

# Critical toponymy

Place names in political, historical  
and commercial landscapes

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 4<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM  
ON PLACE NAMES 2017

Windhoek, Namibia, 18-20 September 2017

Conference  
Proceedings

EDITORS

Herman Beyer  
Matthias Brenzinger  
Theodorus du Plessis  
Peter E Raper

*sb*

# Critical toponymy

## Place names in political, historical and commercial landscapes

Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Place Names 2017

Jointly organized by the Joint IGU/ICS Commission on Toponymy, the UFS, and UNAM

Windhoek, Namibia, 18-20 September 2017

Herman Beyer  
Matthias Brenzinger  
Theodorus du Plessis  
Peter E Raper

EDITORS

*sb* **SUNBONANI  
CONFERENCE**

*Critical toponymy – Place names in political, historical and commercial landscapes*

Published by Sun Media Bloemfontein (Pty) Ltd.

Imprint: SunBonani Conference

All rights reserved

Copyright © 2019 Sun Media Bloemfontein and the editors

This publication was subjected to an independent double-blind peer evaluation by the publisher.

The author and the publisher have made every effort to obtain permission for and acknowledge the use of copyrighted material. Refer all inquiries to the publisher.

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any electronic, photographic or mechanical means, including photocopying and recording on record, tape or laser disk, on microfilm, via the Internet, by e-mail, or by any other information storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission by the publisher.

Views reflected in this publication are not necessarily those of the publisher.

First edition 2019

ISBN: 978-1-928424-24-6 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-928424-25-3 (e-book)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18820/9781928424253>

Set in Cambria 10/15 pt

Cover design, typesetting and production by Sun Media Bloemfontein

This printed copy can be ordered directly from: [media@sunbonani.co.za](mailto:media@sunbonani.co.za)

The e-book is available at the following link: <https://doi.org/10.18820/9781928424253>

## PEER REVIEW PROCESS

Abstracts submitted to the symposium was judged by the symposium's scientific committee (comprised of experts in the field) with regards to relevance to conference themes, scientific rigor, originality and contribution to the subject field. Authors whose abstracts were accepted after the stage one review process were included in the conference presentation programme (a total of 29 papers). Authors who wished to do so submitted their full papers for the conference proceedings.

The Proceedings of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Place Names 2017 involved a rigorous double blind peer review process of the full papers. The review panel comprised of national and international experts in the subject matter, namely place names. Based on the outcome of the peer review process, papers for the proceedings were selected based on the following criteria:

- Alignment between the abstract and the content of the paper
- Whether or not the paper disseminates original research
- Whether or not the paper presents a new development within the discipline

The rigorous double blind peer review process by the scientific review panel provided valuable comments and constructive criticism. Authors whose papers were accepted were provided with the anonymous reviewers' comments and requested to submit their revised full papers. Provided that all comments were appropriately responded to, the final papers addressing the comments and responses were included in the conference proceedings (ISBN: 978-1-928424-24-6).

The members of the peer review panel were involved not in the review of their own authored or co-authored papers. The role of the editors and editorial secretary was to ensure that the final papers incorporated the reviewers' comments and to arrange the papers into the final order as captured in the table of contents. Of the 19 full papers submitted to the proceedings, 13 were accepted for inclusion. This results in an acceptance rate of 68%/rejection rate of 32%.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword .....	i
<i>The Editors</i>	
Multiple place names and their political aspects on the territory of the former Czechoslovakia .....	1
<i>Georg Schuppener</i>	
Geographical names standardisation in South Africa: a name-planning perspective on activities, 2007-2016 .....	15
<i>Theodorus du Plessis</i>	
Naming as a tool for cultural domination: a case of toponym use in south-eastern Zimbabwe .....	35
<i>Steyn Khesani Madlome</i>	
The influence of missionary societies on place names in South Africa .....	51
<i>Cornelia Geldenhuys</i>	
Herero place names .....	65
<i>Lucie A. Möller</i>	
Unravelling the etymology of selected toponyms in Zimbabwe .....	83
<i>Godwin Makaudze</i>	
The role of toponymy in identifying cultural heritage: a case study of place names in the Bushmanland, Northern Cape .....	97
<i>Jani de Lange</i>	
Three types of commercial place-name use – with examples from Austria .....	111
<i>Peter Jordan</i>	

The challenges of using Slovenian choronyms in brand names .....	123
<i>Matjaž Geršič, Drago Kladnik, and Katja Vintar Mally</i>	
Place names, place, and place-related identities in the linguistic landscape of rural South Africa .....	145
<i>Chrismi-Rinda Loth</i>	
Naming a place, placing the self: toponymy and identity in two Central American republics .....	159
<i>Kathryn M. Hudson</i>	
The dialectics and politics of football as revealed in the names and nicknames of three selected Zimbabwe stadiums .....	177
<i>Liketso Dube</i>	
Naming, space and power in NoViolet Bulawayo's We Need New Names (2013) and Lawrence Hoba's 'The First Trek – The Pioneers' in The Trek and Other Stories (2009) .....	189
<i>Elda Hungwe</i>	
Appendix 1 .....	201

## FOREWORD

The 4<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Place Names (ISPN) was held on 18-20 September 2017 in Windhoek, Namibia, on the campus of the University of Namibia. It was jointly organized by the Joint IGU/ICA Commission on Toponymy, the Unit for Language Facilitation and Empowerment (now the Department of South African Sign Language and Deaf Studies) (University of the Free State, South Africa), and the Department of Language and Literature Studies (University of Namibia, Namibia). Hosted every second year, this symposium is the only one in Southern Africa that focuses on toponymy. The vision of the ISPN series is to create a platform for sharing and promoting international expertise and collaboration on all aspects of place names, local as well as international researchers and government officials.

While etymology remains a fundamental component of toponymic research, the critical turn in social sciences research precipitated the need to situate linguistic analyses within broader social and symbolic contexts. As such, the theme for this fourth bi-annual international symposium was 'Critical toponymy: Place names in political and commercial landscapes'. The papers presented at the symposium explored the social, cultural, economic, political, and etymological origins of place names, and also considered how their meaning(s) changed over time. Both of the keynote addresses focused on the contribution of the original name-givers on the toponymicon of southern Africa. Prof Matthias Brenzinger talked about 'Place naming practices among the Khwe and other hunter-gatherers in southern Africa', while Prof Peter E Raper explored 'Bushman cognates of place-name components recorded at the Cape 1595-1799'.

These proceedings of the symposium are a selection of double-blind peer-reviewed papers from the symposium. The Editors wish to thank the reviewers for their invaluable contribution in ensuring the quality of this publication. These papers contribute to the preservation of indigenous, non-standardised or other types of geographical names by



collecting and categorising them in a consistent manner. By exploring the etymology of this range of toponyms as well as their treatment, the authors advance our understanding of place names not only as cultural heritage, but also as political and commercial currency.

The multiplicity of place names present various challenges, whether because there exist multiple toponyms for one geographical feature, or because there are several versions of the same name. SCHUPPENER shows how this phenomenon is exploited politically in the former Czechoslovakia. He also points out the scholarly obligation to acknowledge this multiplicity. DU PLESSIS highlights the misalignment between place names policy and more generalised language policy in South Africa. He argues that including multilingual place names would contribute to the linguistic visibility of marginalised languages. MADLOME also argues for considering the importance of naming places in local languages. His case study in Zimbabwe finds that not doing so constitutes a form of linguistic and cultural domination. GELDENHUYS analyses the influence of missionaries on place naming in South Africa. Surprisingly, she finds that the names reveal less religious intent and instead rather reflects the role of the missionaries in perpetuating colonialist endeavours.

Returning to the issue of multiple place names, MÖLLER explores the linguistically diverse origin of toponyms in her case study of Herero place names in Namibia. Her findings support the notion that indigenous place names serve to convey cultural heritage and identity. The meanings embedded in place names are explored by MAKAUDZE. Instead of a linguistic approach, he explores the sociocultural significance of selected place names in Zimbabwe. This sheds light on how place names serve not only as linguistic, but also cultural artefacts. Coming from the argument that cultural heritage should be conserved, DE LANGE records and analyses non-standardised place names in South Africa's remote Bushmanland. In this way she wishes to contribute to the preservation of these names and their history.

Another form of recording geographical names is by applying them to commercial enterprises and products. JORDAN, who identifies three ways in which place names are used for commercial purposes, argues that using place names in this way stabilises the local toponymicon, illustrated with examples from Austria. Continuing with the commercial application toponyms. GERŠIČ *et al* explores the use of choronyms in branding in Slovenia. Favourable responses to this tactic, they find, is based on the conception that it extends place-related identities. Place names are also used in other ways in the public space. LOTH, for example, finds that the written use of place names in the public space in rural South Africa is used both to construct place-related identities

and to manipulate power relations. HUDSON explores identity construction through place-naming in Central America, again also referring to the political use of toponyms. She emphasises the role of place names as symbolic markers of cultural identity.

Considering a different definition of culture, DUBE shows how the politics of football in Zimbabwe is revealed through the names of stadiums and sitting bays. Furthermore, he speculates that the war-inspired names might even influence the often violent reactions of spectators. Another form of social commentary is provided by HUNGWE. She explores the use of place names as tropes for social dynamics in two works of literature situated in Zimbabwe – a literary device that would not be possible without a shared understanding of the function of place names.

The Editors of this proceedings would like to express their gratitude towards Dr Chrismi-Rinda Loth for managing this publication in all its different facets and also would like to convey their appreciation to the Publisher for producing such a fine publication in their series on proceedings. The Editors are also grateful that so many colleagues have participated in the Windhoek symposium and appreciate the efforts of those whose papers are included in this proceedings for being so co-operative during the whole publication process.

Finally, the Editors want to express their hope that this proceedings may contribute to further stimulate toponymic research in the region and that future symposia in the series will draw even more scholars from the region and even from afar.

**The Editors**  
**Bloemfontein**  
**November 2018**

# MULTIPLE PLACE NAMES AND THEIR POLITICAL ASPECTS IN THE TERRITORY OF THE FORMER CZECHOSLOVAKIA

**Georg Schuppener**

Department of German, Univerzita sv. Cyrila a Metoda v Trnave, Slovakia  
georg.schuppener@t-online.de

## **Abstract**

The present article deals with the political implications of multiple place naming on the territory of the former Czechoslovakia. The history of toponym variants used for one place embraces linguistic, social, political, and ideological aspects of designation. The former Czechoslovakia was a multilingual state; Czech and Slovak were the official languages, whereas German, Hungarian, Polish, and Ukrainian had the minority status. The linguistic situation, moreover, was complicated by the fact that Latin as a *lingua franca* – used until the implementation of national language policy – had a significant impact on place naming in the early history of the area. This results in the co-existence of multiple toponyms, used both successively and concurrently. The article shows the development of the multiple place naming in detail, contextualising this process with political and ideological strategies to maintain a control over the territory. Against the backdrop of historical comparison of German and Czech names, and Slovak and Hungarian names during the emergence of national movements in the 19th century, and the political upheavals of the 20th century, the strong ideological charge of the toponym usage is brought out. Its consequences are still recognisable today. This is especially true for the politically motivated renaming of places in the 1920s and after World War II, eventually leading to the complete disappearance of the original toponyms. Furthermore, the study mentions concrete examples of political exploitation of multi-naming, and shows how it can become a serious problem for the historiography. Even in recent scholarly texts, nationalist concepts are transported by the use of specific name forms; sometimes this is done deliberately, but fairly often unknowingly, too. Thus, the decision to use only one variant of a place name can impede research. Finally, the article suggests possible responses to this problem. The author points out that a focused and careful research of

critical toponymy would allow for a more reflective and comprehensive approach to the assessment of settlement history. Although the examples refer to Central Europe, the findings and results can be applied to multiple place names in other multi-ethnic areas.

**Keywords:** multiple place names, political exploitation, renaming

## 1. BACKGROUND AND GENERAL REMARKS

Alternate naming of places is a widespread phenomenon in areas of long-standing, conflicting language and cultural contacts. The causes and linguistic mechanisms that result in multiple names/forms can be diverse. They range from an adoption of a name in the target language with while merely adjusting to the respective phonetic-phonological system, up to assimilations on the morpheme level. In addition to these forms of linguistic assimilation, various forms of translation and even completely autonomously motivated naming occur.

On the one hand, the use of certain names or their derivatives may attribute to the characteristics of the language used. Numerous languages know various place names outside of their linguistic range (the so-called exonyms), such as the French *Aix-la-Chapelle* for *Aachen*, the English *Munich* for *München*, the Czech *Režno* for *Regensburg*, etc. Moreover, the very decision to designate localities, especially in multiethnic/multilingual areas, can be motivated very practically, as by political or ideological intentions. In this case, the use of certain names carries considerable potential for conflict. Not only does such a use mirror the given political ideology, it also opens the space for establishing, interpreting and transferring culture values.

Of course, such processes of renaming, political steering, manipulating historical memory, and creating secondary traditions are not limited to Central Europe. Similar processes are known from many other world regions and epochs such as European settlements in North America, or, for instance in the renaming of originally German places during World War I. These cultural, historical, and political backgrounds of such transformations are subject to “Critical Toponymies” (cf. e.g. Dix 2015).

The field of toponymy is therefore highly politically – and emotionally – charged, while it is at the same time of a pronounced complexity.

I will be analysing some characteristic cases from an area rich in political and ideological conflicts, namely the former Czechoslovakia. Here, as everywhere in Central Europe, countless examples of multiple place naming can be found. Even for a narrowly defined territory, any representation of the phenomenon defies simple conceptualisations.

Czechoslovakia as an independent state was a result of World War I and existed until the end of 1992, with the exception of the German occupation during the war years of 1938-1945. Territories which had never before been part of the same independent republic, were conjoined in 1918. While the eastern part (now Slovakia) had belonged to the Kingdom of Hungary, the western parts (Bohemia, Moravia and part of Silesia) had belonged to Austria. However, as early as the 19th century, these parts were closely knit with regards to culture and language. After the founding of Czechoslovakia, the national identity and loyalty to the new republic developed relatively quickly, and it was largely supported by both the Czechs and Slovaks. The fragility of this common Czechoslovakian identity, however, was revealed by the end of the 1930s. Slovakia was then given (limited) autonomy, but the centrifugal tendencies resurfaced immediately after the political upheaval in 1989, resulting eventually in the disintegration of the common state (cf. Schuppener 2011:273).

Historically, the languages of Czech, Slovak (which can only be considered a standard written language since the 19th century), German, and Hungarian had co-existed in this region. In addition, Latin or Latinised names could be found in the historical sources. Furthermore, minority languages such as Ukrainian, Polish, Yiddish or Romanes should have also been considered. As a consequence, the ethnic situation was very complicated. First of all, there is no clear-cut dividing line between the ethnic groups (or nations). Linguistic transitions are thus, at least on the dialect level, very common. Furthermore, until the end of World War II – and in Slovakia until today – large border territories with German and Hungarian majorities, and a number of territories with German and Hungarian minorities, formed part of this political unit. Although certain areas were purely German, Hungarian, Czech or Slovak, for most of them two or more co-existing ethnic groups and languages were typical. As a result of this, we cannot speak of any ethnic homogeneity in these territories. This multi-ethnic and multilingual geography, and their multiplicity of place names, tended cause great confrontation in the past. Even today, these areas are not completely conflict-free.

Due to the linguistic conjecture already indicated, the present renaissance of national identity in the post-communist states of Central Eastern, Eastern and Southeastern Europe needs to be taken into consideration. Toponymy is thus becoming increasingly relevant.

After the collapse of communism it was believed that the concept of the nation would become increasingly obsolete, and would be replaced by European identity. However, in the recent past it has become clear that the national element has won more and more relevance in the political, and also in the social perception. Even in the 1990s, Central and Western European political representation viewed the emphasis on the national aspect in the successor states of the Soviet Union, in Slovakia or in the former Yugoslavia as a temporary phenomenon in the course of a natural emancipation process. Today, however, one would have to concede that the appeal to the concept of nationhood, which is per se a construct of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, has once again started gaining prominence in political discourse.

National identity is shaped by various factors. These include, above all, language, symbols, rituals, festivals, religion and history. Designating places by names in national languages plays a significant role in this context.

Based on the ethnic mix in Central and Eastern Europe and the centuries-long existence of multi-ethnic states, the concept of homogeneous nations proves to be particularly problematic since it negates multi-ethnicity. In this national concept, naming is therefore always a political act. As the historiographic research has shown, names have always served the territorial history, while national history represents an a-historical construct.

## **2. TOPONOMIC EXAMPLES**

Multiple place names usually do not occur simultaneously, but there is normally a toponym that can be considered the primary one. The variety of names can be traced back to the Middle Ages, caused by the clash of settler groups speaking different languages. With the nation-building processes in the late 18th and 19th centuries, place names were politically heavily laden, which led to new name formations:

There are many examples of names that made a very late emergence in one of the overlapping languages. These were based on an already long tradition of names in the other languages and often they were officialised after one of the numerous politico-historic changes that took place in these territories. Above all, German names emerged – often without any substratum of a local group of speakers – in the Habsburg

monarchy, especially from the 18th century onwards along with the implementation of German as a single administrative language. A common language was indispensable for an effective state administration at that time (cf. Kořalka 1991:26), and, as part of the reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II, German became the *lingua franca* of the monarchy (cf. e.g. Berger 2000:838). Contrary to the assumed ramifications of this administrative act in the crown lands, this did not mean a targeted Germanisation; the inter-relations of the numerous languages in the Habsburg Empire remained quite complex (cf. Fischel 1910). After the so-called “Austro-Hungarian compromise of 1867”, Hungarian became the administrative language in the Hungarian part of the empire (i.e. also on the territory of present-day Slovakia) (cf. Berger 2000:851). In Bohemia, German dominated in the official name directories until the end of the monarchy (cf. Sperling 2007:61). During this time period, Czech and Slovak place names received German or Hungarian equivalents. Some examples can be mentioned here: *Hradec Králové* > *Königgrätz*, *Jihlava* > *Iglau*, *Trnava* > *Nagyszombat*, *Ružomberok* > *Rózsashegy*, *Žilina* > *Zsolna*. This process took place over centuries. As a result, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a significant number of places were known under multiple names like *Žilina* (Slovak), *Sillein/Silein* (German), *Zsolna* (Hungarian), *Żylina* (Polish), and *Solna* (Latin) (Wikipedia 2018g). In addition to the ethnic aspect as the cause of the plural naming of places, affiliation to social class also played a role. The upper classes spoke predominantly German or Hungarian, so we can speak of a linguistic *superstratum*. For example, in Bohemia of the Middle Ages it was fashionable to give German names to castles (e.g. *Hasenburg/Házmburk*), regardless of the ethnic origin of their owners or the surrounding population (cf. Lutterer & Šrámek 2004:87).

Conversely, in the period following the founding of Czechoslovakia (1918) and then again after 1945, there was an intensified tendency of inventing new Czech or Slovak names for toponyms that had hitherto been purely German or Hungarian. That this was not a case of marginalia is shown by the fact that after 1918, in Bohemia alone, more than 1 300 municipalities had no Czech names at all (cf. Kučera 1999:298).

It is true that the administration could relate the new Czech place names to historical forms, such as the one of the village *Königswald*, for which a Czech name already existed, namely *Libouchec* (after a Slav cattle name *Lubuhce* mentioned in 1169). In Czechoslovakia, this Czech version became official (cf. Hennig & Tempsky 1850:113; Wikipedia 2018c).

In some cases, Czech names were verbatim translations. So, *Krásný Les* is the literal translation for *Schönwald* – created in 1948 – for which there was no historical evidence (Wikipedia 2018b). The same applies to the place name *V Polích* introduced in 1934 for the settlement *Feldhäuser* (cf. Kaiper & Eichler 2001:33). Analogue morphological assimilations were used in cases like *Arnsdorf* > *Arnoltice* or *Antonsthal* > *Antonínov* (cf. Statistický lexikon 1924). Frequently, however – which is not surprising given the large number of names involved – the new names were purely artificial: “Many of the new Czech place names arose arbitrarily at the bureaucrats’ desk.”<sup>1</sup> (Sperling 1981:24) “After 1945, those German and Hungarian place names which had not yet been part of the renaming were changed.”<sup>2</sup> (Sperling 1981:24).

Of the many cases of arbitrary renaming without any reference to historical names, only the settlement *Deutsch Neudörfel* (near Aussig / Ústí nad Labem) was mentioned, which was given the new name *Podhoří* (meaning “promontory”) in 1949 (Pechar 2018 <http://www.zanikleobce.cz/index.php?detail=1447161>). Sometimes renaming took place in several stages, as in the case of *Böhmisch Zinnwald* > *Cinvald* > *Cínovec* 1955 (cf. e.g. Kuča 1996:437), in order to obfuscate its origin.

Another example worth mentioning is the North Bohemian village bearing the name *Lhota pod Pannou* today. The original name was probably *Lhota*, which was the origin of the sound-assimilated German form *Welhotta*. At the beginning of the 20th century, the municipality requested the renaming of the village to *Deutsch Welhotta* or *Německá Lhota* (cf. K.K. Justizministerium 1905:169). After 1945, the ethnic reference in the name was eradicated. However, as there were numerous other villages called *Lhota*, the addition *pod Pannou*, referring to the nearby mountain, was added.

In this phase of the political-ideological confrontation, names functioned as a means to express the claim to sovereignty. On the other hand, they were exploited for the sake of national interests. The growing of national awareness led to the belief that names were instrumental in asserting national interests. Thus, immediately after the founding of Czechoslovakia, the Czech side emphasised the importance of enforcing Czech names as an expression of cultural hegemony and a sign of the historical primacy of the Czechs towards the Germans (cf. Kučera 1999:299, 306). The change of official names was not only a paradigm for the change in power relations, but this “fight for names” was literally a “battle for the interpretation of history” (cf. Preiwuß 2012:10).

1 „Viele der neuen tschechischen Ortsnamen entstanden willkürlich am Schreibtisch der Bürokraten.“

2 „Nach 1945 wurden auch diejenigen deutschen und ungarischen Ortsnamen, die bisher von der Umbenennung noch nicht erfaßt waren, geändert.“



The name of Slovak's present-day capital, Bratislava, serves as an impressive example. The historical Latin name *Preslava civitas*, or the German *Pressburg*, goes back to Carolingian time (cf. Bosl 1955:158; Stanislav 1999; Žigo 2001:219). Other sources claim that the Hungarian name *Pozsony* goes back to the Latin *Posonium* (cf. Kranzmayer & Bürger 1957:185). In Slovak, the name form *Prešporok* – a loan from German – was used until 1919 as a reflection of the city's multi-ethnic history.

