

Name Changes in South Africa: An Indigenous Flavour

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KEYWORDS Onomastics. Name Changes. Place Names. Heritage. Geographical Features

ABSTRACT The paper seeks to address the fact that name changing may be used as a unifying tool with the express view of promoting and rediscovering the country's heritage. Name changing may be influenced by, amongst others, factors such as past history, beliefs, race, ethnicity, democracy and the physical features of a place. It may also be influenced by members of the community who want to reclaim their lost identity and also to restore historical records. The process must be properly handled because it might divide the nation. The paper further argues that all stakeholders should play a meaningful role in the rewriting of the history of South Africa by being involved in all the naming and renaming processes.

INTRODUCTION

Lately, much has been said, and is still being said, about the renaming of geographical features in South Africa. South Africa is a country born of a violent history characterised by diverse political, economic and cultural differences. This is a time of change when many issues of great value and significance have to be decided on, one of them being the renaming of geographical features. In order to develop some insights into the process of the renaming of geographical features such as provinces, towns and cities, we must take a closer look at how people have perceived and still perceive the places which acquired new names. Insights are drawn from Makondo's (2013) transdisciplinary ethnographic qualitative examination of nightclub names at Makoni shopping centre in Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe. The study established the history of the nightclub names and their supposed semantic, pragmatic and semiotic import within their business context. This paper also benefits from Mahime's (2013) discussion of the importance of language maintenance through the use of cultural names to birds and how these are named and where they originate or emanate.

The changing of names of geographical features should be viewed as part of the South African government's bid to rid the country of its colonial and apartheid legacy. In this paper, attention will be given to the renaming of geographical places. Names of geographical places 'are packed with cultural messages. They constitute a very sensitive area in the South African history of land occupancy and settlement' (Dlomu 1994).

In view of the critical importance of consultation, Dlomu further remarks that geographical names need careful handling to create lasting peace and harmony among its citizens. It is also important to ensure that all the people involved in this exercise check the factual accuracy of both the existing and the proposed names.

All parties involved must ensure that the process does not undermine the cultural as well as the linguistic nature of South African population. It must be a genuine exercise that, in the long run, should be viewed as a unifying force. Imposing names of struggle heroes and heroines should be exercised with great courtesy because South Africa is culturally diverse. Also, it is not a one-party state where all decisions are taken unilaterally and thus detrimental to the lesser political groups who do not enjoy political supremacy. The citizenry has the right to stay informed and to participate in all the processes which affect their lives. If the naming process has to do with cultural identity and the restoration of the pride of the communities, all citizens should be afforded the opportunity of rewriting the history of South Africa by engaging in all the naming and renaming processes that are taking place in country.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is mainly a semantic analysis of the South African Geographical names given from varied backgrounds and settings by bringing to the reader's attention the circumstances that led to the renaming of selected place names. The place names are the reservoirs of human his-

tory and culture of the South African people. According to Mouton (2001: 57), “the research design is a blueprint of how one intends to conduct research and the direction will take”. This paper mainly used the qualitative approach as it is located in the interpretative paradigm. According to Seale (1998) in Ndlovu (2014: 19), interpretivists tend to favour qualitative rather than quantitative methods because people’s worlds provide greater access to their subjective meaning than do statistical trends.

RESULTS

In the past, the history of the African people was partially researched and written by white scholars. In documenting their research findings, some of the place names were not properly spelt; they were either intentionally or unintentionally wrongly spelt. This paper has addressed the issue and would set a precedent so that we do not repeat the past mistakes. The renaming of place names should be treated as the important tool employed by people to reclaim their lost identity, culture and heritage.

