavata nayo
(The one with legs outstretched has eaten his fill / The one with crossed legs is the one who went to bed hungry; viz. The feelings of others cannot be experienced as such but show themselves by external signs)

6.1.2.

Development without front-linking.

- e.g. 838 Chava chigondora chava chimombe / Kukona kutunga urema hwacho
(What was a bullock is now a grown beast / If it cannot gore that is its stupidity; viz. A grown man is expected to support his family)
- 983 Chada mwoyo hachikoni / Mwoyo chiremba
(What the heart wants is not impossible / The heart is a doctor; viz. The heart's desire makes a man work wonders)
- 341 Shungu dzembwa dziri mumwoyo / Kuhukura ndiko kududza
(A dog's feelings are in its heart / Barking is their expression; viz. Inner feelings will come out)

6.2.0.

Tsumo exemplifying cross-correspondence, like those in 3.2.0., are found with and without cross-linking.

6.2.1.

Cross-correspondence shown by cross-linking, accompanied by contrast of images at the centre of the proverb.

- e.g. 618 Rombe rinosekwa richaenda / Kana rodzoka, hedzo nhureture
(A beggar is ridiculed when he goes away / When he returns, there is a load for you; viz. One who shows initiative is often ridiculed. But if he succeeds, he will be praised)

6.2.2.

Semantic contrast at the heart of the proverb without cross-linking.

- e.g. 997 Kurayira kunoda pwere / Mukuru ndimambo
(Discipline requires a child / An adult is a chief; viz. Discipline must be administered while children are young. A grown-up man is beyond being disciplined)

5.2.3.

Semantic contrast at the beginning and the end of the sentence.

- e.g. 328 Muromo haupi / Chinopa maoko
(The mouth does not give / What gives are the hands; viz. Deeds not words)
- 617 Rombe pakata hana / Mukaka ndowavaridzi
(Beggar, look to your conscience / The milk belongs to its owners; viz. Beggars can't be choosers)

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study has been to identify the structural forms of Shona proverbs and to consider in what ways these structural forms aid the expressive power of proverbs by deftly positioning the lexical items in relation to one another. It is from the congruence or contrast of the lexical items mainly that the unified comment of the proverb proceeds.

While each proverb is a small universe on its own, and both the variety and subtlety of proverbs make detailed generalisation difficult, if not impossible, certain features have emerged from this attempt to study how the wisdom of the Shona is enshrined in wit.

Paradox is a feature of the simple sentences, both verbal and substantival. But in simple sentences where verb phrase relationships are found in both subject and predicate, as well as in the larger proverbs consisting of two sentences, we appear to have irony in the wider sense defined by Eliot and Richards. The double aspects of irony, namely a balanced awareness of complementary attitudes, is found in the proverbs. In form they consist almost invariably of two complementary and balancing halves. The ways in which these two halves are related are also two-fold. In some cases correspondence of form is used to place the images conveyed by lexical items in corresponding positions. In others cross-correspondence is used to set images in transposed positions. A further dichotomy is observed in regard to the semantic

relationships between images, namely congruence and contrast. In general the comparison of congruent items conveys ironic implications drawn out by analogy, while that of contrastive items conveys the irony inherent in complementary situations.

Study of the proverbs reveals a remarkable skill in manipulating abstract structural patterns in order that the comparison of selected images may take place with the desired effect of 'comic surprise' and without distraction. Thus grammatical constructions as different as verbal sentences and substantival sentences are made to conform to the same principles of design, namely those of correspondence and cross-correspondence.