During the Slovak national renaissance in the 19th century, there were tendencies to give the city a purely Slavic/Slovak name. The aim was to manifest the claim to sovereignty also in terms of a national language. The first forms proposed were: *Břetislav* (Jan Kollár, 1838), *Břetislava* (Jan Kollár, Ludovít Štúr, 1838), *Bretislava* (Martin Hamuljak, 1838). After the introduction of the new language standard, the variant *Brat'slava (nad Dunajom)* (Ján Francisci-Rimavský) appeared in 1843, and in the second half of the 19th century, the form *Břetislav* and other variants were also used. These names, however, remained limited to small circles of the Slovak national movement. They had no official significance, nor did they find their way into the common usage, even though the Slovaks insisted on the historical Slovak name *Prešporok* and its corresponding variants (Wikipedia 2018a).

In the process of founding and consolidating Czechoslovakia, however, *Bratislava* became the official city name in 1919 (cf. Sundhausen & Clewing 2016:189). The numerous further details of the quite complex name history cannot be discussed here.

The process of naming causes several problematic implications for how to handle names in historiographic texts. The case of Bratislava is elucidating here too: For political reasons, in a publication on the late medieval and early modern city books of Bratislava (originally written in German), the place name *Bratislava* was to be used (cf. Papsonová 2004, but also Ziegler 1999),<sup>3</sup> although this name was not yet in existence at the time these books were written. This stipulation, made by the sponsor, can be seen as an attempt to reinterpret history in terms of modern nationalism.

The following example also shows very clearly how a certain historical image can be conveyed just by limiting the place names to only one linguistic form:

For example, studies on the “*Calendarium Tyrnaviense*” – a Latin calendar published 1663 to 1777 addressing the educated Catholic elite in the Kingdom of Hungary – use the Hungarian city name *Nagyszombat* instead of the Latin *Tyrnavia* or the present-day

3 I am indebted for this hint to Professor Mária Papsonová.

Slovak *Trnava*, which is obviously the basis for the Latin toponym (cf. e.g. Holl & Vargha 2003:109). This is more than inappropriate, considering that the historical document uses the other variant.

Even though there was a notable Hungarian-speaking population in the city, and the official city name was *Nagyszombat* – since it formed part of the Hungarian kingdom since the Austro-Hungarian “compromise” of 1867 until the end of the World War I – the documents that originated in the 17th and 18th centuries show a clear name pluralism.

Such a name choice would be understandable even in historiographic texts written in Hungarian: The Hungarian toponym is presumably best known to both authors and recipients.

However, we find a different name in treatises in other languages. In scholarly articles written in English, Hungarian linguists make exclusive use of the toponym *Nagyszombat*, as there is no English equivalent for *Trnava*. However, the choice of the Hungarian form has several implications here (i.e. in a non-Hungarian text):

1. The Hungarian name form is presented as the authoritative one;
2. The ethnicity of the population in the period in question is (wrongly) attributed;
3. The choice of the Hungarian variant can be understood as an attempt at territorial expansion; and
4. The choice of the Hungarian variant implicitly negates today’s state affiliation or its entitlement.

These points could be considered as irrelevant marginalia if not considered in the context of the nationalism that has been re-emerging in recent decades.

Finally, a special case of multi-naming should be mentioned, which does not result from multilingualism, but has purely political causes: The Moravian town of *Zlín* was renamed *Gottwaldov* in 1949 after the first communist Czechoslovak president Klement Gottwald (1896-1953). The original *Zlín*, however, persisted among the local population, even during the communist era, as a latent anti-communist statement (cf. Hague & Jenkins 2005:6). Only in 1990 did the city regain its original name (cf. Historický lexikon obcí České republiky 2006:611). This politically motivated change of place name has not yet been dealt with.

To sum up, these examples show that there are no generally and internationally accepted rules for the use of toponyms in historiography. Rather, guidelines on the use of names are often determined individually and often without clear, historically-based criteria.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Even the limited number of examples presented in this paper reveals the extent to which the variants of toponyms can be subject to ideology and politics. However, historiography should, if it does not want to understand itself as an *ancilla politicae*, strive for the most appropriate, historically legitimate and adequate, i.e. objective use of names.

For scholarly discourse, the political aspect of multi-naming is relevant in several respects: There is a danger that historiography can become ideologically exploited and the described problem can be used as a positive example. The history of the use of names, the changes of toponyms, especially under political and national precedents, can reveal developments in mentality and cultural history, as well as the construction of national history. Finally, an onomastic meta-issue could be developed from the point of view of the history of science, namely the question of how modern, supposedly objective historiographic texts convey ideology through their choice of place names.

The choice of names is particularly profound and consequential insofar as language can convey complex concepts and constructs of history (often even more or less subtle and thus unconscious) to a broader public. These ideological aspects are not the result of insufficient information. All the presented findings can be confronted with numerous tools that deal with the problem of multi-naming. These include various onomastic dictionaries that list toponyms from the territories under consideration in different language pairs or even in multiple languages (cf. e.g. Pulkert 1997; Majtán 1998). Many of these tools are now available online, too, sometimes even under own search masks (e.g. Majtán 2018 <http://slovník.juls.savba.sk/?d=obce> or Sperling 2018 <http://www.collegium-carolinum.de/publikationen/handbuecher-und-lexika/konkordanz-geographische-namen.html>). The online Encyclopedia Wikipedia not only lists the most important place names in multiple languages (Wikipedia 2018d, 2018e), but also toponyms of only local significance (e.g. Wikipedia 2018f). Moreover, basic administrative directories that provide essential information about the place names in the 18th and 19th centuries have been digitalised and can be used easily (cf. e.g. Hennig & Tempsky 1850). Furthermore, there are some new detailed studies of the changes in this field, such as that conducted by Lehmann (1999). Numerous comprehensive studies on names in the multilingual settlement area focusing primarily on one language are

available too, such as the works of Schwarz (1923, 1931) for German place names on the territory of today's Czech Republic. From the Czech perspective, there is the dictionary of Lutterer and Šrámek (2004), and from the Slovak point of view there is Majtan's (1998) volume. In spite of the valuable contribution of these materials and studies, it seems that they cannot replace a dedicated source work. In any case, the numerous publications offer sufficient opportunities to gain the first overview, which can then be supplemented by detailed source studies. The broad spectrum of such publications also reflects the emerging need not only in historiography, but also in culture and history in the wider sense.

The fundamental problem therefore is not that there is insufficient literature and possibilities to analyse alternate place names, but in the lacking awareness of the problem, namely that the use of a particular variant always carries political and ideological implications.

Apart from that, however, the practical question arises of how to conceive scholarly texts of a historiographic nature whilst simultaneously remaining politically and ideologically neutral.

It is obvious that, for pragmatic reasons, there must be a restriction in the cases of multiple place names. Reproducing the name pluralism completely and consistently is neither economically nor generally practicable. In addition, the complete mention of all names is in many cases inadequate, since not all names have the same relevance, or only one of them was in common use at a given time and within a particular ethnic/social/linguistic group.

To prevent their exploitation, the choice of names must be carefully considered. The following guidelines may be helpful: If a name exists in the language in which the historiographic text is written, this variant should be preferred for language-systematic reasons; the names often just arose to adapt to the linguistic conditions of the language. However, a reference to the name variant used in the considered historical epoch is necessary, especially if it was (presumably) dominant in the relevant context. For historiographic texts in a language for which there is no original form of the toponym (as is mainly the case for English academic texts), the forms used in the sources should be used. Of course, even here, especially in multilingual/multiethnic conflict situations, there are doubts that can be dispelled by historically reflected reasoning. These forms of reasoning should be explicated with regard to the decision-making criteria.

In any case, the potential of a critically reflected toponymy is undisputed and well recognised (cf. Dix 2015:28). A more intensive incorporation of this approach into historiographic literature could lead to a more nuanced approach to the role of names in history. At the same time, this could increase awareness of the complexity of historical processes.

## REFERENCES

- BERGER T. 2000. Nation und Sprache: das Tschechische und das Slovakische. In: A Gardt (ed). *Nation und Sprache. Die Diskussion ihres Verhältnisses in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Berlin/ New York: Walter de Gruyter. 825-864. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110890600.825>
- BOSL K. 1955. *Das „jüngere“ bayerische Stammeshertzogtum der Luitpoldinger*. *Zeitschrift für Bayerische Landesgeschichte*, 18:144-176.
- DIX A. 2015. Umstrittene Räume – umstrittene Namen. Perspektiven der Critical Toponymies. In: JE Steinkrüger & W Schenk (eds). *Zwischen Geschichte und Geographie, zwischen Raum und Zeit. Historische Geographie 1*. Münster: LIT-Verlag. 25-44.
- FISCHEL A. 1910. *Das Österreichische Sprachenrecht. Eine Quellensammlung*. 2nd Edition. Brünn: Friedrich Irgang.
- HAGUE C & JENKINS P (EDS). 2005. *Place Identity, Participation and Planning*. London/New York: Routledge.
- HENNIG C & TEMPSKY F (EDS). 1850. *Statistisch-topographisches Compendium*. Prag: JG Calve.
- HISTORICKÝ LEXIKON OBCÍ ČESKÉ REPUBLIKY 1869–2005. 2006. Svazek II. [s.l.]: Český statistický úřad.
- HOLL A & VARGHA M. 2003. Observatory Publications – Quo Vadis? In: BC Corbin, E Bryson & M Wolf (eds). *Library and Information Services in Astronomy IV*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Naval Observatory. 109-116.
- KAIPER F & EICHLER E. 2001. *Die tschechischen Ortsnamen des Kreises Königinhof a.d. Elbe*. Münster: LIT-Verlag.
- K.K. Justizministerium. 1905. *Verordnungsblatt*. Wien: K.K. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei.
- KOŘALKA J. 1991. *Tschechen im Habsburgerreich und in Europa 1815–1914. Sozialgeschichtliche Zusammenhänge der neuzeitlichen Nationsbildung und der Nationalitätenfrage in den böhmischen Ländern*. Wien: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik.
- KRANZMAYER E & BÜRGER K. 1957. *Burgenländisches Siedlungsnamenbuch*. Eisenstadt: Amt d. Burgenländischen Landesregierung.
- KUČA K. 1996. *Města a městečka v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku. A-G*. Praha: Libri.

- KUČERA J. 1999. *Minderheit im Nationalstaat: Die Sprachenfrage in deutsch-tschechisch-deutschen Beziehungen 1918-1938*. München: R Oldenbourg Verlag. <https://doi.org/10.1524/9783486596007>
- LEHMANN F. 1999. *Der Wandel der Ortsnamen in den ehemals deutsch besiedelten Gebieten der Tschechoslowakei*. Marburg: Biblion-Verlag. <https://doi.org/10.3726/b12977>
- LUTTERER I & ŠRÁMEK R. 2004. *Zeměpisná jména v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku. Slovník vybraných zeměpisných jmen s výkladem jejich původu a historického vývoje*. 2nd Edition. Havlíčkův Brod: Tobiáš.
- MAJTÁN M. 1998. *Názvy obcí Slovenskej Republiky*. Bratislava: Veda.
- MAJTÁN M. 2018. *Názvy obcí Slovenskej republiky (Vývin v rokoch 1773 – 1997)*. [Retrieved 1 May 2018] <http://slovník.juls.savba.sk/?d=obce>
- PAPSONOVÁ M. 2004. Eigennamen im ältesten Stadtbuch von Preßburg (1402–1506). *Brücken*, 12:29-45.
- PECHAR Z. 2018. *Podhoří (Deutsch Neudörfel) – Historie obce*. [Retrieved 1 May 2018] <http://www.zanikleobce.cz/index.php?detail=1447161>
- PREIWUSS K. 2012. *Ortsnamen in Zeit, Raum und Kultur*. Berlin: Frank & Timme.
- PULKERT O. 1997. *Příruční slovník místních a zeměpisných názvů. Česko-německý a německo-Český. Ein kleines Wörterbuch zweisprachiger geographischer Namen. Tschechisch-deutsch und deutsch-tschechisch*. Praha: Edition Resonus.
- SCHUPPENER G. 2011. Sprachliche Identität in der zerfallenden Tschechoslowakei nach 1989. In: B Bock, U Fix & S Pappert (eds). *Politische Wechsel – sprachliche Umbrüche*. Berlin: Frank & Timme. 273-299.
- SCHWARZ E. 1923. *Zur Namenforschung und Siedlungsgeschichte in den Sudetenländern*. Reichenberg: Franz Kraus.
- SCHWARZ E. 1931 *Die Ortsnamen der Sudetenländer als Geschichtsquelle*. München: R. Oldenbourg.
- SPEHLING W. 1981. *Tschechoslowakei: Beiträge zur Landeskunde Ostmitteleuropas*. Stuttgart: Eugen Ulmer.
- SPEHLING W. 2007. *Bäume und Wald in den geographischen Namen Mitteleuropas. Die böhmischen Länder. Eine geographisch-statistisch-namenkundliche Bestandsaufnahme*. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag.
- SPEHLING W. 2018. *Geographische Namen in den böhmischen Ländern/Historisch-kritische Konkordanz der Landschaftsnamen in Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien*. [Retrieved 1 May 2018] <http://www.collegium-carolinum.de/publikationen/handbuecher-und-lexika/konkordanz-geographische-namen.html>

- STANISLAV J. 1999. *Slovenský juh v stredoveku*. 2nd Edition. Bratislava: Národné literárne centrum.
- STATISTICKÝ LEXIKON OBCÍ V REPUBLICE ČESKOSLOVENSKÉ. 1924. *Země česká*. Volume 1. Praha: Orbis.
- SUNDHAUSEN H & CLEWING K (EDS). 2016. *Lexikon zur Geschichte Südosteuropas*. 2nd Edition. Wien/Köln/Weimar: Böhlau Verlag. <https://doi.org/10.7767/9783205201694>
- WIKIPEDIA. 2018a. *Bratislava*. [Retrieved 1 May 2018] <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bratislava>
- WIKIPEDIA. 2018b. *Krásný Les (Petrovice)*. [Retrieved 1 May 2018] [https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Krásný\\_Les\\_\(Petrovice\)#cite\\_note-2](https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Krásný_Les_(Petrovice)#cite_note-2)
- WIKIPEDIA. 2018c. *Libouchec*. [Retrieved 1 May 2018] <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libouchec>
- WIKIPEDIA. 2018d. *Liste der Städte in Tschechien*. [Retrieved 1 May 2018] [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste\\_der\\_Städte\\_in\\_Tschechien](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_der_Städte_in_Tschechien)
- WIKIPEDIA. 2018e. *Liste der Städte und Gemeinden in der Slowakei*. [Retrieved 1 May 2018] [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste\\_der\\_Städte\\_und\\_Gemeinden\\_in\\_der\\_Slowakei](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_der_Städte_und_Gemeinden_in_der_Slowakei)
- WIKIPEDIA. 2018f. *Liste deutscher Bezeichnungen tschechischer Orte*. [Retrieved 1 May 2018] [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste\\_deutscher\\_Bezeichnung\\_tschechischer\\_Orte](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_deutscher_Bezeichnung_tschechischer_Orte)
- WIKIPEDIA. 2018g. *Žilina*. [Retrieved 1 May 2018] <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Žilina>
- ZIEGLER A. 1999. *Actionale protocollum. Das älteste Stadtbuch von Bratislava-Preßburg aus den Jahren 1402-1506*. Bratislava: Slovenské Narodné Múzeum – Múzeum Kultúry Karpatských Nemcov.
- ŽIGO P. 2001. Bratislava – Braslavespurch/Preßburg (Prešpurok)/Pozsony. *Österreichische Namenforschung*, 29:219-223.

# GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES STANDARDISATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: A NAME-PLANNING PERSPECTIVE ON ACTIVITIES, 2007-2016

**Theodorus du Plessis**

Department of South African Sign Language and Deaf Studies, University of the Free State, South Africa  
dplesslt@ufs.ac.za

## **Abstract**

A previous study about the standardisation activities of the South African Council for Geographic Names for the period 2000-2007 revealed specific gaps from a name-planning perspective, in particular regarding the treatment of language visibility. Amongst others, this entailed that current standardisation attempts are based on a narrow-minded interpretation of the one-name, one-entity principle and are not aligned with the constitutional minimum bilingual requirement. Ironically, one of the unplanned consequences is that, although the Council endeavours to bring about specific (mainly ideologically inspired) corrections, current standardisation attempts largely continue the naming conventions of the previous regime. Ultimately this does not make any direct contribution to the meaningful enhancement of language visibility for the marginalised languages of the country. The 2009 study was based on an analysis of the 832 entries included in the Council's database by 8 June 2007. Specific attention has been paid to trends regarding the Council's approach to multilingualism in name standardisation. In the meantime, 534 new entries have been added, with the result that the Council's database contained altogether 1336 entries by 9 February 2016. The current paper reports on a comparative study of these 534 additional entries in the light of the Council's approach to two central name-planning issues, namely lexicalisation – actions pertaining to the capture of language form – and conversion – actions pertaining to capturing language visibility. Apart from the uncovering of noticeable problems in the management of South Africa's official database of geographic names in general, the most recent study reveals noticeable trends regarding the Council's handling of multilingualism in a comparative



manner. Based on this, conclusions are drawn about the implications for the evolution of local name-planning at national level. Finally, the results of the most recent study offer a specific perspective on the role of ideologically-inspired name planning in South Africa.

**Keywords:** language policy and planning, language visibility, multilingualism, place name planning, South African Council for Geographic Names (SACGN), standardisation

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The contribution here presented stems from an earlier study (Du Plessis 2009) based on 832 entries in the approved names list of the Department of Arts and Culture from the period 1 January 2000 to 19 December 2007. Essentially it aimed to identify the most notable trends regarding the language of approved names and considered their implications for language visibility. Some of the core findings in this study include that the so-called “restoration” of (indigenous) names takes central stage with regard to name-planning initiatives in South Africa and that this did indeed take place between 2000 and 2007, i.e. 74.4% of the names listed during the period under review stem from Sintu languages. However, the results also reveal that the name-planning approach followed by the South African Geographical Names Council (SAGNC) as the national names authority up to 2007 is not aligned with the language policy requirement that government institutions should use at least two official languages. This is reflected in the body’s very narrow interpretation of the “univocity principle”, the so-called one-name-for-one-entity notion in names standardisation (cf. Windsor 2008), resulting in standardisation in one form (Kerfoot 2006:83). Due to these shortcomings, by the end of 2007 the practice of geographical names standardisation in South Africa had inevitably contributed to the continuation of past conventions, i.e. the monolingualisation of the linguistic landscape (89.8% of names approved between 2000 and 2007 are monolingual in nature and no room is left for the recognition of bilingual, let alone dual names). Some concession is made towards hybrid names, although these constitute a mere 6.7% of names for this period overall.

In view of these tendencies the previous study closed with the burning question of whether one can really talk of the transformation of the linguistic landscape as far as geographical names are concerned if past language visibility practices are largely continued?

Has the SAGNC made any changes to its *modus operandi* since 2007 and, consequently, has it adopted a different approach towards geographical name planning in South Africa? This contribution thus aims to investigate the continued work of the SAGNC with regard

to both the standardisation and re-standardisation of geographical names between 2000 and 2016, thus comparing names standardisation between the periods 2000-2007 (the “first period”) and 2008-2016 (the “second period”).

## 2. ABOUT NAME PLANNING

The concept *name planning* (Kallasmaa 2002) as it is used within this contribution simply relates to what Huang (2007) terms “language planning for naming”, i.e. the process of relating two concepts, described by Hodges (2007) as “language planning and place naming”. The concept obviously also relates to what Saparov (2003) describes as “place-naming policy”. In providing an overview of the growing interest in the field and discussing some major theoretical concepts, Du Plessis (2012) points out that the concepts “place-name care” or “place-name treatment” are sometimes also used to situate place naming within a language planning context.

These related concepts mostly allude to (place-name) “standardisation”, a core concept in the field: “... the principle whereby one standard name is assigned to each geographical entity (place, feature or area) at any point in time” (UNGEGN 2006:36). However, other disciplines also use the term “standardisation”. For instance, in language planning, (language) “standardisation” usually refers to the codification of a language, involving standardisation procedures such as graphisation, grammatication and lexication (Kaplan & Baldauf 1997:29). To make a distinction between the two concepts, Nahir (1984:318) distinguishes between “language standardisation” and “Auxiliary-Code Standardisation” (ACS). He defines ACS as “... standardizing or modifying the marginal, auxiliary aspects of language such as signs for the Deaf, **place names**, and rules of transliteration and transcription, either to reduce ambiguity and thus improve communication or to meet changing social, political, or other needs or aspirations” [own emphasis]. As a type of ACS, place-name standardisation partly corresponds to toponomists’ understanding of “place-name standardisation”. Since the rendering of a written name form is central in both approaches, the three elements of language standardisation also apply to place-name standardisation.

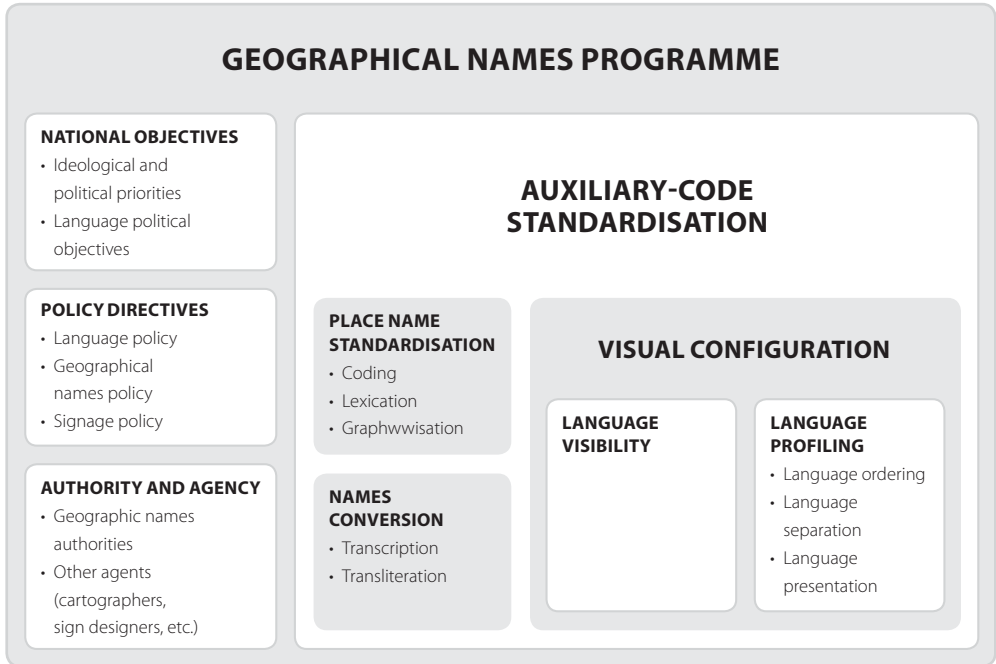
The *Manual for the National Standardization of Geographical Names* (UNGEGN 2006) emphasises the *visuality* of the written form of a name. This visuality is manifested in different textual forms, including in gazetteers, other documents, maps and charts, but also in signage, whether it be road and street signs or other types of named signs displayed in the public space. The display of geographical names on maps is related to the field of “cartotponymy”, the process whereby the official written form of each name

is applied to a geographical entity shown graphically on a map by means of point, line and area symbols (UNGEEN 2006:38). The display of geographical names on signage falls in the domain of studies of the linguistic landscape (Gorter 2006). Essentially the focus in these studies falls on “the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region” (Landry & Bourhis 1997:23). Hicks (2002) was one of the first authors to establish a connection between the linguistic landscape, signage and place names, emphasising the centrality of language visibility as an instrument of language legitimisation.