Historical Perspective

It is perhaps appropriate to look back to where we come from in order to attach meaning and value to the remaining process taking place in the country. In South Africa, colonial conquest was characterized by the subjugation of the indigenous people in all spheres of life. Indigenous people were not empowered to play any meaningful and significant role in the writing of the rich history of their country. One of the great historical tragedies of the apartheid era was the imposition of colonial names on landforms such as rivers, dams, villages, towns, cities, game reserves and government buildings. It is also a well-known fact that many South African towns and cities had names before the colonial period. Unfortunately, these names were never formally acknowledged due to oral tradition. The oral tradition contributed immensely because the colonizers could not properly pronounce the original names of some of the South African towns and cities, for example, Messina instead of Musina; Debegen instead of Dipitseng; Matoks instead of Botlokwa; Magoebaskloof instead of Makgobaskloof; Chuniespoort instead of Chueniespoort, Mathiba instead of Mothiba; Levubu

instead of Livhuvu and Mogaliesberg instead of Mogaliesberg.

Community Involvement

The participation of all the citizens of South Africa in the renaming process will prove to the world that all South Africans are enjoying the fruits of their hard-fought freedom. It will also prove that power is not concentrated in the hands of a few individuals or one political formation. Rather, that the masses who voted for the government into power can exercise their will without any fear. However, it must be emphasized that all parties involved are guided by a set of rules in order for them to partake in this exercise from a well informed position. However, all the South African citizens should feel free to participate in the renaming of their respective communities or villages. They must choose names free of negative connotations which will help the country to heal its past wounds. This is done as a way to break away “with the past colonial superiority and racial domination of one race by the other” and thus “reflect our path of dynamic transformative discourse” (Mamaila 2002). At the end of this exercise all existing and proposed names must be representative of the majority of people who live in the areas which bear the names.

Standardization of Geographical Names

In an effort to promote and rediscover the country’s heritage, the South African government established the South African Geographical Names Council to advise its central government on new geographical names as well as the changing of existing geographical names (South African Geographical Names Council Act 118 of 1998). It is the duty of the Geographical Names Council of South Africa to ensure that no name is forced on people. This implies that the council must make sure that all people inhabiting a particular geographical area are informed of the importance of their participation in order to avoid any political hegemony or manipulation by people in the corridors of power. According to Ntsewa (2005) of the National Geographical Names Council, the main role of the council is to encourage communities to suggest new place names to replace names which are considered inappropriate, offensive, inaccurate or a duplication of other names.

The Geographical Names Council must exercise its authority without any favour or prejudice. If the council is biased in executing its duties, the intended goal of rewriting the history of South Africa will be jeopardized. Its decision should be based on genuine information which will remain valid and absolute for many generations to come. No history will be accepted if it is based on rumours or comes from unreliable sources who only want to achieve their own political agendas at the expense of the masses of this country. Hall (2005) argues that:

Critics of the campaign to standardize names across the country say arbitrary renaming is a populist measure that wastes valuable resources, creates confusion and is an attempt to erase the country's heritage (Business Day 18 August 2005).

Name changing seeks to help transformation of South Africa by making the names of its cities sound more African and restoring names used before colonial times (Hall 2005). The name changing process will be acceptable to all South Africans if the main aim is to make the changes representative of all cultural groups. It is sometimes painful to note that many inhabitants, especially Black South Africans, seem to see this important process as a way to honour only heroes and heroines of one specific group of people.

Approval of Official Names

The South African Geographical Names Council was established in 1998 to consider submissions from provincial names councils and submit them to the Minister of the Department of Arts and Culture for official approval (South African Geographical Names Council Act 118 of 1998) (2001:1). The Minister, on advice of the national council, makes the final decision to publish the change of a name in the Government Gazette.

New Names for South African Towns/Cities

The newly approved names will be unique, symbolic and representative and thus reward to the country. They will be multicultural and multi-lingual. Every community will identify itself with its name. Name changing does not only affect the names of towns, streets, dams and rivers, but also the names of countries.

Jenkins et al. (1996: 15) mention that it is only natural that when people come into power they should seek to right old wrongs by changing place names, as has happened all over the world. When governments change, names of countries and provinces may also undergo change, for example:

- (i) Following a landslide victory of Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) in the 1980's general elections, the country's name, Rhodesia, was changed to Zimbabwe. The country's capital was also changed from Salisbury to Harare.
- (ii) When South West Africa gained independence from apartheid South Africa in 1990, its name was changed to Namibia.
- (iii) The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a country characterized by many names. It was previously known as Zaire. It is now referred to as DRC, DR Congo, Congo and Congo-Kinshasa (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo).

In view of the critical importance of the renaming process, the researcher shall concern himself mainly with the historical value and symbolic meaning attached to the new proposed names. The following is a list of South African provinces, cities and towns which have received new names:

Bela-Bela

Bela Bela is a town situated in the geo-thermic hot springs of the Limpopo Province. Bela-Bela was previously known as Warmbaths. The springs were discovered by the Tswana tribes that moved into the area in the early 1800s. In 1873 the Transvaal government bought the land to build a resort at the springs and called it Warmbath. The name was later anglicized to Warmbaths (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bela-Bela>).

Centurion

After the establishment of the Government of National Unity in 1994, the town clerk of Verwoerdburg announced that with the incorporation of Verwoerdburg, Rantesig, Knoppieslaagte and Doornkloof it would be logical to find a completely new name for the area (Jenkins et al. 1996). Initially the name change was proposed by a

group of business people. Their proposal was influenced by the new cricket stadium, Centurion. However, there was disagreement about the name change. According to Jenkins et al. (1996:29), a referendum was used to approve the name change:

From an official list of 307 names, 72 were submitted to the public in a referendum, and the majority of those who voted chose Centurion.

The name Centurion was approved by the Southern Pretoria Sub-structure on 27 June 1995 (Jenkins et al. 1996).

Lephalale

Lephalale is a town in the Limpopo Province. It is known as a coal mining town. It was previously known as Ellisras. The town was established as Ellisras in 1960 and named after the original farm owners, Patrick Ellis and Piet Erasmus (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lephalale>).

Modimolle

Modimolle is a town located in the Waterberg in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. Modimolle was formerly known as Nylstroom. The town was renamed after a prominent hill close by which the locals regard as their holy mountain. The name Modimolle means 'place of the spirits' (<http://www.mrinfo.co.za/sa/limpopo/doc/Limpopo-28.htm>). The town was established in the 1860s. It is located approximately 135 kilometres north of Pretoria. It is the commercial centre of the Waterberg district.

The first prime minister of the Republic of South Africa, J.G. Strijdom used to reside in Nylstroom (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modimolle>). Other prominent people who resided in Nylstroom were the artist Erich Mayer and architect Gerhard Moerdijk who designed the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria.

Modjadjiskloof

Modjadjiskloof was previously known as Duiwelskloof. Before the arrival of the Voortrekkers in 1894, the area was known as Ga-Modjadji. According to the chairperson of the Balobedu Heritage Society, Dr Mathole Motshekga, who wrote a book on the history of the Modjadji dynasty and the Balobedu people, the place was

named Duiwelskloof by members of the Dutch Reformed Church in 1894. Modjadjiskloof is home to Limpopo's legendary rain queen, Modjadji (Motshekga 2004).

Mokopane

Mokopane is a town in the Limpopo Province of South Africa, established by the Voortrekkers. It was named Potgietersrus after the Voortrekker leader Piet Potgieter.

The town, Potgietersrus was changed to Mokopane in 2003. The name is derived from the word *kôpana* (to come together) and acts as a unifying force or a symbol of unity. It calls upon people to work together. It is home to the Northern Ndebele speaking tribes (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mokopane>).

Musina

Musina is a town in the Vhembe District Municipality. It was previously known as Messina. The town was established in 1905.

In 2002 the name was officially changed to Musina. Musina means 'spoiler', which refers to copper. Unfortunately, colonizers misspelt the name Messina. Musina boasts one of the world Heritage Sites, Mapungubwe (place of jackals). Mapungubwe was officially declared a heritage site in 2004 (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Musina>).

Polokwane

Polokwane is the name for Pietersburg. It was founded in 1886 and named in honour of Voortrekker leader Petrus Jacobus Joubert. The town became a city on 23 April 1992 and on 11 June 2003 changed its name to Polokwane (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polokwane>). The name Polokwane, in Sepedi, means "place where people care for each other". Polokwane is the capital city and metropol of the Limpopo Province.