From this it becomes clear that place-name planning relies on various policy directives, such as place-name standardisation, the choice of language and script for the name, the form of the name (whether bilingual, dual, etc.), and the display (language visibility) of the name in maps and on signage, etc.

Nahir (1984) adds a further aspect which could broadly be described as the “language political agenda”; more specifically language politics in relation to place-name standardisation or what Berg and Vuolteenaho (2009) refer to as the “contested politics of place naming”. One should therefore recognise that the mandate of the national legal authority responsible for place-name planning is closely interrelated with a national agenda and place-name programme.

Consequently, Du Plessis (2012) proposes a typology that relates to all of the mentioned elements. Figure 2.1 contains a revised version of this typology. Coding can include code choice, lexication can include code form (monolingual, bilingual, etc.) and graphisation can include code representation (script and letter type, etc.).

**Figure 2.1** Typology of geographical place-name planning

This typology can aid the description of place-name planning in a geographical area.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

Data for this contribution was gathered from the latest version of the SAGNC database (DAC 2016), which contains a list of 1336 gazetted South African geographical names as at 9 February 2016. The study by Du Plessis (2009) covered the version of the database that was available as at 17 December 2007. At that stage the database consisted of 832 gazetted items approved during the period 2000 to 2007. In the current *List of approved names 2016* (hereafter “the *List*”), the entries for this period now total 802 (60.0% of 1336) of all approved names. Since 17 December 2007 altogether 534 more gazetted names (40.0% of 1336) were added for the period 2008 to 2016.

The noted discrepancy between the 17 December 2007 total (of 832 names) for the 2000-2007 entries, as compared to the 9 February 2016 total (of 802 names), has implications for further comparisons: the 2016 version of the *List* contains 583 “new” entries, the 2007 version 631; the 2016 version contains 112 renamed entries, the 2007

version 109; the 2016 version contains 92 rewritten entries, the 2016 version 107. Consequently, any comparisons between the period 2000-2007 and 2008-2016 were made on the basis of the latest (2016) version of the *List*.

The *List* consists of six columns, containing *inter alia* information on the gazetted place name, the previous name (accompanied by comments), the feature type, the *Gazette* date, name of the province and language of the name.

One has to rely on the comments column for information on the origin and location of the name and in order to be able to identify the kind of names treatment involved, i.e. the standardisation of previously unstandardised names and the re-standardisation of previously standardised names. Regarding entries for previously unstandardised names, the *List* occasionally refers to a “new” name or remarks that the entry is an “existing name registered for the first time”. In the case of re-standardised names, the *List* refers to a “change” of a (previously standardised) name (renaming), or to the “correcting of the spelling” (re-spelling or rewriting) of a (previously standardised) name. For many entries no comments are given whatsoever. In these instances, the researcher made the deduction that “new” entries were involved. Based on this information it was possible to further classify the entries into standardised entries and re-standardised entries (renamed or rewritten).

Although not so important for the purpose of this contribution, the *List's* rather random and inconsistent information provided for feature type was categorised according to onomastic terminology, i.e. into *oikonyms* (names of settlements), *hydronyms* (names of water bodies), *oronyms* (names of elevated formations) and *hodonyms* (names of routes) (ICOS 2017). Based on building and construction terminology (CSIR 2005), a further category of names, namely that of public or social facilities, was identified.

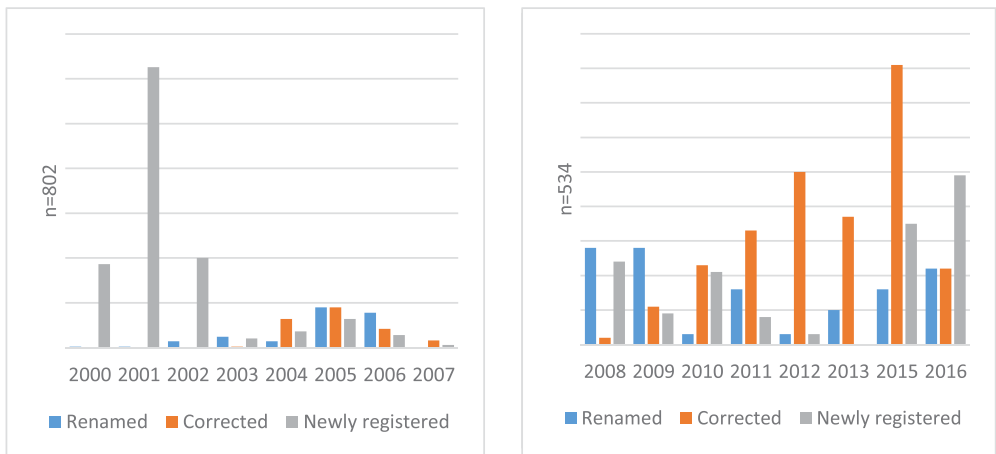
Some of the language classifications of the *List* had to be corrected, for instance in the case of the toponym *Madras*, mistakenly taken as English but actually of foreign language origin, as well as the case of *Sefogane River*, indicated as being partly of Northern Sotho origin but technically a hybrid name. Empty cells in the *List* are tagged in my database as “No information provided” or “No treatment indicated”, depending on the circumstance. Where uncertainty about the origin of a name is recorded in the *List*, it is also tagged in my database as “Uncertain or unknown”.

## 4. RESULTS

As we are primarily interested in how the SAGNC deals with societal multilingualism, the ensuing overview will concentrate on how language diversity is managed as an aspect of names treatment in South Africa.

Chart 2.1 provides an overview of the flow of names approval in each of the two periods in terms of the types of names treatment. Note that no approvals were recorded for 2014, incidentally an election year. The sharp rise in 2015 might therefore be partly attributed to “stand-over” approvals from 2014.

**Chart 2.1** Approval of names and type of treatment, 2000-2016 (left 1st period, right 2nd period)

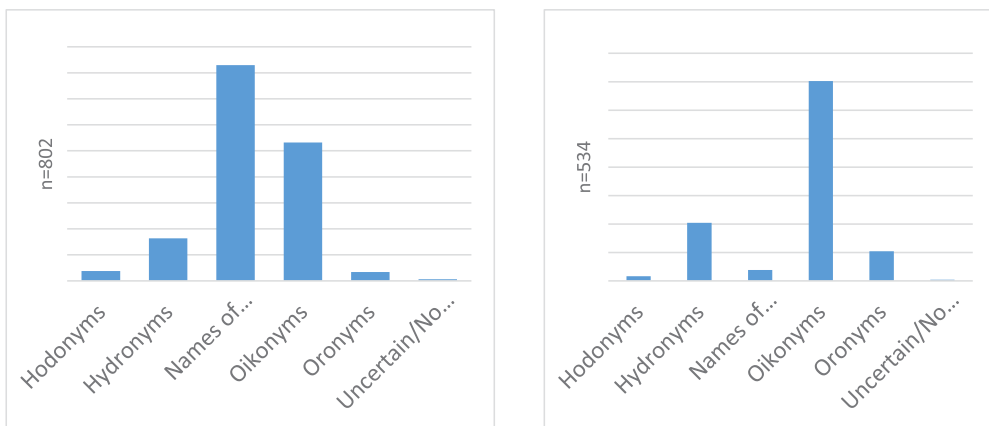


On comparing the approval rate between the two periods, on average 100 approved names per year between 2000 and 2007 and 59 names per year between 2008 and 2016, one gets the impression that proportionally more work had been done during the first period. However, looking at names approvals in each year it seems that the Council has worked more consistently during the second period, despite approving fewer names. Furthermore, work during the first period seems to be dominated by abnormal activities recorded during the initial years (2000-2001), the result of entering a large number of “new names” into the *List*. This kind of “catch-up” work is directly related to the extended mandate of the SAGNC, henceforth approving names that were not previously standardised. Furthermore, upon comparing the type of names treatment related to the approvals, one notes more of an even spread in activities during the second period; possibly an indication of a “normalising” agenda. One nevertheless needs to note that despite a comparatively greater spread in activities during the second period,

the SAGNC seems to have started focussing proportionally more on the re-spelling of names in the Sintu languages from 2010 onwards. This imbalance relates to the fact that during the first period, 72.7% of the entries involved newly standardised names and 27.3% re-standardised names, whilst exactly the opposite is true for the second period, where 27.9% of the listed names involve newly standardised names and 72.1% re-standardised names.

Overall the SAGNC devoted relatively more time to standardising (54.8% of all entries) than to re-standardising (45.2% of all entries) South African place names. Out of the overall total of 604 re-standardised names, 27.4% represent rewritten entries and 17.8% renamed entries. Chart 2.2 displays the name type according to the geographical feature that is named.

**Chart 2.2** Name type according to geographical feature, 2000-2016  
(left 1<sup>st</sup> period, right 2<sup>nd</sup> period)

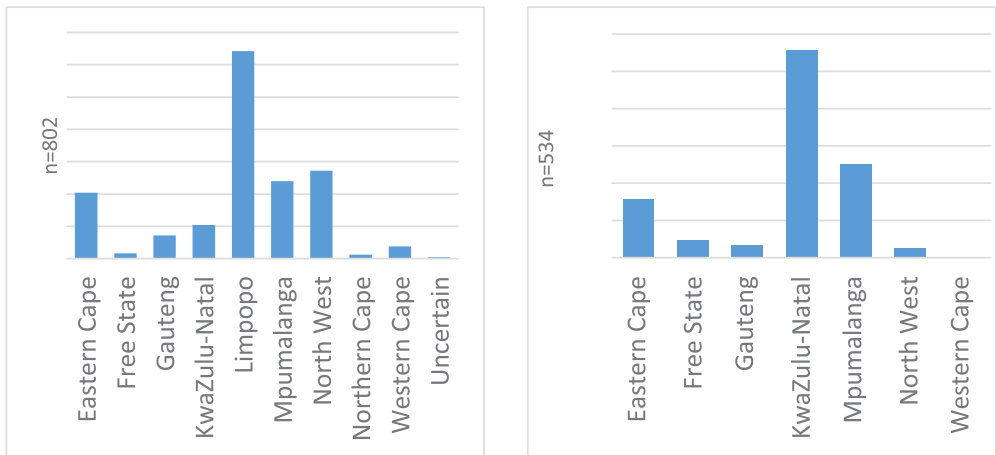


A difference is noted in naming patterns between the two periods. During the first period, 51.8% of all approved names result from the addition of newly approved names for public and social facilities (airports, post offices, parks, etc.) and 33.2% from the addition of newly approved names for human settlements (informal and rural settlements, etc.). Names for many of these geographical entities had not previously been standardised. For instance, 97.8% of the 415 names standardised for public and social facilities during the first period refer to post offices, whilst 89.1% of oikonyms refer to villages (e.g. *Bhaziya*, *Khubusi*), to settlements (e.g. *KwaMafela*, *oThingo*), and to (mostly small) towns (e.g. *Boshoek*, *Gundani*). During the second period one notes a clear shift to naming human settlements, with 65.7% of entries falling in this category and 19.1% in the hydronym category. Apart from names for suburbs and farms, 96.9% of

the 351 oikonyms standardised during the second period refer to the same entities that dominated the first period. A notable difference is found in the increase of hydronyms, related mostly to the re-spelling of names for rivers (72.6%), for instance *Amanzimtoti* > *aManzimtoti*, *Ixopo* > *iXobho*, *Nkothweni* > *iNkothweni*, *Umkomaas* > *uMkhomazi*. As seen, the attention during the second period simultaneously shifted to renaming entities and to rewriting names in accordance with the orthography of the language involved and not according to the former English (or Afrikaans) orthography.

Chart 2.3 displays the location of the approved names per province. Note that during the second period approved names are no longer located in all nine provinces.

**Chart 2.3** Location of approved names, 2000-2016 (left 1<sup>st</sup> period, right 2<sup>nd</sup> period)



Here also, differences were found between the two periods in terms of the location of the approved names. During the first period, 40.0% of the approved (new) names are located in Limpopo, whilst during the second period most attention went to (rewriting the spelling of) names in KwaZulu-Natal, with 52.1% of treated names between 2008 and 2016 located here. This shift indicates that most of the rewritten names (81.5%) during the second period are located in KwaZulu-Natal, whilst 65.9% of names that were renamed are located in Mpumalanga.

Chart 2.4 displays information about the overall language spread among approved names. For perspective, this spread is compared to census data on language. Note that the chart displays the English forms of the language names. Where the chart displays the name Northern Sotho / Pedi, the *List* intermittently uses Sesotho sa Leboa and Sepedi. Since there is no written form in South African Sign Language (SASL) one cannot expect



this to feature in names. In order to gain an overall perspective, names in the Sintu languages are grouped together. The abbreviation INBCL refers to Indigenous Non-Bantu Click Languages (see Brenzinger 2014).

**Chart 2.4** Language spread among approved names compared to language of census, 2000-2016 (left 1<sup>st</sup> period, right 2<sup>nd</sup> period)



The above comparison between language of name and language of census is made merely for interest's sake since the current *List* only contains place names that were approved after 2000 and not the complete list of all gazetted South African place names. The comparison nevertheless indicates that a focus in toponym treatment in the Sintu languages is indeed justifiable.

During the first period, 78.8% of approved names stem from Sintu languages; 85.0% during the second period. Interestingly 6.1% of approved names in the first period are hybrid names and in the second period this figure is at 7.7%. It is interesting that the *List* classifies none of these 84 names as hybrid names! Instead, it uses the classification "Multiple languages" or alternatively follows the convention of listing the languages which the name is composed of, such as in the case of the place name *Piet Tlou*, where the languages of the name are listed as "Afrikaans & Sesotho", and in the case of *Polokwane North* where it is listed as "Sesotho sa Leboa and [sic] English" [notably without the ampersand].

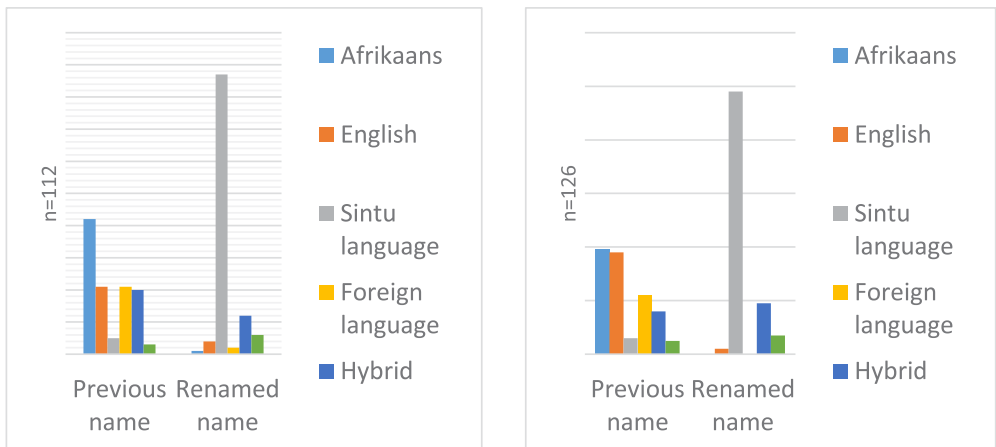
A breakdown in terms of individual Sintu languages reveals that during the first period and in accordance with the provincial location above, languages from the northern and eastern part of South Africa feature relatively more prominently in approved names:

29.6% of names in the Sintu languages from Northern Sotho / Pedi, 19.2% from Tswana and 14.1% from Venda. An exception is that 15.0% of the approved Sintu language names during this period stem from Xhosa. However, during the second period a complete shift was found toward languages of the more eastern locations of the country (also in correlation to provincial name locations), where 61.2% of approved names in the Sintu languages now stem from Zulu and 13.0% from Xhosa.

A striking aspect of the language spread among approved names is that in the first period 90.4% of approved names were standardised as monolingual names, a tendency largely continued during the second period with 87.6% of approved names standardised as such.

Chart 2.5 compares the language of previously standardised names to the language of renamed toponyms. Such a comparison offers a perspective on the way that the SAGNC manages language representativeness.

**Chart 2.5** Language of previous name vs. language of renamed name, 2000-2016 (left 1<sup>st</sup> period, right 2<sup>nd</sup> period)



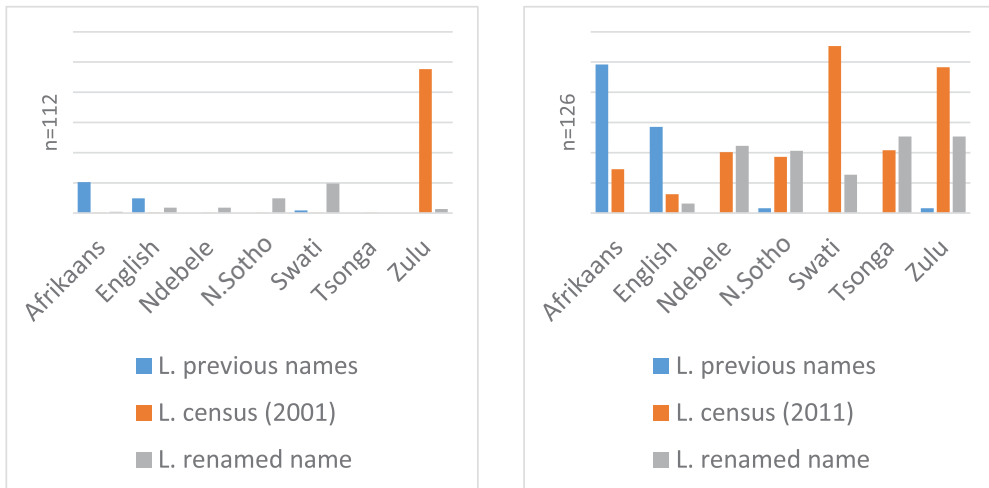
Of the 112 names targeted for renaming during the first period, 37.5% are of Afrikaans origin and 18.8% of English origin. During the second period, 31.0% of the 126 targeted names are of Afrikaans origin and 30.2% of English origin, suggesting a slight shift towards an equilibrium. In conjunction with the ideological rhetoric about authenticity and the origin of place names, toponyms in foreign languages were also targeted

-18.8% during the first period and 17.5% of targeted names during the second period. Interestingly some hybrid names were also renamed: 10.7% during the first period and 15.1% of targeted names during the second period.

The outcome of renaming by and large increased the language visibility of Sintu language place names, thereby proportionally decreasing language visibility in the targeted languages. During the first period, 77.7% and during the second period 77.8% of the renamed names now stem from Sintu languages, revealing a consistent shift towards renaming names in the Sintu languages. In terms of the individual Sintu languages, 35.7% of the renamed names during the first period are from Northern Sotho / Pedi origin and 19.6% of Swati origin. During the second period there is more of a spread, with 20.6% of the renamed names being of Zulu origin, 12.7% from Tsonga, 11.1% from Ndebele and 10.3% of Northern Sotho / Pedi origin.

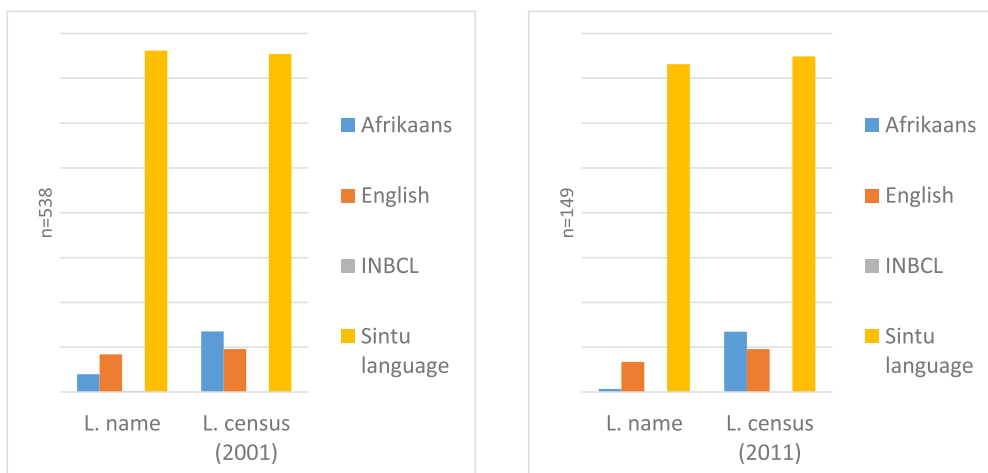
Chart 2.6 compares the language of the previous name and the language of the renamed name with the language of census for Mpumalanga (only) in order to establish whether language representativeness is really a consideration. The results from the language census for 2001 are not reliable as can be seen from the over-representation of Zulu. We shall therefore rely on the corrected language census from the second period.

**Chart 2.6** Comparing language of previous name and language of renamed name with language of census (left 1<sup>st</sup> period, right 2<sup>nd</sup> period)



As evidenced, renaming during the second period attempted to increase the language visibility of the provincial languages other than Zulu. This was achieved by renaming over-represented Afrikaans and English names into names in local languages: Ndebele, Northern Sotho / Pedi and Tsonga. The same result was not achieved through renaming into Swati and Zulu. Chart 2.7 juxtaposes this finding with the language spread among newly standardised names.

**Chart 2.7** Language spread among newly standardised names (left 1<sup>st</sup> period, right 2<sup>nd</sup> period)



Notably, during both periods there is an almost perfect correlation between the language of new names and the census language in the case of the Sintu languages. The same cannot be said about new names in Afrikaans and English.

Now that language representativeness does indeed play a role in language choice when renaming, as well as in naming places, the question is whether this is also the case with regard to hybrid names. Table 2.1 displays the linguistic composition of the hybrid names in the *List*.

**Table 2.1** Linguistic composition of approved hybrid names

Period	Specific element						Generic element				n
	Afrikaans	Sintu language	SL + English	SL + Afrikaans	Foreign language	FL + Afrikaans	Afrikaans	Sintu language	English	None	
2000-2007	8.51%	55.32%	12.77%	0.00%	21.28%	2.13%	14.89%	2.13%	76.60%	6.38%	47
2008-2016	2.70%	43.24%	40.54%	2.70%	10.81%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	72.97%	27.03%	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.95%</b>	<b>75.00%</b>	<b>17.86%</b>	<b>1.19%</b>	<b>17.86%</b>	<b>1.19%</b>	<b>8.33%</b>	<b>1.19%</b>	<b>75.00%</b>	<b>15.48%</b>	<b>84</b>

Notably during both periods, the approved hybrid names consisted mostly of a specific element from the Sintu languages: more than 50% in the first period, i.e. *Shelangubo Dam*, *Motlatse River* but significantly less and just over 40% during the second period, i.e. *Moloto South*, *Mankazana Dam*. This decrease can be attributed to a new tendency involving the commemoration of persons. The peculiarity here is that not only the (Sintu language) surname is used but a combination of this name and the persons' forename (mostly from English) to form the specific element of the toponym, i.e. *Malcomess Mgabela Bridge*, *Siyabulela Mlombile Township*, etc. Also notable is the decline in toponyms containing a specific element in a foreign language, from 22.3% during the first period to 10.8% during the second period, a tendency we have also noticed in renaming practices.

Little discrepancy was found concerning the generic element of the hybrid toponym. During both periods three quarters of approved hybrid names contained a generic element from English, e.g. *Khumula Estate*, *Mhlaba Cross*, etc. (first period) and *Malibongwe Ridge*, *Msulungwana Hill*, etc. (second period). This consistency can also be attributed to the increased use of personal names as toponyms, without adding a generic element, from less than 10% during the first period to more than 25% during the second period. The hybridity of these toponyms without a generic component lies in the fact that they are mostly constructed from different languages.

One therefore notes in the approved hybrid names that language representativeness still plays an important role but only insofar as the specific element of toponyms is concerned, i.e. visibility in languages other than English. One also notes an overwhelming preference for generic English elements, signalling the authorities' predisposition towards this language. Only one example has been recorded where a toponym carries a generic element in a Sintu language: *Orlando Ekhaya* (Zulu for "home"), a name approved during the first period.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The somewhat random distinction made between the period of the previous study (2000-2007) and the period not yet studied (2008-2016) has in fact proven to be rather significant. Not only does the periodisation coincide with the degree of productivity in approving names, and with the actual spread of names treatment activities, but more specifically the distinction has definite bearing on a change in focus with regards to names treatment. This shift in focus is directly related to the nature of the SAGNC's 'names transformation' work since its establishment.

Whereas during the first period the SAGNC seemed to have had a greater focus on standardisation, a definite shift towards re-standardisation activities during the second period was noted; more particularly to an increased interest in adopting an indigenised orthographic system for the spelling of toponyms from Sintu languages. This division suggests a balanced approach towards standardisation which relates to the Council's mandate of "... restoring the indigenous history and names of places" (SAGNC 2002); in other words adding existing place names that were not listed previously (due to the limited mandate of the previous names authority), re-spelling names that were not written according to indigenous orthographies, or to renaming names for a variety of reasons in accordance with the current regime's ideology.

Whilst the names of human settlements received some attention during the first period as opposed to the greater prominence afforded to the naming of public and social facilities, the attention clearly shifted to the names given to human settlements during the second period. The naming focus of the first period can be attributed to the fact that the new regime wanted to signal its impact on the linguistic landscape through officialising previously unstandardised names for public and social facilities, e.g. post offices. This relates to one of the reasons given by SAGNC to review names, i.e. the fact that a particular name had existed in the past but was not officially recognised (SAGNC 2002:7). It became important to also focus on the names of human settlements, especially during the second period, as a way to recognise the citizens living in these places. This shift in focus also relates to the need to rewrite and rename previously standardised toponyms.

A difference between the two periods in terms of the location of standardised names was also noted, where the focus shifted from the northern and eastern provinces during the first period, to mostly the eastern (and Zulu-speaking) provinces during the second period. These trends coincide with the focus on adding previously unstandardised names to the *List* and with reviewing existing names. However, it could also be attributed to another priority of the SAGNC, namely to respect the "wishes of the local population" (SAGNC 2002:4). This principle is affirmed by the spread of languages featuring in the approved names which incidentally correlates with the provincial location of names, that is in provinces where the Sintu languages constitute the majority languages.

One aspect wherein no difference was found between the two periods concerns the overall trend of standardising monolingual names and of neglecting to make any provision for alternative name forms. This confirms the SAGNC's very narrow interpretation of the univocity principle that requires 'one name per geographic entity' – apparently for the

Council this means ‘one language per name’. Despite the fact that the SAGNC claims to undertake place name standardisation in accordance with UNGEGN requirements (SAGNC 2002), the *List* does not recognise other forms of an approved name, e.g. listing *Kaapstad* as the other form for the approved name *Cape Town*, a practice recommended by UNGEGN for multilingual countries (UNGEgn 2006:36). In fact, UNGEGN even goes so far as to state that “(a) national authority may adopt more than one official name for a geographical entity”, such as indeed occurs in many other multilingual countries. The SAGNC’s only concession towards the multilingual nature of South Africa is to accept hybrid names, mostly names for public and social facilities such as *Marconi Beam* and *Phumzile Mahlangu Police Station*.

The correlation between naming in Sintu languages and the provincial location of names points to an attempt made by the SAGNC to establish convergence between the language of the place name and the predominant language of the location. Examples of the location of particularly renamed names from the first period (51.8% located in Mpumalanga) are *Buffelspruit* (Afrikaans) > *Mhlambanyatsi* (Swati), *Klipfontein* (Afrikaans) > *eNgwenyameni* (Ndebele), *Paayzynpan* (foreign language) > *Ditlhagane* (Zulu), *Witbank* (Afrikaans) > *eMalahleni* (Zulu), etc., and from the second period (65.9% located in Mpumalanga) *Gemsbokspruit* (Afrikaans) > *Mzimuhle* (Ndebele), *Enkeldoorn* (foreign language) > *Leratong* (Northern Sotho / Pedi), *Eglington* (English) > *Xalamuka* (Tsonga), *Machadodorp* (hybrid name) > *Entokozweni* (Zulu), etc.

A further aspect wherein no differences were found between the two periods concerns the renaming of previously standardised names. It was noted that in both periods Afrikaans and English names, as well as names in foreign languages are targeted for change and that the re-standardised names stem from Sintu languages. However, the results show that although this renaming does increase the language visibility of the Sintu languages, and therefore reflects a degree of commitment to language representativeness, other factors are also at play. A central consideration is the principle mentioned above of establishing a correlation between the language of the people and the language of their place. This aspect is further strengthened by the comparison in the Mpumalanga renaming case, between the language of the name (previous as well as renamed) and the census language. One can conclude that at least during the second period, renaming in Mpumalanga resulted in a convergence of language of name and language of locality and that the renamed toponyms seem indeed to be more representative of the languages used by the local citizens. The discrepancy noted in terms of language and place correlation in terms of newly standardised names should be attributed to the location of

the latter, a variable that further confirms the strive towards convergence. The majority of new names are located in only a few provinces where Sintu languages constitute the majority languages.

A difference between the two periods was again registered in terms of the manner in which hybrid names are handled. A shift was noted during the second period to place names that commemorate persons without including a generic element in the toponym. Where a generic element is added the tendency during the second period is towards using English for such purpose, thus correlating with the general language politics of the South African government with regard to English.

Although the current collection of names in the *List* reflects a degree of language variety and thus collectively denotes a multilingual names profile, the overall monolingual nature of individual names limits their language visibility in the linguistic landscape. This points to a neglected aspect of names planning in South Africa: the fact that names authorities do not regulate bilingual or dual names as is required by UNGEGN.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Aside from a range of problems with the way the *List* is managed, which for matters of scope cannot be discussed here, the exercise of comparing the approved names across two distinct periods has proven useful. Not only did it reveal a number of significant differences between the two periods; in fact the comparison also revealed areas of no difference whatsoever. The second finding is of importance to the question arising from the former study mentioned in the introduction to this contribution.

However, the recorded differences between the two periods have brought to the fore two language management aspects that remained undetected in the previous study, namely that of language representativeness and of convergence between language of name and language of place. The comparisons made in relation to these aspects have revealed that although one sometimes gains the impression that names are merely changed for the sake of change, more is at stake, aside even from political and ideological considerations. We have seen this realised specifically in trends regarding the renaming of already standardised names, as well as in the case of newly standardised names.

Regarding the continued trends noted in the case of language visibility, the large-scale monolingualisation of the linguistic landscape detected in the previous study has merely been continued. The comparisons made concerning this aspect revealed no new trends or any attempts whatsoever to align the persistent monolingual names policy with the



constitutionally embedded bilingual policy. In fact, the SAGNC has not moved an inch since the previous study was conducted with regards to the recording of other non-officially recognised forms for standardised names in the *List*.

On the whole, the comparison between the two periods reveals that the SAGNC's standardisation programme currently entails the re-spelling of toponyms in the Sintu languages, and renaming as well as naming places primarily in the Sintu languages in order to better "connect" with the majority of local inhabitants. Although one can undoubtedly ascribe these priorities to a names transformation agenda, one nevertheless needs to recognise that essentially they still do not part with the past legacy preventing the recognition of language diversity through officialising only one language form per name. From a language visibility and language policy perspective a completely transformed geographical names system for South Africa would involve the recognition and recording of other accepted forms of the officially approved name.

Instead of completely replacing the previous writing system for names in the Sintu languages, the SAGNC could recognise it alongside the so-called "corrected" version of the name, e.g. *KwaKhangela* x *Congella*, *eGolela* x *Golela*, *uMlalazi* x *Mlalaas*, etc. Not only will such practice visibly align best practice from other multilingual countries such as Israel, Belgium, Ireland, etc., but it will almost certainly promote bilingual place names and increase language visibility, consequently cultivating a spirit of tolerance and togetherness. Related to this is the recognition of dual names, for example *eManzana* x *Badplaas*, *Mokopane* x *Potgietersrus*, *KwaDukuza* x *Stanger*, etc., a case already well argued by Möller (2012). Although the few hybrid names in the *List* do promote some form of bilingualism in names, the tendency towards English generic elements in such toponyms, without considering the languages of the location of the name, actually undermines the SAGNC's striving to achieve a state of convergence between the language of the name and the language of the people. Nevertheless, one needs to admit that the current data on hybrid names is too limited for making valid generalisations.

Fundamentally the SAGNC needs to review its narrow interpretation of the univocity principle and align it more pertinently to UNGEGN's guidelines on multilingual names and best practice in other multilingual countries. By doing so the Council could significantly enhance its names transformation programme and make a clear break with past place-name conventions. This will require an explicit alignment between place-name policy and language policy, which could contribute to a balanced place-name programme that eliminates discrimination against any local linguistic group.

## REFERENCES

- BERG LD & VUOLTEENAHO J. (eds). 2009. *Critical toponymies: the contested politics of place naming*. Surrey/Burlington: Ashgate.
- BRENZINGER M. 2014. Classifying non-bantu click languages. In: C Saunders (ed). *Papers from the pre-colonial catalytic project, Volume I*. Cape Town: Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town. 123-135.
- CSIR (COUNCIL FOR SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH). 2005. *Guidelines for human settlement planning and design*. Building and Construction Technology Report No. BOU/E2001. Pretoria: CSIR Building and Construction Technology.
- DAC (DEPARTMENT OF ARTS & CULTURE). 2016. *List of approved names 2016*. [Retrieved 6 April 2017] <https://www.dac.gov.za/content/toponymic-guidelines-map-and-other-editors>
- DU PLESSIS LT. 2009. Language visibility and the transformation of geographical names in South Africa. *Language Matters*, 40(2):215-238. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10228190903188542>
- DU PLESSIS LT. 2012. Language visibility and the renaming of places: A comparative study of five countries. *Nomina Africana*, 26(1):15-53.
- GORTER D. 2006. Introduction: The study of the linguistic landscape as a new approach to multilingualism. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 3(1):1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790710608668382>
- HICKS D. 2002. Scotland's linguistic landscape: the lack of policy and planning with Scotland's place-names and signage. *Lingua Pax Conferences and symposiums/World Congress on Language Policies - Linguapax IX (2002)*. [Retrieved 29 January 2007] [http://www.linguapax.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/CMPL2002\\_T2\\_Hicks.pdf](http://www.linguapax.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/CMPL2002_T2_Hicks.pdf)
- HODGES F. 2007. Language planning and placenaming in Australia. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 8(3):383-403. <https://doi.org/10.2167/cilp120.0>
- HUANG C. 2007. Language planning for naming and its socio-cultural connotations: A case study in Taiwan. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 8(3):305-323. <https://doi.org/10.2167/cilp127.0>
- ICOS (INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF ONOMASTIC SCIENCES). 2017. List of key onomastic terms. *Onomastic terminology*. 23 May 2017. [Retrieved 8 August 2017] <https://icosweb.net/drupal/terminology>
- KALLASMAA M. 2002. Name studies in Estonia. In: I Nyirkos (ed). *History of the study of toponyms in the Uralian languages*. Debrecen & Helsinki: Onomastica Uralica. 47-80.
- KAPLAN RB & BALDAUF RB JR. 1997. *Language planning from practice to theory*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

- KERFOOT H. 2006. Role of the United Nations in the standardization of geographical names: some fifty years on. In: United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. *Manual for the national standardization of geographical names*. New York: United Nations. 83-97.
- LANDRY R & BOURHIS RY. 1997. Linguistic landscape and ethnolinguistic vitality: An empirical study. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 16(1):23-49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X970161002>
- MÖLLER LA. 2012. A case for dual names. *Nomina Africana*, 26(1):62-94.
- NAHIR M. 1984. Language planning goals: A classification. *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 8(3):294-327. <https://doi.org/10.1075/lplp.8.3.03nah>
- SAGNC (SOUTH AFRICAN GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES COUNCIL). 2002. *Handbook on geographical names*. 2nd Edition. Pretoria: Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology.
- SAPAROV A. 2003. The alternation of place names and construction of national identity in Soviet Armenia. *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 44(1):179-198.
- UNGEEN (UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES). 2006. *Manual for the national standardization of geographical names*. ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/88. New York: Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations.
- WINDSOR G. 2008. Report on the Storage and Depiction of Dual Names in Australia and New Zealand. *Committee for Geographical Names in Australasia (CGNA)*. 9 October. [Retrieved 7 June 2011] <http://www.icsm.gov.au/icsm/cgna/DualNameDepictionStorage08.pdf>

# NAMING AS A TOOL FOR CULTURAL DOMINATION: A CASE OF TOPONYM USE IN SOUTH-EASTERN ZIMBABWE

**Steyn Khesani Madlome**

Department of African Languages and Culture, Great Zimbabwe University, Zimbabwe  
skhesani@gmail.com

## **Abstract**

Naming plays a crucial role in conveying historical information from one generation to another. It can also be used as a way of preserving certain cultural aspects of any given group of people. On the other hand names may be used as a tool for showing cultural dominance by majority groups over the minority. Socio-onomastic theory is used in analysing toponyms in the south-eastern part of Zimbabwe, which falls largely under the Chiredzi district. The majority of the inhabitants of the south-eastern part of Zimbabwe are the Tsonga speaking people. It is a common practice in Zimbabwe and other African countries that a language different from that of the locals may be used to name places which are significant to the central or local government. This may also happen in places which are seen as more insignificant, but which have bearing on cultural dimensions. This paper explores naming practices either by the Vatsonga people in south-eastern Zimbabwe. These could be government officials, immigrants from other parts of the country or the locals themselves. This paper seeks to analyse certain naming practices which are inclined towards promoting cultural heritage among the Vatsonga in Zimbabwe. It further interrogates the tendency of naming by people who are not bona-fide inhabitants of the area in question. Furthermore, this paper examines how the locals interpret and simultaneously contest certain names which have been imposed in their neighbourhood. Some of the names which were successfully changed to suit the majority of the people in the region are also discussed. The paper further explores the possibilities of changing names which are deemed not to conform with the culture of the local inhabitants. Unstructured interviews were conducted to gather the data. It was found that most of the toponyms in a language other than that of the locals seem to apply to places of national interest, such as parks, plantations and border posts. This

serves as an eye-opener to both the locals and government officials who may not see the importance of naming in the local language as a way of preserving cultural heritage and empowering the locals.

**Keywords:** cultural domination, cultural heritage, local language, toponyms, Vatsonga

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Language is of crucial importance in any given community since it is a marker of people's identity. Through language, people can name their surrounding areas. Naming plays a crucial role in conveying historical information from one generation to another. It can also be used as a way of preserving certain cultural aspects of any given group of people. Neethling (2005:254) supports this sentiment when he says "Names are a powerful cultural barometer, and there is much one can learn from naming patterns". This implies that through names, people can measure the level of their culture. On the other hand, names may be used as a tool for showing cultural dominance by majority groups over the minority. This paper seeks to analyse certain naming practices which are inclined towards promoting cultural heritage among the Vatsonga people in Zimbabwe. The study also aims to interrogate the naming tendencies by Tsonga speakers and non-Tsonga speakers. It is furthermore the aim of this contribution to examine how the locals react to certain names which were imposed in their neighbourhood. The study further explores the possibilities of changing names which do not conform to the culture of the local inhabitants.

### 1.1 Historical background

The south-eastern part of Zimbabwe is a predominantly Xitsonga speaking area. Xitsonga in Zimbabwe and other neighbouring countries has erroneously been referred to as Xichangana, Shangani, Shangaan or Xangani, from the pre- to the post-colonial era. Other ethnic groups are also found in this region, though in smaller numbers. Manyanga (2012) argues that "...the modern ethnic composition has much to do with the disintegration of the Rozvi confederacy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries..." This is evidenced by the existence of certain names which have Pfumbi origins. Pfumbi is closely related to other Shona-Nyayi varieties. The authorities, who are mostly non-Tsonga, resist the use of the Tsonga ethnonyms, arguing that Tsongas are those in South Africa (Hachipola 1998).

The naming of places in this region has been done either by the Vatsonga people themselves or by other people such as government officials, immigrants from other parts of the country, the locals themselves and even earlier inhabitants during the pre-colonial era. Sixteen languages including Xitsonga have been declared as official languages in Zimbabwe (Government of Zimbabwe 2013).

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY**

Since names may be referred to as sociocultural labels, socio-onomastic theory was used to analyse the toponyms in the south-eastern part of Zimbabwe which falls largely under the Chiredzi district (Neethling 2005). Knowledge of linguistic imperialism has also guided this study since it highlights how certain languages come to dominate others in the same geographical region. Unstructured interviews were conducted to gather the data from 10 participants from each of the following three categories; the local inhabitants, local authorities and traditional leadership.

## **3. A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF LANGUAGE, CULTURE, IDENTITY AND NAMING PRACTICES**

This section of the paper discusses certain aspects of language and cultural identity which are related to naming practices in different places. It also shows the role of naming as a way to dominate or resist domination by other cultures.

### **3.1 Language and cultural identity**

A common language spoken by a certain group of people causes them to be known as an ethnic group. These people, among other things, also have common beliefs, traditions, values and aspirations communicated in their common language. This will make it easier to identify them as a unique cultural grouping. Their language becomes a main tool of preserving their culture. Gebre (2010) argues that members of an ethnic group identify themselves based on aspects such as common language, ancestry, religion and origin, and it is their shared heritage which bonds them together.

Spolsky (1999:181) supports this by saying: "*language is a central feature of human identity... beyond this individual level, language is a powerful symbol of national and ethnic identity.*" This means a nation or an ethnic group may use their common language to express their sense of belonging or identity. In the Zimbabwean context, there is no such language which is common to the entire nation, given the multi-lingual nature of the

country, i.e. various ethnic groups take pride in their own languages in different parts of the country. This is the case with the Vatsonga and other ethnic groups in the south-eastern part of Zimbabwe.

### 3.2 Cultural contact and cultural dominance

Cultural contact happens when people from different cultures reside in a common geographical location or when they become neighbours. Diane (2006:1) defines cultural contact as: *“the occurrence of two or more cultures coming into contact with each other through conquest, immigration, mass media, trade or travel”*. This contact will inevitably exert an impact on neighbouring cultures, even if people make a concerted effort to maintain their group solidarity and ethnic cultural identity. In the long run there will be acculturation or cultural influences from other groups, but the extent may vary from community to community (Herskovits 2009:1).

Furthermore, Davis (2005) found that the factors that cause language contact may range from mere accident to those of a more deliberate nature. He further argues that the deliberate factors may be caused by dominant groups as a way of attempting to weaken the culture of the smaller groups. This language contact has sociolinguistic and sociocultural consequences which may impact negatively on the speakers in any given area. Furthermore, in this regard, the SIL (2008:1) reported:

When one group is very powerful they may use that power...to eliminate the speech variety [of the other group]. Differences in economic or political power and prestige almost always put the (speakers of the) less-powerful language at a disadvantage....speakers of such a language resist having their identity (as marked by their language variety) taken away from them and they may react... by working all the harder to preserve, protect and develop their traditional language of identity.

This shows that speakers of the disadvantaged languages react, in most cases, to this unfair treatment in order to safeguard their culture and identity.

Mbakogu (2004) also writes about cultural dominance of the west over the African culture, describing it as follows: *“The cultural domination of the West is entrenched in imbibing the western way of life and thus making our political, economic and development aspirations conform to this alien way of life”*. This quotation makes it clear that conforming to a dominant group’s way of life has effects in other facets of life of the

dominated group. This phenomenon can also be seen amongst Africans, where certain groups will try all they can to dominate others in all spheres of life. This paper takes a closer look at this phenomenon, particularly in the Zimbabwean context.

Schiller (1976) in his paper described cultural domination focusing mainly on its source, context and current styles. He also looked at the phenomenon of diplomacy, which may be used by other powerful nations. For instance, Schiller explains the link between cultural domination and the free flow of information, citing countries like the USA. In his paper he highlights that through this emphasis of the free flow of information, a single language like English is used to disseminate information to the peripheries and this is a sign of the wielding of power.

Cultural dominance may also be treated as cultural imperialism which, develops in the world as a system resulting in cultural penetration in various areas. Schiller argues that even though this penetration occurs due to economic reasons, its impact is inevitably felt by individuals in various social settings due to their social consciousness. Examples of multinational corporations are given as examples of entities which fall into this category for economic reasons. Various economic activities attract national interests and this may cause cultural imperialism in one way or another. Schiller (1976:9) avers that:

the concept of cultural imperialism today describes the sum of the processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of dominating center of the system.

This means that various methods can be used as a way of dominating other groups, with this being done by promoting the interests of the dominating group. This is very common in Africa and the world over. The present study shall, however, concentrate on the naming practices in south-eastern Zimbabwe to reveal the extent of this domination. In this case the language used for naming is of paramount importance. In support of this, Bourdieu (1991) argues that language is not just a means of communication but it can also be viewed as a medium of power. This implies that language can give a clear picture of the social structure of any given community.



### 3.3 Resistance to domination through naming

There are various ways of showing resistance to unfair treatment and these can be exhibited by those on the receiving end of the unfair practice. Naming is one such a phenomenon which can be used as a way of showing resistance to certain practices by the affected groups. This has happened in some communities in Africa, as shall be highlighted in this section.