The name changing of the town was contested vigorously. A few marches were organized but the support was not overwhelming as anticipated by the concerned group. In spite of the marches, the name has finally been accepted by the inhabitants of the town.

Senwabarwana

Senwabarwana is a small town in the Blouberg Municipality. It was previously known as

Bochum. The name Senwabarwana originates from a river called Senwabarwana. According to informants, the name means “where the Bushmen drink” (<http://www.bloubergmunicipality.com/Heritage Sites.htm>).

Sophiatown

Sophiatown was the cultural centre of the Black South Africans of Johannesburg. To show that Sophiatown was the symbolic centre of black culture, it was characterized by arts, politics, religion and entertainment.

The township was founded in 1899. Before the apartheid era, people of all racial groups lived in Sophiatown. The apartheid government bulldozed Sophiatown by the end of 1963 and rebuilt it as a Whites only suburb named Triomf (triumph). The ANC government restored the name Sophiatown in the late 1990's, although the name change was only completed in February 2006 (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sophiatown,-Gauteng>). At the ceremony organized to rename the suburb, the executive of Johannesburg Amos Masondo remarked that “the name Sophiatown evokes memories of a vibrant, creative, multicultural community, a place where artists, writers and musicians flourished, against the odds, in an atmosphere of racial tolerance” (<http://www.southafrica.info/sa-glance/history/sophiatown140206.htm>).

Gauteng

Gauteng is a province of South Africa. It was formed from part of the old Transvaal Province after South Africa's first non-racial elections on 27 April 1994. It was initially named Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging (or PWV) and was renamed Gauteng in December 1994.

The name Gauteng comes from the Sesotho word meaning Place of Gold, the historical Sesotho name for Johannesburg and surrounding areas referring to the thriving gold industry in the province following the 1886 discovery of gold in Johannesburg (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauteng>).

Mpumalanga

The name Mpumalanga was changed from Eastern Transvaal on 24 August 1995. The name means east or literally ‘the place where the sun rises’ in SiSwati, isiXhosa and isiZulu.

Prior to 1994, Mpumalanga was part of the Transvaal Province (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mpumalanga>).

Limpopo

Limpopo is the northernmost province of South Africa. The capital is Polokwane, formerly called Pietersburg. The province was formed from the northern region of the Transvaal Province in 1994, and initially named Northern Transvaal. It was renamed Northern Province until 11 June 2003, when the name of the province was formally changed to the name of its most important river, Limpopo (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limpopo>).

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RENAMING PROCESS

The names people give their surroundings provide a unique source of information about a society's history, beliefs and values. There is a large number of aspects of a country's development which achieve linguistic recognition through its place names (Crystal 1980). Nevertheless, names can change along with governments. It is said that a large amount of time and financial resources are spent on deciding on the names of streets, rivers, dams, cities, or towns when a new government comes into power. Jenkins et al. (1996: 12) echo this sentiment:

Changing names is part of a process of change in the tide of a country's history. It acts as a mirror of the dynamic forces of changing historical relations, human relations, ideologies and attitudes towards change.

Interestingly, name changing may be a positive drive that reflects creativity and may serve an expression of common interests and goals of solidarity. However, name changing may also become a political tool of manipulation, even destruction, of social assets and of a cultural heritage that may never be regained (Jenkins et al. 1996).

Hlophe (City Press 18 July 2002) is of the opinion that the problem with the names of South African towns is that during the apartheid era they only reflected the history and backgrounds of the Afrikaner people to a large extent and to some degree the English.

The names of South African cities, towns, dams, rivers, buildings, streets and all major roads in the country cannot be left untouched to only

express and depict White history. Jenkins et al. (1996:22) reflect on the manner in which the political leaders of the previous government imposed their names:

The names of National Party leaders have been given more often to features such as dams, airports, roads, buildings, schools and hospitals, whereas in the 19th century British Imperialists and Voortrekkers had a field day commemorating their leaders in the names of towns.