Gebre's (2010) research about the Aari and Gama of Ethiopia demonstrates that the former were not just passive recipients of domination by the latter, but that there were attempts at individual and group level to resist and fight back against this unjust treatment. The Aari gave names which reflect courage and an unwavering stance in the face of this domination. These deeds were remembered by giving the names provided in Table 3.1 below:

**Table 3.1** Aari names reflecting courage

Male	Female	Meaning
Buchmay	-	cannot be uprooted
Esray	Esraya	does not listen/obey
Gadray	-	cannot be fooled
Garay	-	does not give in
Haysmay	Haysmaya	unbeatable in court
Masmay	Masmaya	cannot be returned
Zami	Zamiken	Strong
Giqay or Riray	-	not terrified/scared
Gamanksh	Gamanksha	causes trouble to Gama
Gamaays	Gamaaysken	beaten Gama, in court
Gamakais	-	wipe out Gama
Ganemas	-	reclaim authority/power
Hamdar	Hamdarken	protect land
Hambab		owner of land

Some of the names given by the Aari people, as shown in Table 3.1 above, also show that there were times during which individual or group resistance against the Gama yielded results either in the court of law or through informal acts of vengeance. On the other hand, the Aari names seemed to indicate self-praise or to show that they have reclaimed their land and also managed to conquer their former oppressor.

Other names were given to show that the Aari were now in control over their land. This is an interesting situation which may be likened to the events of south-eastern Zimbabwe. However the situation is slightly different in the sense that there is renaming and or counter-naming in some places which were named by the earlier inhabitants, or by those who came later or vice-versa. Another difference is that some legal battles between the Aari and the Gama people were solved in court, while in Zimbabwe very few cases of this have been recorded.

#### 4. NAMING PRACTICES IN THE SOUTH-EASTERN PART OF ZIMBABWE

This section discusses some place names which have appeal to the nation as a whole. These names could have been given either by the locals or by government officials. Some of the names were given through the influence of missionary work in the region. The etymology of the name is one of the main aspects to look at. Below is a linguistic map of Zimbabwe (Figure 3.1) showing how the languages are distributed across the country. Xitsonga shares linguistic space with languages such as Shona, Venda, Sotho and Ndau.

**Figure 3.1** Linguistic map of Zimbabwe (Ethnologue 2017)



\*In this map the language indicated as Tswa represents Xitsonga.

## 4.1 Sango

Sango is a border post that links Zimbabwe and Mozambique on the south-eastern part of the country. *Sango* is a Shona word for bush. This is the common version of what the name means from a national point of view since Shona language is widely spoken and publicised through the media and the education sector. This version claims that the name was given following the nature of the place, which is close to a national park. However, some locals have their own meaning and feelings in as far as the name is concerned.

One of the local chiefs (Gezani 2017) claims that the name derives from a well which was named after the *Sambo* clan in *Xilotlela* area. He argues that people later mistakenly referred to it as *Sango*, meaning that it carried a different meaning altogether. Practically, a number of Xitsonga speakers around this area would prefer calling the area “*ka Xilotlela*”, meaning at *Xilotlela*’s place. Those that are a bit further away, especially non-Tsonga speakers, simply call it by the name *Sango* which is widely known in the country. This same border post is named Chiqualaquala (*Xikwalakwala*) on the Mozambican side. As such, some locals feel that it is also plausible to rename it as *Xikwalakwala* since the border simply divides the Vatsonga from Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

## 4.2 Gonarezhou

This is a national park which is run by National Parks and Wildlife Management. The park is found on the border with Mozambique, and close to the Tsonga communities in the Chiredzi and Mahenye areas. *Gonarezhou* is a Shona name meaning a tusk of an elephant and was given because of the great number of elephants here. Chauke (2017), a local leader in Chiredzi South, pointed out that this place is called “*Gonakujingwa la Maphokole*”, meaning “place of a person who was named Maphokole”. This means that the local inhabitants’ views on the actual name were not considered. An alternative suggestion is to name this place *Gonarandlopfu*, which is simply a translation from the Shona version.

## 4.3 Gonakudzingwa

This is a place of national interest since it bears the history of many national heroes who were once detained in it. Gonakudzingwa is a Shona name which means being able to be chased away. There are some views which were given by locals pertaining to the naming of this place. Oral history has it that before the Vatsonga inhabited this area, there were some people of Pfumbi origins who occupied part of the south-eastern area.

This is evidenced by the remnants of some names and shrines found in the area today. One informant (Gezani 2017) says there was a man of Pfumbi-Nyayi origin whose name was Maphokole who was known for magic. He goes on to say that this man was pursued by Nguni fighters, but they failed to conquer him and chase him away from the land. Finally, Maphokole changed into an anthill. This man would then boast saying: “*ndakona kujingwa*”, meaning they have failed to chase me away. Some locals later referred to the place as “*Gonakujingwa la Maphokole*”. The name was later renamed in standard Shona as *Gonakudzingwa*, which is totally divorced from the intended meaning. *Gonakujingwa* (“being able to be chased away”) actually means the opposite of what the man boasted about.

#### 4.4 Masimbaevanhu

This is the name of a place under chief Tshovani’s jurisdiction. *Masimbaevanhu* is a Shona name meaning people’s power and was given soon after farm invasion that took place from 2000 and onwards. These naming practices were conducted within a political context by Shona speakers who were at the forefront of the invasions. Many Xitsonga speakers can be found in these resettlements but they did not influence the naming practices in most of the areas. There are no traces of their culture in the naming of this place. Naming in the south-eastern part of the country was supposed to reflect the cultural and historical events as this is a common trend in various parts of Zimbabwe. The names discussed below bear witness to anomalies which took place in this region.

#### 4.5 Machureni

This is a place in Section 24 of the Hippo Valley Estates. Machureni is a name of a school in the area. The Vatsonga of the Xilonga clan are said to have occupied the land between the current Chiredzi town and Lundi river before the establishment of these estates. This information is supported by one of the elders in Xilonga (Mavunda 2017), who said: “*lomu a ku vuriwa machurhini ya ka Xilonga hikuva lawa i marhumbi ya vakokwani va hina.*” [this place was called Machurhini as evidence of our ancestors having previously occupied this land]. The name Machureni now sounds like a Shona word since it was misspelt and bears no meaning whatsoever in both Shona and Xitsonga. It also no longer bears any present-day traces of Xilonga culture and history. The name was supposed to be Machurhini, which means mortars. These mortars were evidence that some people inhabited the land before it was occupied by the Hippo valley estates, and they reflected

Vatsonga culture. The establishment of the Hippo Valley Estates saw the removal of these locals to a place further south of the Lundi river as their land was converted into sugarcane farming and a game park.

#### **4.6 Chibwedziva**

This is a name given to a school, business centre, and a clinic. Oral interviews with locals revealed that the name is now a Shona word which derived from a Pfumbi dialect, since there are claims that these people inhabited the land since time immemorial. One of the locals, N'wa-Deyimani (2017), strongly believes that the actual name of this place is *Cingwejiva/Cigwejiva* since most of the Tsonga speakers pronounce it in this way. Looking at the sound shifts between the standard Shona and Pfumbi it is clear that the sound /dz/- is replaced by /j/- as shown in some of the place names in the area: Sosojiva > Sosodziva and Jamahwe > Dzamabwe. The Tsonga population has followed suit by using some of the words they found to have already been in existence. This shows that some Pfumbi names have also been changed to suit the standard Shona orthography. This is a form of linguistic domination.

#### **4.7 Damarakanaka**

This is the name of a missionary clinic which is situated on the southern side of the Lundi river. The missionaries established the clinic and a church as they wanted to spread the word of God in the area. The name is a Shona word which means good news. The naming was done by the missionaries after consulting some pastors who were of the Shona origin. Interestingly, the majority of people who stay in the area are Xitsonga speakers. There is no other name known to current Tsonga inhabitants for this area other than the one given above.

### **5. RENAMING ATTEMPTS BY IMMIGRANTS**

Most of the non-Tsonga speakers were forced to migrate to the south-eastern lowveld by the colonial government in the 1950's. Some went soon after independence, following their relatives to seek fertile soil. As a result they wanted to associate themselves with their former homes by renaming some villages and places using their own language (either Shona or Ndebele). The renaming attempts by immigrants are a sign of failing to embrace cultural diversity as enshrined in the culture policy of Zimbabwe. Some of the priority policy areas of the national culture policy executive summary (Unesco 2017:3) are as follows:

Appreciation and Respect for Indigenous Zimbabwean Identities and Cultural Diversity: This is in acknowledgement of the diversity of indigenous cultures and identities which are major enablers for sustainable socio-economic development.

This means, regardless of their background, all people should acknowledge the multicultural nature of Zimbabwe. However, these immigrants went on creating their own names as shall be discussed below.

### **5.1 Mukai**

Mukai is a Shona word which means wake up and was given to a school in Muhlangueni which is a predominantly Xitsonga speaking area. What the name implicates is that people in that area were 'asleep' and as a result the school was built in the area so that they may be enlightened. This reveals that some of the community leaders who suggested the change to the original name considered the local name to be inferior. Similarly, other names have also been an attempt to distinguish the new territories of immigrants from various parts of the country. These names are discussed below.

### **5.2 Chomupani**

This was a case of renaming which resulted in the new name meaning a place full of Mopani trees. The local name was Copani. These immigrants thus diverged slightly from how the name of the place was pronounced by the locals, hereby changing the meaning altogether. This place is found in Chiredzi South and is characterised by a multitude of surrounding Mopani trees. This convinced the immigrants to rename it as Chomupani [a place of Mopani trees] and the name was recorded as such in official documents.

### **5.3 Chanyenga**

This place was called Xaniyenga by the Vatsonga and was later named Chanyenga for quite some time. Chanyenga means 'it has proposed love'. This meaning is different from the intended meaning by the Vatsonga community before the immigrants arrived, as shall be discussed in another segment of this contribution. The name Chanyenga is evidence that there are some Shona speakers in the area even though it might be meaningless to Xitsonga speakers.

## 5.4 Tichadya

Tichadya is a place in Chiredzi South and is a predominantly Xitsonga speaking area, with Shona being another language spoken there. The name means we shall eat. One local leader (Xirilele 2017) highlighted that the name is derived from a name of a former freedom fighter operating in the area. This former freedom fighter used to say “*Tichadya mafuta enyika*”, literally meaning “we shall eat the fat of the country”. The actual meaning was ‘we shall eat fruits or resources of our land as a result of the armed struggle’. This place was then named after him. There is no other name given to this place in Xitsonga.

## 6. RENAMING ATTEMPTS BY TSONGA LOCALS

The Tsonga people have tried to reclaim some of place names which were named in Shona or other languages by giving completely new ones or simply trans-phonologising. This was a way of trying to reclaim their cultural identity. Some of the names are only known to the locals, but they are not used officially. Some have been changed successfully in official records. Examples of this are discussed below.

### 6.1 Muhlanguleni

The locals contested the use of the name Mukai and successfully changed it to *Muhlanguleni*. The locals felt that the use of this name is an insult since it has some implications that they were backward and needed to wake up and come abreast with other ethnic groups. Another local (Xidziva 2017) argues that the place should be named *Muhlanguleni* instead of using the name *Mukai*, when he says “*vito ra ku Mukai a hi rona ko va ku hi rhuketela ntsena, vito ra ntiyiso i Muhlanguleni*” [Mukai is just a mockery, the true name is Muhlanguleni]. *Muhlanguleni* means a place of small shrubs called *mihlangula* in Xitsonga. This name is accepted in the community since it describes objects which they can see, and they also do not feel offended by the name.

### 6.2 Chanienga (Xaniyenga)

This name, although wrongly spelt, means it (stream) fools me. The name could also have been written as Xaniyenga. Makondo (2017), one of the locals, explained how the name came into being. He says there was a small stream which some people underrated, but they were overcome by it when over the stream was flooded, especially when they were drunk. Thus, the people realised that they had been fooled and made to believe they could cross it easily, but unfortunately could quite easily be swept away before

crossing to the other side. Thus the name came into being following events which took place there. However, the Shona speakers who later came to inhabit the land brought their own version which is actually a distortion of what the earlier inhabitants intended.

### **6.3 Copani**

This refers to a place which the locals named Copani, meaning to pierce with an arrow. However, as explained earlier, the immigrants who arrived in the area later named it Chomupani, giving it a different meaning altogether. Even though the locals call it Copani, officially the name of the school in this area is still Chomupani, showing resistance to the existing names in the area.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

This investigation found that most of the toponyms in languages other than that of the majority of the inhabitants of south-eastern Zimbabwe (Chiredzi) seem to have been applied to places of national interest such as parks, sugarcane plantation compounds, schools and border posts. With such names there is the general feeling that locals were not sufficiently consulted to give their views or suggestions on appropriate names for these places. Instead of consulting, boards responsible for naming instead impose names which do not have any significance among people of the Vatsonga culture. This paper has revealed that most of the people who are non-Tsonga speakers seem unconcerned about whether they have pronounced or written Tsonga names properly. This was shown through the names of schools which have been distorted or written using Shona orthography. The naming practices in this area have shown that there is both intentional and unintentional cultural and linguistic domination by either Shona or Ndebele culture/languages on languages spoken in the south-eastern peripheries of Zimbabwe. The unintentional forms of dominance could be explained simply by failure on the part of government authorities to pronounce the names properly. As elucidated by the naming practices discussed in this paper, the findings have proved that there is cultural domination of certain groupings in the south-eastern peripheries of Zimbabwe by those deemed to be the majority groups.



## REFERENCES

- BOURDIEU P. 1991. *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- CHAUKE B. 2017. Interview 16 July 2017. Masukwe, Zimbabwe.
- DAVIS J. 2005. Code choices and consequences: Implications for educational interpreting. In: M Marschark, R Peterson, E Winston & P Sapere (eds). *Sign language interpreting and interpreter education: Directions for research and practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 112-141. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof/9780195176940.003.0005>
- DIANE K. 2006. *Society in our times: The essentials*. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Belmont CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- ETHNOLOGUE. 2017. *Zimbabwe*. [Retrieved 6 September 2017] <https://www.ethnologue.com/map/zw>
- GEBRE Y. 2010. Cultural contact and change in naming practices among the Aari of Southwest Ethiopia. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 22(2):183–194. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13696815.2010.506387>
- GEZANI B. 2017. Interview 15 July 2017. Xikombedzi, Zimbabwe.
- GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE. 2013. *Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (NO.20) Act 2013*. Harare: Fidelity Printers and Refiners.
- HACHIPOLA SJ. 1998. *A survey of minority languages in Zimbabwe*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Press.
- HERSKOVITS M. 2009. Some comments on the study of cultural contact. *American Anthropologist*, 43(1):1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1941.43.1.02a00020>
- MAKONDO T. 2017. Interview 02 June 2017. Samu, Zimbabwe.
- MANYANGA M. 2012. The archaeology of Zimbabwe's Southern and South Western Lowveld: Some thoughts on the emerging picture. *Zimbabwea*, 10:1-18.
- MAVUNDA X. 2017. Interview 18 July 2017. Xilonga, Zimbabwe.
- MBAKOGU IA. 2004. Is there really a relationship between culture and development? *Anthropologist*, 6(1):37-43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09720073.2004.11890827>
- NEETHLING B. 2005. *Naming among the Xhosa of South Africa*. The Edwin Mellen Press: Lewiston.
- N'WA-DEYIMANI E. 2017. Interview 19 July 2017. Sengwe, Zimbabwe.
- SCHILLER HT. 1976. Communication and Cultural domination. *International Journal of Politics*, 5(4):1-127.
- SIL (SUMMER INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS). 2008. *SIL International 2008 Update*. [Retrieved 24 May 2018] <https://www.Sil.org/about/reports/2008>

SPOLSKY B. 1999. *Sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

UNESCO. 2017. *The Draft Culture Policy of Zimbabwe* [Retrieved 30 October 2018] <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/policy-monitoring-platform/draft-national-cultural-policy>

XIDZIVA A. 2017. Interview 20 August 2017. Machindu, Zimbabwe.

XIRILELE G. 2017. Interview 20 August 2017. Muhlanguleni, Zimbabwe.

# THE INFLUENCE OF MISSIONARY SOCIETIES ON PLACE NAMES IN SOUTH AFRICA

**Cornelia Geldenhuys**

Department of South African Sign Language and Deaf Studies, University of the Free State, South Africa  
geldenhuysc@ufs.ac.za

## **Abstract**

South Africa's place-name landscape is a reflection of the country's history. It reflects a diversity of nations, cultural traditions and languages, and various European and American missionary societies decided to come and Christianise the "heathen" peoples of Southern Africa. The establishment of mission stations left a clearly discernible footprint on the place-name landscape. This project investigates the traces left by Christianity on the place names of South Africa, not only through the naming of mission stations that later developed into towns, but also through the ripple effect of naming on the immediate environment of the mission station. Mission stations were named with a predilection for the names of missionaries, saints and religious leaders, as well as for the names of persons and places and vocabulary from the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and the New Testament. For this investigation, data were collected from the *Place Names Dictionary of Southern Africa* (Raper, Möller & Du Plessis 2014). The data were analysed and classified according to the origin of the name and classified according to specific types, namely Mission stations; Secondary references to places or characters of religious significance; References to objects or locations in the Christian Bible; and Religious objects, to determine the toponymical relation between the place as geographic entity and the name. The paper aims to uncover the rationale behind the name giving by the respective missionary societies, as well as to point out the similarities and differences in the name-giving practices of these societies.

**Keywords:** Bible, mission stations, religions, religious figures, saints

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Belief systems have always played a significant role in the naming of places. Wherever European colonists settled in new parts of the world, Christian missionaries from various denominations soon followed, to minister to the newly arrived immigrants, but also to convert the so-called 'heathens' of the new territories. Southern Africa was no exception.

By naming a new place or territory, ownership is established, hence constituting a form of colonisation. It is also a form of identification with the hitherto unknown, giving a name that is familiar to both the persons or institution as well as the new inhabitants and visitors. The establishment of mission stations has always formed an important part of the greater colonisation movement during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Place names contribute to forging the identity of particular places, the scale of which is sometimes subtle, for instance when referring to mission stations, *Einsiedeln* or *Koeningsberg* and at other times overt, e.g. *Liefeldt Mission* or *Sendelingsdrift* (Mission's drift). The combination of place and scale creates various sets of identities (Guyot & Seethal 2007:55), which reflects "discursive relations between indigenous, colonial and post-colonial legacies" (Biogon 2016:1) in the production of space and place. Through name giving, an "imaginary landscape", or a second narrative is created around the place (in this instance, mission stations) that is named, which embeds the allocated biblical or Christian names' connotations or relationships in the colonised space.

South Africa's place-name landscape is a reflection of the country's history. Place names reflect the motivation behind the bestowal of the names. It reflects an aspirational or associative description, identifying the space with an existing connective narrative of other places and peoples. As time progresses, the name loses any denotation of its original meaning among users, but the name remains (Meiring 2012:159). This is true for many Southern African names with a biblico-religious connotation. This study highlights the colonial influence by considering the major influence of missionaries on the toponymic landscape of South Africa. It is therefore an acknowledgement of the influence of missionaries, especially Protestant missionaries, on so-called cultural imperialism.

Representing a diversity of nations, cultural traditions and languages, various European and American missionary societies felt the call to come and Christianise the "heathen peoples" of Southern Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The objective of this article is to show that this process of conversion to Christianity, of which one of the overt expressions is the naming of mission stations, displays a curious disregard for the central purpose of mission, namely the Bible.

[T]he exporting to Africa of Christianity, commerce and civilisation in the interest of uplifting the indigenous population shaped the indigenous South African both positively and negatively as the good intentions of European colonialists and missionaries became awkwardly entangled with exploitation, separatism and supremacy. (L'Ange 2005:173)

This state of affairs is not unique to Southern Africa, and is comparable to toponymical interventions as part of the broader history of colonisation throughout the world. Place names are the result of social interactions, and are embedded in language. The naming of places is often associated with nature and the environment, and of course laden with history. It reflects, amongst others, descriptive geography, fauna and flora, climate, history, culture, astronomy as well as the religious predispositions of the population.

In short, according to Chabata (2007:13), place names fulfil one or more of three functions; they are descriptive, connotative and/or commemorative: "Each name is chosen because it has some socio-cultural, political or historical significance. The names, therefore, reflect the thinking of the name-giver; hence the contention that names intermediate between features or places and the people using them."

The *Dictionary of Southern African Place Names* (Raper *et al* 2014) served as the source material for this study. The objective of this article is to demonstrate the rich opportunities this database represents through a small and well-demarcated study of the Dictionary's commentary on the colonial centre *viz. a viz.* the colonial periphery; stated otherwise, the coloniser *viz. a viz.* the colonised. Furthermore, the value of such a database is that it confirms historians' contemporary views of the MISSION and purpose of missionaries as agents of empire. The establishment of mission stations throughout this part of the African continent left a clearly discernible footprint on the place-name landscape, thus creating an invaluable resource.

One of the reasons why the investigation of Judeo-Christian place names proved appealing to this study, is that it allowed for a relatively stable database, because these names were left fairly unchanged in the South African post-apartheid era.

## 2. GENERAL BACKGROUND

For this study, the comprehensive list of place names, as found in the *Dictionary of Southern African Place Names* (Raper *et al* 2014) was converted into a database created in Microsoft Excel and prepared for further analysis. The first step was to classify the full entry in the *Dictionary* according to place name, province, GPS coordinates and description, with room left for a key word indicating the origin of the place name. Next, all duplicates referring the reader to another entry in the text were removed, e.g. entries with alternative spellings or outdated names. Of the almost 8 000 place names identified, 4.82% (372) entries were identified as being of Judeo-Christian origin.

### 2.1 Judeo-Christianity and the naming of places

The act of naming announces ownership of an area hitherto unknown to the prospective coloniser, although the area being colonised would already have been named by the first inhabitants, e.g. the Bushmen. A name allows the unique identification of a place but it also represents a form of colonisation, by establishing the name-giver's relationship with the place; i.e. it transforms the unknown into a known entity (Meiring 2012:159). The choice of biblical and Judeo-Christian names for places therefore indirectly reflects a form of ownership and the establishment of familiarity is linked in some way to a Judeo-Christian background.

The biblical imprint on colonial geography is not unique to Southern Africa. A good correlate would be the case of the early Puritans in the US, where an America-as-Israel myth may be identified: "Many [of the Puritans] interpreted their trans-Atlantic voyages as analogous to the Israelites' miraculous passage through the parted Red Sea ... that process, of course, required specific places in which the [biblical] drama could be enacted," or rather re-enacted, according to Francaviglia (2011:89). Elaborating on this metaphor, American colonists conflated their new wilderness as a 'desert' that could be transformed into 'a land of milk and honey'. According to Francaviglia (2011:89), "although the eastern seaboard's geographic parallels to the Holy Land were not strong, it was widely believed that North-America itself was the New Zion."

Examples of general references to Judeo-Christianity are, for instance, the many places referring to Catholic saints, e.g. *Cape St Francis*, *Golfo de Sao Thome*, or more general references to missionary or religious activity, such as *Sendelingsdrif* (Missionary's drift), *Christianenburg*, *Mount Tabor* or *Noah's Ark*.

Table 4.1 below shows a sub-division of the 372 place names referring by either name, by function or by origin to Judaeo-Christianity. These include mission stations and other places in Southern Africa.

**Table 4.1** Place names with Judeo-Christianity associations

<b>TOTAL ENTRIES IN DATABASE*</b>	<b>7 719</b>
<b>TOTAL ENTRIES WITH JUDEO-CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS</b>	<b>373</b>
Names of mission stations	204
Secondary references to places or characters of religious significance	104
References to objects or locations in the Christian Bible	54
Names referring to religious objects	11

\* As compiled by the author for the purpose of this article from the *Dictionary of Southern African Place Names* (Raper *et al* 2014).

The large majority of these entries with Judaeo-Christian associations (204 entries; 54% of the Judaeo-Christian entries) refer to names connected to mission stations, which is logical, although not always discernible from the name, e.g. names like *Bethanie*, *Elim*, *Maranatha*. However, the tendency to use Judaeo-Christian references is not narrowly limited to the names of mission stations in Southern Africa. Examples of this would be the name of the town *Bethlehem*, in the Eastern Free State, named after the biblical birthplace of Jesus (Raper *et al* 2014:32), and the nearby *Jordaanrivier* stream, named after the biblical Jordan River (Raper *et al* 2014:213).

The second category contains 104 place names (28%) referring to other places or persons of general religious significance. These would include saints or in some instances the name of a leader of a specific denomination, for instance *St Augustine's*, a settlement in KwaZulu-Natal which was established as a mission of the Church of England in 1879, and named in honour of St Augustine of Hippo, Bishop of the Church of North Africa in earlier times (Raper *et al* 2014:445). A further example is the *Liefeldt Mission*, a Lutheran mission station in the Eastern Cape, named after its founder, Revd Ludwig Liefeldt (Raper *et al* 2014:276), or *Philippolis*, a town in the Southern Free State, named in honour of Dr John Philip (1775-1851), Superintendent of the London Missionary Society, and who selected the site for the original mission station (Raper *et al* 2014:412).

Ninety-two (25%) names in this category refer specifically to persons, places and events in the Christian Bible, e.g. *Araratsberg*, *Hebron*, *Mizpah*, *Nazareth*, or *Gibeon*, *Noah's Ark* or the *Twelve Apostles*. It also includes geographic metaphors, equating Southern

Africa with the countries of the Bible. A good example here is *Nylstroom*. This town, situated 125 km north of Pretoria, and currently named Modimolle, was established on the farm Rietvlei in February 1866. The Afrikaans name, literally translated as ‘Nile stream’, was chosen because of a misapprehension by the townsfolk that this river was the original source of the Nile. The Jerusalem-goers, a religious sect, were a group of Voortrekkers who wanted to trek overland to Jerusalem. This eccentric, fanatical group had the idea that they were part of the “chosen people of Israel” on account of their descent. In the Northern Transvaal they believed that they had reached a branch of the Nile River, girded with reeds, and they shortened the name to Nylstroom, whilst in reality it was a local river that flooded because of good rains. These people believed that if they followed the stream they would reach the source of the Nile, and from there, the Promised Land. However, malaria caused numerous deaths, and they did not continue (De Buys Genealogy 2012).

Also in this this sub-division there are 12 references (3%) to religious objects or artefacts, such as *Monk’s Cowl*, a peak in the Drakensberg mountain range on the KwaZulu-Natal side (Raper *et al* 2014:338), *Bishopscourt*, a suburb of Cape Town east of the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens, thus named on account of the Anglican Bishop of Cape Town’s residence (Raper *et al* 2014:35). Another example is *Bobbejaan se Preekstoel* (*Baboon’s Pulpit*), a rock formation in the Waterberg mountain range in Limpopo, and named thus because it resembles a sitting baboon (Raper *et al* 2014:40).

## 2.2 Place naming and mission stations

Next, the naming of mission stations in particular will be discussed. Below follows a summary (Table 4.2) of the missionary societies that established stations in Southern Africa in order of significance.

**Table 4.2** Missionary societies in Southern Africa in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries

MISSION STATIONS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA	
London*	35
Rhenish**	21
Wesleyan*	20
Berlin**	14
Hermannsburg / German / Albrecht**	13
Roman Catholic / Trappist	15
Moravian / Lutheran**	10



<b>MISSION STATIONS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA</b>	
Norwegian	5
Anglican*	7
Glasgow*	5
Presbyterian*	4
American	4
Methodist*	3
Dutch Reformed Church (DRC)	2
French	2
Shiloh	2
Paris	1
Baptist*	1
Bethel	1
Goshen	1
Inland	1
Protestant	1
Seventh Day Adventist	1
Swedish	1
Swiss	1
Unknown	33
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>204</b>

Mission stations in Southern Africa do not reproduce biblical geography as a metaphor or replacement for biblical land, as might be expected. This is partly due to the unique role that missionary societies played within the broader production of empire. As a result of the British occupation of the Cape Colony and Natal, British Missionary Societies\* had the strongest influence on the establishment of mission stations in South Africa, i.e. 66 in total. The second-largest group that established mission stations across South Africa, as well as in the erstwhile German South West Africa was of German origin (58).

Looking at the naming of mission stations, an additional consideration is at play. The naming of a place was also a means for missionaries to feel at home in a new environment. It expressed comfort, e.g. *Genadendal*. This is the oldest mission station in South Africa, founded in 1737 by Georg Schmidt, a pioneer missionary and founder of the first Protestant Mission (Moravian Brethren) who settled in the Baviaans Kloof (Ravine of the Baboons) in the Riviersonderend Valley and began to evangelise the Khoi people.

The name of the mission station is of Dutch origin, meaning ‘valley of mercy’ – a reference to the grace or mercy to be found through conversion (Raper *et al* 2014:150; Gilliomee & Mbenga 2007:98-99).

It was often the case that the European missionaries wanted to establish a link with their past or a known geographic entity, e.g. *Hermannsburg*, a station of the Hermannsburg Missionary Society in KwaZulu-Natal. The station was named by its founder, Pastor Ludwig Harms, in honour of Hermannsburg in Germany, headquarters of this Society. This missionary society established a number of other stations across South Africa (Raper *et al* 2014:182). *Amalienstein*, a former mission station of the Berlin Missionary Society in the Western Cape was named in honour of Amalie von Stein, benefactress of German missions (Raper *et al* 2014:11). A further example is *Einsiedeln*, a Trappist mission station 15 km east-south-east of Richmond in KwaZulu-Natal and named by the founder after an 18<sup>th</sup>-century Benedictine abbey near Zürich in Switzerland (Raper *et al* 2014:111), or *Koenigsberg*, a station of the Berlin Missionary Society in Kwazulu-Natal. It was named after Königsberg in Germany, home town of one of the founding donors of the mission station (Raper *et al* 2014:243).

The naming of a mission station could also be an expression of aspiration, whether spiritual or real, e.g. *Elim*. This mission station is situated in the Western Cape, near Agulhas, and was established in 1824 as a Moravian mission station. The name refers to the scripture in the biblical book of Exodus (15:27), and means ‘palm trees’. The biblical Elim, an oasis with twelve fountains and seventy palm trees, is the place where the Israelites rested after crossing the Red Sea and trekking through the desert (Raper *et al* 2014:113). The naming of a mission station after the biblical Elim therefore represents, on the one hand, an aspiration to spiritual riches and, on the other hand, denotes the aspiration towards creating a place; i.e. a self-sustainable place that can offer food and shelter. Elim was a refuge, a place of safety, initially for the indigenous Khoi people and later for hundreds of newly freed and destitute slaves. Another mission station with the same name, established by the *Mission Romande*, is situated in the province of Limpopo near Louis Trichardt (currently known as Makhado) (Raper *et al* 2014:182). Another example is *Bethelsdorp*, a mission station of the London Missionary Society, established in 1803. It refers to the patriarch Jacob’s encounter in the book of Genesis (28:19), where he had a vision of angels moving on a ladder between heaven and earth with God at the top, leading to the naming of the biblical place of *Beit-el*, House of God (Raper *et al* 2014:32). In using the same name for a mission station, it refers to the expression of an aspiration to communicate with God as well as to build a church, i.e. a house of God.

The missionaries also established a link with and displayed an identification with existing figures within the specific Christian denomination or tradition, such as *Philippolis* referred to earlier, or *Readsdale*. The latter mission station in the Eastern Cape was established in 1830 and named in honour of Revd James Read (1777-1852), who came from Bethelsdorp near Port Elizabeth to serve there.

The influence of the respective missionary societies on the civilising mission of the colonial power, in this instance the British colonial empire, is not to be underestimated. The London Missionary Society, for example, was perhaps not the first European-based missionary society to establish missions in Southern Africa. However, according to McDonald (2015:110), it became the most important in terms of its political influence both within and beyond the colony. It therefore has to be emphasised that the missionaries brought more than just conversion to the colonies. They represented a political force and a particular understanding of civilised society. Their preoccupation with literacy, with reading, the promotion of indigenous languages and translation of the Bible into these languages, as well as the establishment of schools reflects their agency as a vehicle for the establishment of learning and social order. According to Patrick Harries, “Reading was both an agent of modernisation and an integral part of [the missionaries’] history and religion” (2001:406). Furthermore, literacy could not be considered “a politically neutral indicator of progress” (Harries 2001:405). This was firmly a “civilising exercise” in order to transform African societies to reflect the imperial ideal.

The Bible is central to this endeavour. This is the book that the missionaries brought to the colony; the book that the missionaries translated into the indigenous languages; the book that encapsulated the values and norms the missionaries hoped to transfer; and this was the vehicle towards literacy. It is thus to be expected that the Bible features prominently in the vocabulary of place names of the 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century missionaries. However, the database used for this study shows that the exact opposite is true.

Continuing from the earlier analysis of the names of mission stations, the place name database was further sub-divided into the following subcategories of name giving, namely the names of mission stations (see Table 4.3 below).

**Table 4.3** Names of mission stations established during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries

ORIGINS OF NAMES OF MISSION STATIONS	
Places or persons of religious significance	78
Places familiar to the name-giver/society	36
Nature and the indigenous environment	36
References to figures, objects or locations in the Bible	28
General and historical references	26

### 2.2.1 *Places or persons of religious significance*

As already mentioned, an example of this is *Einsiedeln*, a Roman Catholic Trappist mission station 15 km east-south-east of Richmond in KwaZulu-Natal. The station was established by Abbot Franz Pfanner in 1887 and named by him after *Einsiedeln*, near Zürich in Switzerland, where an 18<sup>th</sup>-century Benedictine abbey contains a famous image of the Virgin Mary, the object of an annual pilgrimage (Raper *et al* 2014:111).

A further example is *Centocow*. This was originally the site of a Trappist mission in KwaZulu-Natal, named by its founder Czestochowa in Poland, the site of a famous shrine of a black Virgin Mary in an ancient monastery (Raper *et al* 2014:66). The mission station at *Wupperthal*, 72 km south-east of Clanwilliam, founded by the Rhenish Missionary Society, was named after the valley (German *Tal*) where the Rhenish Mission Institute is situated at Barmen in Germany (Raper *et al* 2014:549).

### 2.2.2 *Places familiar to the name-giver or a society*

The headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church in Lesotho, and important educational centre south of Maseru, is called *Roma*. Initially it was known as *Motseoa-'Ma-Jesu*, 'village of the Mother of Jesus', but early Protestant missionaries changed the name to *Roma*, with reference to the city in Italy where St Paul died (Raper *et al* 2014:439). *Reichenau*, a mission station of the Roman Catholic Trappist monks near Himeville in KwaZulu-Natal, refers to an island in Lake Constance, the site of a Benedictine Abbey founded in 724 (Raper *et al* 2014:432).

### 2.2.3 *Nature and the indigenous environment*

Mission stations situated in rural areas of Southern African often carry names reflecting indigenous naming practices. An example of this is *Embokodweni*, a mission station north-east of Mahlabatini in KwaZulu-Natal. The name is of Zulu origin and means 'place of round stones' (Raper *et al* 2014:116). *Tembani* is a mission station north of Stutterheim in the Eastern Cape. The name is Xhosa for 'place of hope' (Raper *et al* 2014:590). Another example of a mission station named for its indigenous environment is *Boetsap*, a village between Barkly West and Vryburg in the Northern Cape. The name was recorded by early missionaries as *Bootschap*, derived from Tswana *bucwa*, 'fat, or sleek', referring to the condition of the cattle there (Raper *et al* 2014:42). Another mission station with the same name is situated on the farm Groenkloof near Ladybrand in the Free State; also recorded as *Buchap*, in this case a Sotho adaptation of a Bushman name referring to 'green'.

*Otjimbingwe* is a station of the Rhenish Missionary Society 40 km south-east of Karibib. The name, of Herero origin, is said to be derived from Otjzinwe and means either 'place of refreshment', referring to a spring in the Omusema River, or 'place of the tiger' (Raper *et al* 2014:398). The name *Goas*, a Roman Catholic mission station in Namibia, is Khoikhoi and means 'place of bullfrogs' (Raper *et al* 2014:155).

### 2.2.4 *Biblical figures, objects or locations*

The *Maranatha Mission* (Seventh Day Adventist Mission east-north-east of Grahamstown) is an example of a mission station named for references to the Christian Bible. The name is derived from two Aramaic words *Maranatha*, signifying 'the Lord cometh', following the translation of 'accursed' of the Greek word Anathema in the Bible (1 Co xvi 22): 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed, Maranatha (the Lord cometh)' (Raper *et al* 2014:305).

The name *Pella*, initially a station of the London Missionary Society established by 1806, and eventually a Roman Catholic mission, is of post-New Testament origin, taken from that of Pella in the Perea foothills east of the Jordan River to which early Christians fled when Jerusalem was sacked in AD 70. This mission station was also the refuge of inhabitants of a London Missionary Society station in Namibia that was destroyed by the Khoikhoi (Raper *et al* 2014:409).

*Ebenhaeser* is a mission station of the Rhenish Missionaries in the Vanrhynsdorp district in the Western Cape. The name means 'stone of help' (1 Samuel 7:12) (Raper *et al* 2014:409).

*Emmaus*, a station of the Berlin Missionary Society near Winterton in KwaZulu-Natal, where evangelists are trained, refers to the New-Testament town near Jerusalem mentioned in Luke 24:13, meaning 'hot springs'. This is where Jesus encountered travellers after His resurrection (Raper *et al* 2014:118).

Examples of more mission stations with biblical names are *Saron*, *Serepta*, *Zoar*, *Pniel*, *Mamre* and *Enon*.

### **2.2.5 General and historical references**

A number of mission stations' names have no bearing to Judeo-Christianity, e.g. *Clarkson*, a Moravian mission village in the Humansdorp district in the Eastern Cape. It was named in honour of Thomas Clarkson, who helped to abolish the slave trade in South Africa (Raper *et al* 2014:72). Another example is *Marburg*, Port Shepstone, initially established in 1882 as a station of the Hermannsburg Missionary Society and named after Marburg, a city in Germany, where the first minister studied at the university (Raper *et al* 2014:118). *Mount Pachard*, a station of the South African General Mission in the Eastern Cape, was named by the first missionary to the Tshezi tribe, in honour of the superintendent of a Soldiers' Home in Ireland who had greatly influenced his life when he was a soldier there (Raper *et al* 2014:346).

## **3. CONCLUSION**

Approximately 5% of the entire database refers to mission stations, totalling 204 names. Of the place names of the mission stations, only 14% are directly linked to the Christian Bible. This is counter-intuitive to the central role of what the missionaries purported to do in coming to Southern Africa (Frescura 2015:65-66):

European missionaries to southern Africa during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries played a strangely ambiguous role in the history and affairs of the region. On the one hand, they were driven by a strong desire to genuinely serve humanity and bring about material and social changes which would improve its quality of life. On the other hand they were possessed of a moral self-righteousness which led them to make hasty and uninformed judgements upon indigenous mores, norms and values they were scarcely equipped to

understand. The first manifested itself in an involvement in local agriculture, irrigation and technology which, being environmental and hence independent of larger cultural issues, found a small measure of acceptance in rural society. The second sought to impose an alien morality and work ethos upon the local people without realising that these undermined their most basic social and cultural tenets and were therefore largely resisted. The dichotomy of this approach was not something which found separate expression in different individuals but was often incorporated within the same person.

However, the database presciently points to what modern historians describe when referring to the role of missionary societies in the creation and maintenance of empire, namely that the Bible was a mere signifier of social incorporation, civilisation, and the maintenance of law and order (SA History 2011 s.a.). Literacy, rather than biblical literacy, was the primary objective. The missionaries became agents and also gatekeepers to civil society, and literacy was the currency. It would thus seem that, in this exercise, the Bible and biblical knowledge were mere by-products, rather than the end product of the process (Williams 1959, in Frescura 2015:66):

Local acceptance of early missionaries in the Eastern Cape hinged more upon their technological ability to introduce furrow irrigation into an otherwise drought-stricken land than upon their Christian teachings.

According to Etherington (1977), the work of missionaries during the last century should not be viewed in isolation from the activities of either traders or government officials. In many ways they shared common interests and often what was of benefit to the one group was equally good for the others; “therefore missionary operations may provide important clues to the workings of modern bureaucracies” (Etherington, 1977:32).

Warneck (1959, in SA History 2011) saw the missionary as generating a demand for consumer goods while, at the same time, creating conditions which facilitated the establishment of trade links:

Certainly we know that the former [the missionaries] performed a number of *ad hoc* duties on behalf of the Government such as reporting on events in remote areas and fulfilling various diplomatic functions. In some cases there was active collusion between the two parties, to the detriment of indigenous interests.

In conclusion, the objective of this paper was to discuss what the rationale was behind the name giving by the respective missionary societies. Looking at a well-demarcated sub-category of the *Dictionary of Southern African Place Names* (Raper *et al* 2014), namely biblical names for mission stations, it is suggested that the spreading of the

Christian message was the purpose of the establishment of mission stations. However, contemporary thought instead points to the purpose of these mission stations as the creation and maintenance of social order in the British Empire.

## REFERENCES

- BIOGON L. 2016. *Place names in Africa: Colonial urban legacies, entangles histories*. Switzerland: Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-32485-2>
- CHABATA E. 2007. The role of place-names in the making of a Zimbabwean identity. *Nyt om Namn*, 46:13-16.
- DE BUYS GENEALOGY. 2012. Jerusalem-Gangers: From the Cape to Jerusalem. [Retrieved 10 September 2017] <http://debuys.blogspot.co.za/2012/02/jerusalem-gangers-from-cape-to.html>
- ETHERINGTON N. 1977. Social theory and the study of Christian missions in Africa: A South African case study. *Africa*, 47(1):31-40. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1159192>
- FRANCAVIGLIA R. 2011. *Go East, young man: Imagining the American West as the Orient*. Utah: University State Press of Colorado, Utah State University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt4cgphg>
- FRESCURA F. 2015. A case of hopeless failure: The role of missionaries in the transformation of Southern Africa's indigenous architecture. *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 28(2):64-86.
- GILLIOME H & MBENGA B. 2007. New history of South Africa. In: H Giliomee & B Mbenga (eds). *New history of South Africa*. Cape Town: Tafelberg. 98-99.
- GUYOT S & SEETHAL C. 2007. Identity of place, places of identities: Change of place names in post-apartheid South Africa. *South African Geographical Journal*, 89(1):55-63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03736245.2007.9713873>
- HARRIES P. 2001. Missionaries, Marxists and magic: Power and the politics of literacy in South-East Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 27(3):405-427. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632430120074518>
- L'ANGE G. 2005. *The White Africans: From colonisation to liberation*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball.
- MCDONALD J. 2015. Loyalism in the Cape colony: Exploring the Khoesan subject-citizen space, c.1828-1834. *New Contree: A Journal of Historical and Human Sciences for Southern Africa*, 73:106-131.
- MEIRING B. 2012. South African identity as reflected by its toponymic tapestry. *Acta Academica*, 44(3):24-51.
- RAPER PE, MÖLLER LA & DU PLESSIS LT. 2014. *Dictionary of Southern African Place Names*. 4th Edition. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball.



# HERERO PLACE NAMES

**Lucie A. Möller**

Faculty of the Humanities, University of the Free State, South Africa  
lamoller@absamail.co.za

## **Abstract**

Geographical names are an important linguistic instrument in identifying features of the landscape, at the same time reflecting the culture and heritage of a people. The historical and cultural relevance of indigenous place names is consolidated in United Nations Resolutions VIII/9 and V/22 (2007). These recommend the promotion of a greater understanding of the heritage and identity roles of geographical names, and, that in the method of collecting, recording, official treatment and dissemination of these names, the indigenous input remains crucial, as well as the restoration of the names and recognition of the name givers. The naming activities of the Herero as nomadic pastoralists illustrate their cultural traditions, customs and occupational skills, folklore and beliefs.

This paper discusses some Herero place names within this framework and focuses on their referential function; the identified naming motives and patterns of the names, and their original etymologies that may confirm the close relation of the name givers with the land.

**Keywords:** cultural identity, geographical names, Herero, heritage, language contact, naming motives, pastoralist lifestyle, traditions

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Herero place names constitute a large portion of the Namibian place-name heritage, as is evident from the hundreds of names recorded over the past few centuries (Surveyor-General nd; 1972). The physical, social and language contact of the Hereros with the Bushmen, Khoekhoe, Damara, Ovambo and other language speakers of the area, such as the incoming Afrikaners and Witboois from the Cape, is recognisable in several toponyms

that reveal linguistic influences from these languages. The study focuses on naming motives and linguistic aspects from these differing languages, and how they influenced Herero place names. The unexplainable components in the names are often retraceable to ancestral root words from Ur-Bantu, but some are borrowed words and translations from non-Bantu languages spoken in the region, e.g. Bushman and Khoekhoe.

In retracing words and language elements, the challenge is to indicate that the language contact that occurred resulted in several toponyms displaying morphemic and phonological adaptation, such as click replacements, sound shifts and other adjustments. Translated names, either partial or full translations, are equally useful in understanding the original motives and etymologies of Herero toponyms and how these relate to their lifestyle.