During the apartheid era dams and water schemes were named after Nationalist Party leaders. However, shortly after the 'new' South African government had been established in 1994, the first major political place name changes were instigated by the then Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, Kader Asmal (Jenkins et al. 1996:26). The dams and water schemes which were given the names of Nationalist Party leaders and their homeland counterparts were subsequently renamed in November 1994 (Jenkins et al. 1996: 26).

<i>Old name</i>	<i>New name</i>
Hendrik Verwoerd	Gariiep
Braam Raubenheimer	Kwena
Charlie Malan	Impofu
Fanie Botha	Tzaneen
Hans Strijdom	Mokolo
Hudson Ntsanwisi	Nsami
Jan Wassenaar	Klaserie
Lake Mentz	Darlington
Makgomo Matlala	Arabie
Paul Sauer	Konga
P K le Roux	Vanderkloof
Sarel Hayward Canal	Orange-Riet Canal

Several major airports in the apartheid South Africa were also named after former prime ministers according to their province of origin (Jenkins et al. 1996).

In South Africa, roads as well were named after Nationalist Party leaders. Examples of the roads are as follows:

Ben Schoeman Highway
Jan Smuts
D F Malan
J G Strijdom
H F Verwoerd

Examples of airports that bore the names of apartheid leaders are as follows:

<i>Old name</i>	<i>New name</i>
Jan Smuts Airport/ Johannesburg	OR Tambo International Airport

<i>Old name</i>	<i>New name</i>
International Airport D F Malan Airport	Cape Town International Airport
H F Verwoerd Airport	Port Elizabeth Airport
Louis Botha Airport	Durban International Airport

This simply suggests that name changing is one of the solutions of bringing all the citizens of the country on board. Name change is, therefore, a necessity. Due to the social and political transformations that are taking place in South Africa, name changes are unavoidable in the new South Africa. Name changes can be a process that unifies people rather than divides them. The government would do well in giving a more balanced reflection of the real South Africa (Sunday Sun 10 February 2002).

THE FUNCTIONS OF PLACE NAMES

Place names reflect a spectrum of emotions, reminding people that they were created (place names) for use daily by human beings who call those place names home. Place names can be despairing, bleak and soulless, remindful of the callous past, self-conscious, ironic, hyperbolic, euphemistic, humorous, imaginative, or proud and defiant. Furthermore, the new names of informal settlements make a vibrant, creative and multilingual contribution and deserve to be welcomed wholeheartedly (Raper et al. 1996).

The significance of place names is clearly outlined by Dorion (1988) as cited by Jenkins et al. (1996: 32), who says:

Geographical names serve several functions, in relation both to the places they designate and to the groups who live in them. They serve to locate, classify, distinguish, characterize an endless number of places of varying nature, function and size. But they also serve to recall, to evoke, to record and even to promote elements of the collective memory of a people, be they events, persons or other elements of regional and national culture.

This affirms that South African names not only constitute an effective system of communication but also serve the cultural interests of all the peoples of the country (Jenkins et al. 1996). Dlomu (1994: 9) also maintains that one uses geographical names in one's descriptions of one's surrounding areas. When relating to someone where one has been or where one plans to

be in future, a geographical name is almost invariably used. In this regard, Dorion (1992: 1) argues that geographical names reveal significant cultural and environmental aspects of a community's identity. Dlomu (1994: 13-14) further indicates that:

Geographical names are packed with cultural messages. They constitute a very sensitive area in the South African history of land occupation and settlement ... Geographical names need careful handling as part and parcel of the country's attempt in the creation of lasting peace and harmony amongst its people.

Hlophe (City Press, 18 July 2002) underpins the significance of both personal and place names as follows:

Names in Africa and all over the world for both individuals and places are not mere tags. They carry with them certain meanings. In the case of places, they reflect a particular history of a given people, either residing in the area or those with some link with the area.