A comparative analysis of historical, linguistic and onomastic aspects of Herero naming provides a categorisation of names according to the main themes underlying Herero place names. The names are discussed within a historical perspective of first reports on the Herero as nomadic cattle herders in Namibia; the social and language contact situation of the area; the Herero language, its structure and naming patterns, and the main naming motives pertaining to the Hereros' nomadic pastoralist lifestyle; descriptions of the topography as reflections of this, and other cultural traditions influencing their naming. Some examples of Bushman and Khoehoe influence, as retraced in selected toponyms, are pointed out in the discussion.

Namibia serves as research area since Herero is spoken mainly within its borders, extending from the eastern corners of Ngamiland and Botswana to the Namib Desert in the west, and up to the Kaokoland (Wikipedia 2014a). Descriptions of Hereroland, Bushmanland, Kaokoland, Namaland (Schinz 1891:142, 146; Raper 1972:79), the Waterberg East and West areas, are all mentioned as Herero-speaking settlements in reports of explorers, hunters, missionaries, administrators and early settlers in the area. These reports contained descriptions of the topography and geology, the abundant fauna and flora, the people inhabiting the land, and the places they named (Vedder 1928-1929; Köhler 1959:16).

## 2. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES AND BACKGROUND

The Herero people of Namibia are a Bantu-speaking, cattle-breeding people, who moved into the western regions of southern Africa with the dispersion of migrating Bantu from the vicinity of the East African lakes. Some sources indicate their migration from the central to eastern regions of Africa through Zimbabwe, Botswana and the Caprivi south-westward into Namibia (Anonymous 1881). With the spread southwards into the eastern, middle and northern areas of Namibia, they followed typical survival routes of a nomadic people in finding sufficient grazing and water resources for their herds of cattle and smaller domestic animals (Hahn 1844-1854:209, 1849, 1869; Irle 1871:117, 1886:66 ; Vedder 1928).

As summarised in Raper and Möller (2015:391), they comprise a number of sub-groups, namely the Himba, the Tjimba, the Maherero, the Mbanderu, the Ndamuranda, the Zeraua, and the Kwandu (Wikipedia 2014b). Initially they settled in Kaokoland, near the Kunene River, but subsequently a large section of the population moved southwards, while the Himba, Ndamuranda and Tjimba tribes remained behind. The Tjimba and Ndamuranda groups occupy Kaokoland, while the Maherero are found in the vicinity of Okahandja, and the Zeraua in the area around Omaruru (The Cardboard Box 2014). The Mbanderu occupied an area around the town of Gobabis in eastern Namibia according to the Rhenish Mission (Hahn 1844-1854:324-325; Irle 1886, 1906).

As the Herero spread through the country, they selected geographical areas with features crucial for settlement, such as water sources and grasslands. From the east they traversed *inter alia* Olifantsfontein and Gobabis, then northwards from Windhoek to Otjiwarongo, Omaruru, Grootfontein and Sesfontein (Irle 1886:22); eventually to Etosha and around the Waterberg, or *Otjozondjupa*, as they called it (Köhler 1959:16, 19; Von Schumann 1980:97), where large communities of their people settled. Their own names were descriptive of the regions into which they migrated, and formed another, new layer of toponymic activities in Namibia.

In their naming of topographical features the exchange of lexical items with other languages is reflected. This theme of language contact and mutual borrowing or translation of words and names is nothing new. It has been described by various scientists, missionaries, linguists and historians exploring Namibia, writers like Duparquet (1880-1881), Schinz (1891), Vedder (1928-1929), Göllnitz (1942), Nöckler (1963), Kamupingene (1985), Otto (1985), and so forth.

## 2.1 First reports and contacts from historical records

Looking at the naming actions historically, the examples illustrate how the contact with other language speakers brought about change. The Europeans, with their writing skills, recorded and translated the names, and placed these within a context of modern historicity.

Contact between Europeans and indigenous peoples, as recorded from the era of explorations into the 'hinterland', was intermittent during the early seventeenth century (Godée Molsbergen 1916). Explorers from the Cape were sent out as early as 1656 and 1685 to investigate reports of rich cattle herds and other livestock for bartering purposes. The first explorers, who reached Namaqualand across the Gariep River, were Johannes Tobias Rhenius in 1724, and forty years later Hendrik Hop. The latter reached Grundoon in the southern parts of Namibia, and the detailed journal of these travels from 1761 to 1762, was kept by Carl Brink (Mossop 1947:2-153).

The first mention of the Hereros as *Gomdamras*, *Chammaquas*, *Damroquas* or 'cattle people', was made by Jacobus Coetsé, who in 1760 reconnoitred the region as far as the Fish River and Karas Mountains, and reported this to Hop's travel guides (Mossop 1947:49-51). Later explorers such as Willem van Reenen (1791-1792) reached even further into Namibia. During these travels they heard reports of the *Gommaga-Damara* or cattle-rich Herero nation to the north, also of the Tswanas, called Birinas or Biringubs (the 'goat people') to the north-east (Mossop 1947: map opp. 154).

Further reports on these '*Damroquas*' or Herero came from explorers such as Robert Jacob Gordon (1779, ms 4), mentioning 3 groups of *Daman*, alluding here to the 'cattle people' (Nienaber 1989:291). The first missionaries into Namaqualand were the Albrecht brothers (1803) and Heinrich Schmelen (1814). Schmelen wrote of having spoken to a Damara (Moritz 1911:212) who named four types of Damara, inter alia the Gomegedamaras or Komagadamaras (from *gome*, for 'cattle', *ga* 'many', 'rich'), meaning the Herero-nation. Kroenlein (1889:73) recorded the Nama designation *gamaḫa-Damab* that refers to a cattle-rich Damara (singular). Hugo Hahn and Franz Kleinschmidt who since 1844 worked as first missionaries among the Herero, compiled an ABC and dictionary in the Herero language of which a thousand copies were printed in Cape Town through missionary Kolbe's efforts. They recorded some of the earliest Herero place names in writing.

The mission station at *Otjizeva* ('lake', 'waterhole'), the first to be established by the Rhenish Mission, constituted the southernmost Herero settlement at the time (Schinz 1891:130). Missionaries such as the above and John Campbell (1815:311 as quoted in Nienaber 1989:261-263) reported: "Five tribes compose the *Damara* nation...The poor *Damaras* are called *Gauw*, and the rich *Goomache*,... meaning 'cattle, oxen rich'. A toponym such as *Gommaga*, 'many oxen', was applied as ethnic reference to the 'Goomache' people or Herero. These proper names all derived from Herero words for oxen or cattle, *gome*, *ongombe* (Irle 1917:253), also used as borrowings in the Bushman and Khoekhoe languages where they appear as *xama*, *gome*, *gume-di* and *goma-s*.

The cattle horns became symbolic tokens of the Herero. They were placed at the gravesites of great leaders, and at the entrances of their *ongándas* or settlements (Irle 1917:418). They were replicated as traditional cultural emblems in the headdresses worn by women, signifying the horns of cattle (Levinson 1961:55). The Herero social organisation is based on a matriarchal system, and for women their standing in society is identified by wearing these headdresses.

### 3. SOCIO-PHYSICAL, CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVES

Physical and language contact between the peoples of Namibia influenced the naming activities in the region. Original naming motives become clear when analysing the components of each toponym. Naming motives reflecting survival strategies emerge from the names, especially those referring to water features, cattle-herding routes and passes through mountains, good pastures and the presence of wild animals such as carnivores.

The difference in lifestyle and culture of the hunter-gatherer Bushmen and that of the cattle-herding Herero may be a reason why Herero names reveal abundant evidence of naming of domesticated animals such as cattle and goats, and agro-pastoralist activities related to this. Also encountered are references to traditional customs and cultural activities, as well as artefacts, from the earliest times of iron smelting and pottery; the preparation of hides by flogging and tanning for leather clothing such as coats and belts, and weaving cloth from wool. These naming motives abound, whereas fewer Bushman names contain reference to animal husbandry or agriculture (Raper & Möller 2015:389, 391-392).

### 3.1 Traces of Bushmen and Khoekhoe influence on Herero place names

Bushman, Damara and Khoekhoe words are encountered in several Herero place names where they either appear as loan words or adapted components. The influence of these languages on Herero renderings of geographical names is evident in several examples. This reflects the antiquity of the names for mountains, rivers and other prominent topographical, geological and other features. Since some Herero place names, derived from Bushman, Khoekhoe or Ur-Bantu root words, are also present in translated form, a comparative analysis is used to uncover the origins and etymologies.

A few examples of such words are discussed as they occur in Herero place names, e.g. renderings of the word for 'elephant' in different languages. In Bushman languages of the Northern Cape regions, and in the Kalahari, in Botswana and the Naukluft area, the words are indicated as: *!xo*, *!koah*, *tjowa*, *!kua*, *#kxoa* (with o-a vowel sequence). The Ur-Bantu word *yoŷu* for 'elephant' (Doke & Vilakazi 2005:511, 160) evolved to *ndou* or *djou* in Herero with vowel sequence *o-u* retained, and as found in *Otjosondjou*; as *-dlovu* in Zulu where the place name *Umgungundlovu*, 'resting place of the elephant', was allocated; and as *tlou tlou* in Tswana as found in the place name *LeRwatlou* (Möller 2017:156-158). The Bushman words */hau, be://k"au* for 'elephant', were adapted to *ndau* in some Bantu languages such as Ovambo.

The name *Khoankub* was translated into Afrikaans *Olifantskloof* and German *Elefantenkluft*, from Bushman *//khoa* 'elephant', with *!kuua* being a generic for a 'pass' (Bleek 1956:455), which was Khoekhoenised by the added masculine suffix *-b* in the toponym. Compare *Khoabendus* 'elephant gathering place' in Nienaber and Raper (1980:504-505), for a similar example. The Khoekhoe, Afrikaans and German translations preserved the original semantic origins and enabled the analysis to the retraceable components in Bushman.

### 3.2 Naming patterns

The naming patterns in Herero consist mainly of compound names with a prefix and a component specifying the feature being referenced. Sometimes a phrase or metaphor is used to describe the feature.

Linguistic aspects of Herero place names are discussed in Raper and Möller (2015:391) and summarised as: “The Herero language is part of the Niger-Congo family of Bantu languages” (Maho 2008; Wikipedia 2014a). As in other Bantu languages, Herero place names, being nouns, are characterised by prefixes or class markers”. These class markers are:

Class 1: omu-, ova-; Class 2: o-, ozo-; Class 3: omu-, omi-; Class 4: otji-,ovi-; Class 5: e-, oma-; Class 6: oru-, out-; Class 7: oka-,ou-; Class 8: ou-, omau-; Class 9: oku-, oma-, omaku- (Brockmann 1941:3-5).

#### 4. ONOMASTIC PERSPECTIVES REVEALING PRIMARY NAMING MOTIVES

The main naming motives are descriptive references to features in the landscape. Some names give a clear picture of the topography, including those of geological features of the area such as *Okowakuatjiwi*, translated as *Kalkfeld* in German (Möller 1986:320). Names referring to the pastoralist and cultural lifestyle, fauna and flora of the region are equally numerous (Albertyn 1984; Kamupingene 1985). Some are represented as metaphoric renderings, and as such, reflect the inherent “onomasiology of the language speakers and their cultural identity” (Ohly 1998:51-64), i.e. the naming actions and usage of imaginative language items by the Herero speakers.

##### 4.1 References to the landscape

Naming motives describing the desert, semi-desert regions, and geographical features within it, such as sandy or dry rivers, bush or savanna, and the water sources in these settings, dominated naming actions. The Herero moved between these features and settled in the vicinity of rivers, around pans, waterfalls and fountains. They survived by drilling waterholes, or digging in the lime banks along watercourses, the sandy or clay riverbeds. Many names containing components such as *ondjombo*, *omusema*, *otjitoto*, refer to these activities. These descriptive elements in the names illustrate their survival skills and refer to the conditions that influenced their agro-pastoralist lifestyle.

The Herero described aspects of desertification, such as geographical features relating to the quality of water in such regions either as ‘brackish’, ‘salty’, colour-stained in certain soil-types, or, mentioned the clarity and purity of the water.

The *Ohamuheke*, also known as *Omaheke*, for example, refers to a 'place of sand', and is the Herero name for Sesfontein. A German hybrid translates the name as *Omaheke-Sandfeld*. The place name *Okamarure*, of which the German translation is 'Salzbrunnen', is a reference to the quality of the water as 'salty', thus 'brackish fountain' (Möller 1986:384).

The river name *Omuramba Omatako* (written also as *Omuramba ua Matako* (Köhler 1959:11), refers to a non-perennial tributary of the Kavango River. It rises between Otjihaenamaparero and the Omatako Mountains and extends north-east to join the Kavango at Ndonga, 80 km east of Rundu. *Omatako* was initially said to mean 'buttocks' (Raper, Möller & Du Plessis 2014:392), but apparently seems to be derived from a word for 'breasts', //kaxu or //katsu in /Xam and refers to the high-peaked mountains (Raper & Möller 2015:396). The river is named after the mountains, and *omuramba* means 'dry watercourse'. *Otjoruuma*, in Ngamiland, also means a 'dry place'.

The place name *Omongwa*, or *Omongua*, contains a root word for 'salt', namely *ngua* or *omongua* (Irle 1917:73, 279). The area is characterised by the occurrence of saltpans, the largest just south of Aminuis. An ancient reference to salt as commodity is retraced in this name, from /Xam /u: or !gaa; or from other dialects spoken in the area. In the Hie language, a saltpan is *dzuawe*; and in Herero 'brackish' ('salty') water is known as *otjomongua*, *omongua* (note the *dzu-a > ngua* adaptation). A small village on the Khumib in Kaokoland, *Orupembe*, is said to mean the same, namely 'brackish water', but was indicated as depicting a 'mirage', alluding to the place as 'desert-like' where such natural phenomena occur.

#### **4.1.1 Descriptive and metaphoric names for mountains**

The *Omavanda* is a mountain range in Kaokoland, east of Otjimbombonga and south of the Baynes Mountains near the Angola border. The name means 'hills', derived from the word *otjivanda*, 'hügeliges Gelände' (Göllnitz 1942:1), or 'flacher Hügel' (Irle 1917:191), i.e. 'flat hills on a high plateau'. This word *otjivanda*, from the root - *vanda*, relates through phonological adaptation, to a Bushman word *han!a* for 'hill' (Raper & Möller 2015:399-400).

The *Otjompau* or *Otjompau* is a watercourse rising in the Zuckerhutberg, north-west of Windhoek, and the name is said to mean 'place of white stones'. Its German name is metaphoric in the sense that it recalls the image of a 'sugar-hat' that actually refers to a drink, extracted from fluid poured over a sugar coated funnel-like container (Brenzinger, personal communication, 18 September 2017). The original Herero name,



though, had geological relevance, as it referred to the shale-like ‘white stones’, glistening or shimmering in the sunlight like a watery substance. These stones occur in the mountainous regions all around the Windhoek area.

Mountains are often described after their shape, prominence or association with other features. Compare the name of the *Erongo*, a massif with its highest point at 2 305 m, situated south-west of Omaruru, north of Kranzberg and south-east of Okombahe (Raper *et al* 2014:125). Various explanations have been provided for this name. A variant spelling, *Elongo*, is said to refer to its ‘three pointed spires’, the E- is the class prefix; the last component is a Kung word //noa, adapted to ro-, or lo (as interchangeable consonants), ‘large’ or ‘big’; the last component from Auen !ngo:, //N!ke !go: and Hie !goa, ‘mountain’ (Bleek 1929:22, 59). Another explanation is that the ‘large mountain’ was seen as a ‘large home’, as it was the former stronghold of the Bergdamara. Another source indicated a section as being called the *Bokberg*, suggesting that it refers to ‘goats’, ‘bokke’, or antelope (Köhler 1958b:15; no 43, 1959:68-69, 86; map 3, Otjohorongo reserve). Compare *Otjhorongo* nearby, known as the ‘place of the kudu’, derived from the Herero word *ohorongo*, ‘kudu’ (Göllnitz 1942:41).

The mountain name *Etjo* is explained as ‘table mountain’, “der Tafelberg” (Göllnitz 1942:1; Raper *et al* 2014:128). Its Bushman origin lies in the word *ts’oa* for ‘flat’, a synonym of *tsoā*, *ts’oá*, derived from /Xam (Bleek 1929:39; 1956:219). It elucidates the click adaptation from *ts’oa’* > *tjo*. Yet another mountain is the *Oruhungu*, its name explained as the ‘pointed mountain’ after its shape.

A metaphoric rendering is found in the oronym *Otjitundua* (*Otjitunduwa*), a mountain that lies in Kaokoland. The name refers to a fairly steep hill or rock with the resemblance of ‘a termite- or anthill’ (Albertyn 1984:29), called *otjitundu* in Herero (Göllnitz 1942:1, 17).

#### **4.1.2 Place names referring to water features**

Water sources such as rivers, pools, fountains, waterholes in riverbeds or dug-out wells, were of primary importance to the cattle-herding Hereros. The *Erindir’ Ozondjiva* in the Omaheke region, for instance, refers to “a great waterhole or water pan” (Irle 1871-1872:2). The generic component *djiva* is derived from the Hie word *džiba* for ‘lake, pool’ (Raper *et al* 2014:402). The name *Otjoruharui*, meaning ‘place of many flowing fountains’, is explained as being composed from the word or expression *oruharwi* / *oruharui*, i.e. ‘perennial, always flowing fountain’ (Göllnitz 1942:2); the name *Otjikango* refers to ‘a hot spring’ (Göllnitz 1942:2); confirmed in fieldwork notes by Binding (1977; 1980-1984) as a ‘hot water spring’. However, it was also explained as simply a ‘large fountain’ (Raper

*et al* 2014:398). *Oahava* is said to mean ‘shallow water’, whilst *Omusema* is a name that refers to ‘a waterhole dug in a river-bed’ (Raper *et al* 2014:392), and *Okombatwere / Okambatwere* refers to ‘water obtained by piercing the ground’ (Binding 1980-1984).

The place name *Okakango* is explained as a ‘small vlei or pan’; *Otavi* refers to a ‘gushing fountain’, ‘pulsing spring water’ (Raper *et al* 2014:397). *Otjihaenamaparero*, although it has various explanations as to its etymological origins, for example “place where you don’t need to dig with your fingers for roots and bulbs” (Albertyn 1984:74), or an “unapproachable place”, is mainly regarded as meaning: “place without waterholes (gorras)” (Raper *et al* 2014:398).

The place name *Ombungururu* was initially explained as referring to the ‘waterhole of the hyena’, with a generic *-ombu* referring to a water feature. The feature lies in the district of Otjimbingwe. An alternative meaning was given as a ‘water hole in the form of a deep funnel or chasm causing a thundering echo’ (Binding 1977). Bleek (1929:90) gives words for ‘water’ as *!gu*: from Auen, *//gu*: from Kung and *!O!kung*, which may relate to the component *-ngu-*; the ‘*ruru*’, possibly referring here to the ‘thundering waters’, adapted from *\_guru* (Bleek 1956:764), or *e\_!koru* for ‘thunder’, as in Sesarwa (Bleek 1929:85). Yet, Göllnitz (1942:41) confirms the explanation given by Binding as ‘steeply cascading waterhole in a rock’ (“steil abfallendes Wasserloch [im] Fels”). This toponym clearly indicates language influences in the naming process which led to various etymologies.

The descriptive Herero names referring to their lifestyle as herders, relying on their livestock for sustenance, combined these notions in the place names they allocated to water and grazing features. For instance, in *Eorondama*, they combined the naming motives where the component *eo-* depicts a certain type of ‘water hole in a rock’, and *rondama* refers to ‘a calf’.

## 4.2 Naming motives referring to lifestyle as agro-pastoralists

Most naming motives identified as important in Herero place names (after topographical feature motives) refer to a pastoralist lifestyle, i.e. those features related to cattle herding activities and dairy farming. One outstanding motive is identifying pastures suitable for grazing, for example of a certain type of vegetation, such as *Okamahapu* ‘place of many good grazing shrubs’, or referring to grass as found in names such as *Okenyeny* Mountain (formerly written as *Okonjainja*), meaning “mountain with/of fine grass” (Raper & Möller 2015:401). Motives deriving from references to water sources

and the lay of the land, whether it is flat savanna or hill-like, are numerous. Compare *Ongombombero*, referring to a ‘pathway or narrow pass through a mountain ridge where cattle were herded’ (Albertyn 1984:67); from *ngombe* ‘cattle’ + *ombero*, a ‘mountain ridge’, “Bergsattel” or “Bergpforte” (Irle 1917:61).

Other place names indirectly refer to cattle farming, e.g. names of containers for dairy products: *Omahoro*, a ‘carved wooden pail (*ehoro*) to hold curds/sour milk’, as in farm names Gross- and Klein-Omahoro (Köhler 1959:93); or the quality of the milk as the name of the *Omaruru* River suggests, said to mean ‘bitter water’, the flavour of ‘bitter curds’, resulting from cattle grazing on certain shrubs (Raper *et al* 2014:392), and *Okandivi* describing ‘good grazing giving cream-rich milk’, from *ongondivi/ondivi* ‘butter’ (Irle 1917:77; Göllnitz 1942:14).

The component ‘ongombe’, ‘ozongombe’, as cattle are called, occurs in several place names referring to various features that impacted their cattle ranching. Compare place names such as *Otjongombe* ‘place where the cow grazed’. *Otjonzongombe* was explained as ‘place of cattle’, therefore a ‘good cattle ranch’, whereas the place name *Otjomanangombe* is said to mean ‘where cattle are killed’, “place that finishes the cattle” (Köhler 1959:36).

#### **4.2.1 Descriptions of cattle types as motive for place naming**

Descriptive names for cattle or cattle types according to colour patterns were often recalled in place names. The place name *Ombirisu*, for instance, referred to ‘red cattle that were dappled with white spots, or mixed with stripes’; *Omatozu-Ohunbunguru* describes the ‘fountain of black oxen with white spots’; *Ombutuzo* refers to ‘black oxen with white underbelly’ (Göllnitz 1942:46). *Ondauro*, with the root word *ndauro*, refers to a colour feature of certain cattle with a white stripe over the back. The place name *Ongombombonde*, a village and school about 90 km east of Otjiwarongo, just east of Ohakane, Waterberg East (Köhler 1959:43, 97; map 2), refers to a ‘dappled ox’. *Otjimbonde* is said to mean a ‘cow dappled with dark spots’; *Otjikondo* ‘place of the *kondo*-coloured cattle’, i.e. ‘red or black, with a stripe of white across the back’ (Binding 1977).

#### **4.2.2 Names relating to other domestic animals**

Goats are some of the alternative domestic animals kept, although on a smaller scale than cattle, and are called *ongombo ondendu*. *Ozondyanda* is a collective term that refers to smaller livestock such as goats and sheep, ‘Kleinvieh’ (Irle 1917:202; Göllnitz 1942:17).