Names are given to places in order to identify or differentiate them from one another. Haggett (1979:30) is of the opinion that '- the simplest way of specifying a location somewhere on earth's surface is to give it name-'. According to Haggett (ibid.), the best way to locate a place is to give it a name. This will enable its inhabitants or tourists to identify and locate the place. Names may be given to villages, towns, cities and suburbs in relation to the people inhabiting these particular areas. Golele (1993:30) states '- place names in many ways reflect the nature of the society or community in which they are found-'. The above quotation simply implies that place names can help one to know the culture of the people who occupy a particular place. They play significant roles in that people are able to locate through their names. Barker and Billinge (1982:161) concur that '- a place which acquires a name must have a role to play in the society-'

The most important function of a place is to refer to an entity; that is to select one particular entity from a host of others of a similar or different nature, and to identify it from others (Raper 1987: 11). Place names are not given to locations or areas for the sake of giving them but to help understand the history of the people inhabiting those respective areas. Buttimer (1993: 77) agrees with the aforementioned assertion when she says that place names, too, whether real or imagery symbolize a particular kind of experience.

This means that place names may be given in relation to how a particular group of people behaved at any given time. They may be given to show how people suffered or enjoyed themselves under the leadership of a particular induna or chief. This is supported by the view expressed by Johnston et al. (1994: 443) when they suggest that:

The names of settlements, locations, fields and features of natural and cultural landscapes may provide evidence of environmental settlement and social conditions at the time a name was coined.

Historical collections, resources, and sites must fully reflect the many components of South Africa's cultural heritage and, in particular, neglected and suppressed aspects of its people's cultures must be conserved (Jenkins et al. 1996). This sentiment is aptly summed up by Golele (1993:88) when she explains that the disruption was caused by the Group Areas Act:

In the process of the removal and resettlement of people the land they could occupy was a mere stand, compared to their original vast areas. This gave rise to places such as Gandlani in Giyani and Malamulele in Gazankulu. The name literally means 'being packed together very firmly'.

Another feature of interest is that other names are evidence of breakdown of the extended family, for example, when young people set up home they are likely to leave behind old people as reflected in place names such as Hunguta-ximbiana (-reduce the little pot-), Hunguta-poto (-reduce the pot-) and Wisa-poto (-fell? the pot-) (Golele 1993). The newly established families no longer need huge pots to cook for many family members as the aged parents are left behind. The young people opt to live independently and believe that life is much sweeter than before in that they do as they wish without any interference.

CONCLUSION

This paper reveals that the names of geographical features include natural and man-made entities.

It has also been observed that some place names got earned their respective names through onomastic innovation or creativity. The names people give their geographical areas provide a unique source of information about a society's history, beliefs and values.

In addition, this paper has highlighted the changes that might take place due to political changes taking place in the country. When the new government came into being in South Africa it signaled a new era where cities, towns, villages, dams, rivers, buildings, streets, roads and schools, which depicted white history, would change their names. Nevertheless, name changing was the only solution to bring all the citizens of the country on board.

The researcher has also observed that names reflect a spectrum of emotions, reminding us that they were and are used by human beings who reside at those respective places. It is for this reason that it should not be taken lightly as its impact on communities can either bring about reconciliation or hostility. It is therefore concluded that place naming or renaming may be influenced amongst others, by factors such as society's past experiences, beliefs, race, politics of the day, ethnicity, democracy and the physical features of a place. Furthermore, naming and renaming of geographical features form an integral part of reasserting the pride and dignity of all South Africans because it is on historical record that all African countries restored their indigenous cultural heritage on gaining independence from former colonial rulers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that place names that are offensive, discriminatory and indicative of religions and beliefs should be avoided, for example, Matshamahinkanu that literally means that people have occupied the land illegally without the approval from the traditional leaders. It is further recommended that when places are either given or renamed, neutral, accommodative and unifying names should be considered.

NOTE

This paper partly draws from a University of Limpopo Staff Development Office funded 2005 doctoral study promoted by Professor RN Madadzhe and Dr. N.E. Nxumalo.

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