A metaphorically coined place name is *Omawewozonyanda*, where the terrain of a 'field of stones' was associated with the image of 'sheep or goats' and subsequently coined as such. *Otjosondu* is known as the 'place of sheep'. Sheep are called *ondu*, a lamb is called *ondjona / okajona*. The place name *Osona*, initially explained as 'place of the fat ram' (Raper *et al* 2014:397), is derived from the root word *-ona*, and *osona* is indicated as the 'short-tailed sheep', 'Stumpfschwanz', according to Irle (1917:167), therefore relating directly to *ondu osona* (Irle 1917:282; Göllnitz 1942:17).

### 4.2.3 Places named after wild animals

Place names containing the names of wild animals, especially as potential threat to the cattle herders, abound in the region. The most feared were the carnivores, i.e. the great cats, lions, cheetahs and leopards, but also hyenas, jackal, wild dogs and caracals, posing a general threat to livestock.

The lion features prominently in place names, for example in *Ongeama* near Windhoek. An example of this is *Okatjongeama*, 'place of the lion', where lions caused havoc among the Hereros' cattle. Derived from *ongeama*, also written as *ongeyama*, it is derived from the earliest cognate from the //Ku //e language where it was called *!goñh*, or as in /Xam as *kwaΣmma*, an ancient word referring to the 'lion' (Lucy Lloyd, quoted in Bleek 1956:597; Möller 2017:74-75). The caracal, recalled in *Otjinguirira*, is called *onguirira* or *orukuenjaere* (Irle 1917:225; Göllnitz 1942:41).

Other scavengers, such as hyenas and jackal, have equally been immortalised in place names, for example *Ombungu* 'place of the wolf, hyena'. The name of the leopard occurs several times, for example as in *Ombujongwe*, 'water well where leopards drink'; and *Onangwe* 'place of the leopard' as well as *Ongwediva* the 'leopard pool, waterhole'. The Bushman word *dživa*, adapted to *diva* in Herero, refers to a 'pool', and confirms this place name as an ancient designation. *Otjivanda-Tjongue* is explained as the 'hill of the leopard' (Raper *et al* 2014:399), or 'highland flats of the leopard' (Möller 2017:86-87). For a type of 'hyena' Irle (1917:192) recorded the name *ohakane* in Herero, although this actually refers to the 'wild dog' (Göllnitz 1942:41-42; Möller 2017:112). The toponym *Ombujohakane*, meaning 'well of the wild dogs' (Köhler 1958a:101), clearly confirms this as naming the *Lycaon pictus* (Albertyn 1984:37).

### 4.3 Names illustrating socio-cultural traditions, customs, crafts and other skills

This includes: Hut building, wood carvings and engravings of containers (found as some of the oldest artefacts in Namibia from the era of the Bantu diaspora); also gourds and other art works, paintings; weaving, basket making; making of traditional dresses and headdresses by Herero seamstresses from hides, and later fabrics such as cotton and linen. The earliest were ‘garments from wild animal hides’ commemorated in the place name *Ondundazongonda* ‘river that soils/soaks hide clothing’ (“plek wat velklere vuilmaak”, Binding 1977).

The *Okambara* mountain lies to the south-west of the Great Kleeberg and about 40 km south-west of Witvlei. The name, of Herero origin, is said to mean ‘place of the proud ones’.

The toponym *Otjiserandu* refers to the place of traditional soldier training *Otjiratjotiserandu* (Red Band Organisation) according to Köhler (1959:49). Another naming motive reflecting warfare or conflict resounds in *Otjimbari* / *Otjombali* in Okahandja, the ‘place of warfare’. *Otjovasandu* is a village in the Etosha National Park, some 55 km north-west of Kamanjab; its name being said to mean ‘place of young men’ (Raper *et al* 2014:399). The same name, *Otjivazandu*, occurs in Kaokoland (Albertyn 1984:29). The word for a ‘young man’ (“junger Mensch”), is given as *omuzandu* or *omutanda* (Irle 1917:231).

The *Okaue Mukaendu*, meaning ‘rock of women’, is a rocky outcrop on which Khoekhoe women were murdered by the Herero after a plundering of their settlement. The German name of the farm on which this hill is situated, is *Frauenstein*, and is a direct translation of the Herero name (Möller 1987:269).

A railway siding on farm no. 118, along the Nossob River in the district of Gobabis (Meinert’s Adressbuch 1939:288), carries the name *Otjivarumendu*. The deeds of the farm *Eintracht* (DGO-Inventar der Kaiserlichen Bezirksämte 1907) indicate that the name of the area was previously known by its Herero designation, and its meaning given as ‘place of the men’ (Köhler 1958a:95-104). The word for ‘man’ is *omurumendu* (Irle 1917:228). The name change to *Eintracht* came from the new owner, Emil Kessler (ZBU 2000 A11 70i Vig 2 ged. 26 February 1911). The meaning in both cases relates to ‘place of solidarity’, indicating where men came together to discuss issues of importance to their communities; taking decisions on socio-economic matters; trade between the

different groups; legal matters and settling of disputes. The German name *Eintracht* thus translates in the same sense (Möller 1986:252-253), with a meaning of ‘solidarity or to be of the same conviction (“eendrag in Afrikaans”).

## 5. CONCLUSION

The Herero place names, employed within the multilingual context of Namibia, affirmed the social and historical impact of their indigenous identity, culture and lifestyle as a nomadic pastoralist people. In studying the names of the indigenous peoples of the region and their perceptions of the landscape, their role and function in it, together with their expressiveness in naming geographical features, their naming tradition is asserted and promoted. The continued research on Herero place names endorses their presence as part of this multilingual toponymic heritage of Namibia.

As the Herero names were often new coinings and existed side-by-side with the indigenous Bushman, Khoekhoe and Damara names, but gradually exerted a toponymic influence, i.e. motives and naming patterns changed, the phonological and structural appearances of the previous layer of indigenous names changed. Not only did loan words and adaptations flourish, but so did the full scale of translations of the indigenous names.

It remains uncertain which of the adapted toponyms, as those discussed above, were in actual fact original coinings by the indigenous people, the first namers in the region, and which were adapted or translated by the Herero and other incoming Bantu language speakers. As becomes evident from studies on language contact situations, it cannot always be ascertained which language was the donor and which was the receiver language.

This illustrates that the diversity of languages spoken in the region exerted an influence on the naming actions more often than previously assumed, also on the Herero naming patterns. Evidently, many ‘voices’ contributed to this varied, multilingual heritage of common names of animals and place names of the region.

The Hereros’ traditional cultural identity is seen as part of this shared toponymic heritage of Namibia. Their naming contribution may be verified through further research, in compliance with UN resolutions regarding the promotion of indigenous names of the region, therein continuously being asserted as a unique toponymicon of Namibia.

## REFERENCES

- ALBERTYN APJ. 1984. *Die ensiklopedie van name in Suidwes-Afrika*. Pretoria: Sigma Press.
- ANONYMOUS. 1881. "The River Okavango". *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography*, New monthly series, 3(1), Jan:44; Map 138.
- BINDING K. 1977, 1980-1984. Notes from fieldwork in Namibia. Archives of the Names Research Institute, Pretoria.
- BLEEK DF. 1929. *Comparative vocabularies of Bushman languages*. Cambridge: University Press.
- BLEEK DF. 1956. *A Bushman dictionary*. New Haven: American Oriental Society.
- BREZZINGER M. Personal communication, 18 September 2017, Windhoek, Namibia.
- BROCKMANN H. 1941. Einführung in die Herero Sprache. Unpublished cyclostyled manuscript. Swakopmund.
- DOKE CM & VILAKAZI BW. 2005. *Zulu English dictionary*. (Combined Publication). Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.
- DUPARQUET C. *Voage en Cimbébasie*. 1880-81. *Les Missions Catholiques*, 12(589), 17 septembre:451.
- GODÉE MOLSBERGEN EC. 1916. *Reizen in Zuid-Afrika in de Hollandse tijd. 1686 – 1806*. Reizen naar het Noorden, Deel II. s'-Gravenhage: Marthinus Nijhoff.
- GÖLLNITZ J (COMP). 1942. Practical lessons in Herero. Unpublished manuscript. Andalusia.
- GORDON RJ *SEE* NIENABER 1989.
- HAHN CH. 1849. Ova-Herero und Ovampanteru. *Berichte der Rheinischen Mission* (BRM), October (21):324-325.
- HAHN CH. 1844-1854. Neun Jahre im Hereroland. *Berichte der Rheinischen Mission* (BRM), January (1):209.
- HAHN J. 1869. Die Ovaherero. *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin*, 4(2):226-258.
- IRLE J. 1871-1872. Otjozondjiva. *Berichte der Rheinischen Mission* (BRM), October (20):117.
- IRLE J. 1886. Teil 1. Das Volk der Herero; Teil 2. Die Lage der Mbandjeru. *Berichte der Rheinischen Mission* (BRM), Januar (1):22.
- IRLE J. 1906. *Die Herero*. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Verlag.
- IRLE J. 1917. *Deutsch-Herero Wörterbuch*. 2 Vol. Hamburg: L Friederichsen & Co.

- KAMUPINGENE TK. 1985. Meaning of place names and the phenomenon of nomenclature in Otjiherero. *Logos*, 5(1&2):66-71.
- KÖHLER O. 1958a. Herero-Farmnamen in Südwest-Afrika. *Afrikanischer Heimatkalender*:95-104.
- KÖHLER O. 1958b. *A study of Karibib district (South West Africa)*. Ethnological Publications (No. 40). Pretoria: Government Printer.
- KÖHLER O. 1959. *A study of Gobabis (No 42), Omaruru (No 43), Otjiwarongo (No 44), Grootfontein (No 45); districts (South West Africa)*. Ethnological Publications. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- KROENLEIN JG. 1889. *Wortschatz der Khoi-Khoïn*. Berlin: Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft.
- LEVINSON O. 1961. *The ageless land*. Cape Town: Tafelberg-Uitgewers.
- MAHO JF. 2008. *Namlob (Namibian Languages). Bibliography for African Languages and Linguistics*. [Retrieved July 2016] <http://www.reflex.cnrs.fr/Lexiques/webball/>
- MEINERT J. 1939. *Deutsch-Südwestafrikanisches Addressbuch*. Windhoek: J Meinerts.
- MÖLLER LA. 1986. 'n Toponimies-linguistiese ondersoek na Duitse plekname in Suidwes-Afrika. Unpublished PhD thesis. Pretoria: HSRC.
- MÖLLER LA. 2017. *Of the same breath – Indigenous animal and place names*. Bloemfontein: SUN PRESS. <https://doi.org/10.18820/9781928424031>
- MORITZ, E. 1911. Reisestudien aus Südwest-Afrika. *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin* 4:213-252.
- MOSSOP EE (ED). 1947. *The journal of Carel Frederik Brink of the journey into Great Namaqualand (1761-2) made by Captain Hendrik Hop and the journal of the journey of Ensign Johannes Tobias Rhenius (1724)*. Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society XXVIII.
- NIENABER GS. 1989. *Khoekhoense stamname. 'n Voorlopige verkenning*. Pretoria: Academica.
- NIENABER GS & RAPER PE. 1980. *Toponymica Hottentotica B*. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.
- NÖCKLER HC. 1963. *Sprachmischung in Südwestafrika*. München: Max Hueber.
- OHLY R. 1998. Toponymical metaphors: a case study of Otjiherero place names. *ACS-Leiden Catalogue. Africana Bulletin*, 46:51-64.
- OTTO A. 1985. Herero-naamgewing. *Logos*, 5(1&2):126-132.
- RAPER PE. 1972. *Streekname in Suid-Afrika en Suidwes*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg Uitgewers.



- RAPER PE, MÖLLER LA & DU PLESSIS LT. 2014. *Dictionary of Southern African place names*. Johannesburg/ Cape Town: Jonathan Ball. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10228195.2015.1099716>
- RAPER PE & MÖLLER LA. 2015. Bushman (San) cognates of Herero place-name elements. *Language Matters, Special Issue: Language politics in Africa*, 46(3):389-406.
- SCHINZ H. 1891. *Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika. Forschungsreisen durch Gross Nama- und Hereroland, nach dem Kunene, dem Ngami-See und der Kalaxari*. Oldenburg: Schulzes.
- THE CARDBOARD BOX. 2014. *The Herero People*. [Retrieved 14 April 2014] [www.namibian.org/travel/namibia/population/herero.htm](http://www.namibian.org/travel/namibia/population/herero.htm)
- UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES. 2007. Working paper E/CONF98/41/Add 1, Resolutions VIII/9 and V/22. New York: United Nations.
- VEDDER H. 1928. The Herero. In: CHL Hahn, H Vedder & L Fourie (eds). *The native tribes of South West Africa*. Cape Town: Cass & Co.
- VEDDER H. 1928-1929. Ortsnamen und andere Namen aus Südwestafrika. In: *Quellen zur Geschichte von Südwestafrika*, Band 2:161-182.
- VON SCHUMANN G. 1980. Die Geschichte der Station Omburo von 1876-1924. *Afrikanischer Heimatkalender* 2:97-100.
- WIKIPEDIA. 2014a. *Herero language*. [Retrieved 10 April 2014] [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herero\\_language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herero_language)
- WIKIPEDIA. 2014b. *Herero people*. [Retrieved 29 March 2014] [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herero\\_people](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herero_people)

## MAPS, DEEDS & CARDS

- DGO-INVENTAR DER KAISERLICHEN BEZIRKSÄMTE (INVENTORY OF THE DEEDS OFFICE): DGO 3 L5 d12 UV e27 1907.
- SURVEYOR-GENERAL-SWA. n.d. Questionnaires to the index and topo-cadastral series of maps 1:250 000. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- SURVEYOR-GENERAL SWA. 1972. South West Africa. Windhoek: Surveyor General's Office, Pretoria State Printers.
- ZBU ZENTRAL BURO DES KAISERLICHEN GOUVERNEMENTS (ZBU), AKTEN DES: 2000 A11 70i VIG 2 GED. 26 February 1911.

# UNRAVELLING THE ETYMOLOGY OF SELECTED TOPONYMS IN ZIMBABWE

**Godwin Makaudze**

Department of English Studies, UNISA, South Africa;  
Department of African Languages and Literature, University of Eswatini, Eswatini  
makaudzegodie@gmail.com

## **Abstract**

A study of a people's history and geography remains incomplete without a gaze into their naming patterns and systems. Name study continues to unravel rich layers of meaning about the history, environment, wishes and aspirations of the name-givers. Whilst the Zimbabwean landscape is awash with names that show a conscious effort by the name-givers to describe, mark and sometimes 'own' their areas of occupation, a lot still remains unexamined. Using the socio-onomastic theory, augmented by interviews with a purposively sampled population, this paper is an analysis of the origins and meanings of selected toponyms in Zimbabwe. It strives to exhume the underlying circumstances as well as the meanings embedded in selected toponyms like Buhera, Gutu, Chirumhanzu, Mutasa, Mamunyadza, Mutiusinazita and Majiri. The selected toponyms are from three provinces of Zimbabwe, namely Manicaland, Masvingo and the Midlands. The study makes a number of observations; some names in Zimbabwe, such as Mutiusinazita and Majiri are derived from, and therefore connected to particular socio-cultural phenomena such as the predominant flora and the mysteries found in these areas, while other names like Buhera, Mutasa and Chirumhanzu are a pointer to the clans or significant people who inhabited them. It further observes that among these are some like Chirumhanzu and Mutasa, which are incident-based. In addition, other names such as Mamunyadza (which refers to both the school and the surrounding areas) are constituted by initial syllables extracted from other names that make up the toponym's sphere of influence. It concludes that Zimbabwean place names have socio-culturally peculiar meanings. The names are a conscious effort by the people to relate with their environment, to capture

and convey a particular history or to mark the sphere of influence of a given toponym. The article recommends that a serious study of Zimbabwe's geography and history be augmented by an investigation into the etymology and meanings of some places therein.

**Keywords:** etymology, name-givers, socio-onomastics, Zimbabwean place names

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Place names are not arbitrary labels, but are connected with important socio-cultural phenomena which include community heroes or persons who have made notable contributions to society, or even unique events (Buberwa 2012:115). Like other African scenarios, the Zimbabwean landscape is awash with names that show a conscious effort by the name-givers to describe, mark and sometimes 'own' their areas of occupation. Mapara and Makaudze (2016:243) observe that the people have always named places in line with events, shape or appearance of natural phenomena, among others. In light of this, Jepson (2011:9) comments that it would be difficult to find a place name that has no meaning. As shall be seen, place-name study in Zimbabwe continues to unravel rich layers of meaning about the history, wishes and aspirations of the name-givers as well as their perception of the environment.

In Africa, names, especially place-name study is a relatively old discipline, as witnessed through Madubuike (1994), Koopman (2002), Neethling (2005), Mbenzi (2009), Buberwa (2012) and Uluocha (2015), among others. In Zimbabwe also, place-name study, though relatively new, has received considerable attention. Chabata (2012) looks at feature names, in particular those that refer to the natural landscape such as rivers and mountains, as well as those that are given to man-made features such as roads, hospitals and other buildings. Mangena and Ndlovu (2013) study how decolonisation is pursued in the naming of selected 'satellite' schools in the country. In another study, Ndlovu and Mangena (2013) look at transphonologisation of some English words and phrases as the origins of some place names in today's Zimbabwe. Mamvura (2014) examines school names in some urban centres in colonial Zimbabwe. Perhaps the most consolidated study of place names in Zimbabwe is Nyambi, Mangena and Pfukwa's (2016) collection, *The Post Colonial Condition of Names and Naming Practices in Southern Africa*, which looks at various types of names and naming patterns in contemporary southern Africa. Further to that, Mapara and Makaudze (2016) as well as Makaudze (2016) examine the meanings and/or etymology of some selected toponyms in Zimbabwe. However, despite many such studies and observations, much remains unexamined regarding place naming in Zimbabwe, especially concerning the etymology of names. This article is an analysis of

selected toponyms in Zimbabwe. It strives to exhume the underlying circumstances as well as the meanings embedded in the selected toponyms. The focus in this contribution falls on the following toponyms: Buhera, Gutu, Chirumhanzu, Mutasa, Mamunyadza, Mutiusinazita and Majiri. The selected toponyms are from three provinces in Zimbabwe, namely Manicaland, Masvingo and the Midlands. Although some of the places may at some point have been accorded colonial versions of the indigenous names, a closer look shows that the original indigenous names conveyed a wealth of information. In this paper, the names of the places discussed are represented as they are legally spelt. Although the government of independent Zimbabwe embarked on a renaming exercise of cities, towns and other settlements in 1982, the correct spelling of some names was not carried through. As such, it will be seen that some places like Buhera still have wrong spellings and pronunciations.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

The socio-onomastic theory is exploited, augmented by interviews conducted with a purposively sampled population, together with information from literature sources. The socio-onomastic theory posits that names and naming systems are described and interpreted within a socio-cultural context (Neethling 2005:3). In other words, when people name, they do so in line with the local worldview, events and way of life. Therefore, to have an informed appreciation of such names, one needs to look at them from the point of view of the name-givers. Thus, in this paper, the selected toponyms are looked at and given meaning in relation to the socio-cultural environment they were (are) found in.

The names under investigation were selected on account of their popularity among inhabitants of the concerned areas. They were also selected because they were largely easy to comprehend amongst many speakers of the areas in concern. In light of the fact that a successful research endeavour involves choosing prospective participants who have the right information for the study (Neuman 2006), interviews were carried out with members of a purposively sampled population (3 elders per place name). This sampling ensured that participants with the right information about the origin of the toponyms were selected. Elders were targeted because they are able to shed light on the etymology of the selected place names. Literature sources on Shona clan history and early Shona orthography were also consulted. These include Native Affairs Department (Abrahams 1959) records, Hodza and Fortune (1979), Chigwedere (2015) and Louw (1915). This was because some of the place names were closely linked to the history

of clans, especially the Tembo clan of Mutasa, the Mhazi clan of Chirimhanzu as well as the vaHera and Gutu (Gumbo) clans, while the current orthographies of some names have strong links to the early Shona writing system. From Manicaland, names that were common among speakers of the language were Buhera, Mutasa, Mamunyadza and Mutiusinazita. In Masvingo Province, Gutu and Majiri were most popular whilst in the Midlands Province Chirumhanzu topped the list.

### 3. ETYMOLOGY OF SELECTED SHONA TOPONYMS

Scholars such as Koopman (2002), Neething (2005), Makondo (2010) and Mapara (2013), among others, have examined the origins and motivation of naming among Africans and found the following: Expectations/aspirations, gratitude to God or ancestors, historical experiences and commemoration. In addition to the above, there is evidence that some Shona names have other origins. Some Shona names are linked to persons or a group of people who settled in the area, in what Buberwa (2012:117) categorises as ‘individual or clan names’. As for names given after individuals, these people could have been notorious or famous for having done something peculiar.

#### 3.1 Buhera

As Fasi (1984:18) observes, some toponyms owe their names to the first inhabitants of those places. These toponyms help to clarify the history of the land, especially its settlement. This is also what the toponym ‘Buhera’ does. Currently it is pronounced as [bu`he`ra`] (pronounced with high tonal markings) but written as <buhera>, an example of what Möller (2014:109) observes as adapted or revised forms of a language being used instead of the original form. Interviews established that the area is named after the inhabitants of the place who were the vaHera of the Shava (eland) totem. The land was regarded as *nzvimbo yeUhera* (Uhera area) and <uhera> was pronounced with low tone marks as [u`he`ra`]. Although other totems or clans could have been living there, the name was based on the large population of the vaHera people among those who first settled there. Today, the area has people of other totems such as Moyo (Chirandu, vaRozvi), Dziva (Pool), Soko (Monkey), Tembo (Zebra), and Gumbo (Leg) among others. However, these other clans are not as numerous as the vaHera (Shava) people from which the toponym borrowed its name. There are three schools of thought pertaining to the origins of the current spelling of ‘Buhera’.

The first is that of influence from the Karanga dialect spoken in Masvingo Province. Buhera is now under Manicaland Province, but up until around the mid-80s, it was under Karanga speaking Masvingo Province. One of the most distinct phonological features of the Karanga dialect spoken in Masvingo Province is that nouns in class 14 (like upenyu, usiku, uHera) are pronounced with the labio-dental approximant [ʋ] (vupenyu and not upenyu, vusiku and not usiku, vuHera as opposed to uHera) [Fortune 2004:11]. However, early missionary orthography at Morgenster mission used the phonetic [β] for the labio-dental approximant [ʋ] and so uHera was written as βuhera (Louw 1915). Clement Doke's (1931) Shona orthography had a place for some special symbols in Shona writing. However, the Orthography Committee (1955) discontinued the use of special symbols and substituted the bilabial implosive stop [ɓ] with the symbol [b], which was familiar to speakers because it was found in the Roman alphabet. Due to phonetic inaccuracy, the labio-dental approximant [β] was pronounced by lay people as murmured [ɓ]. Even today, in orthography, Buhera is written starting with the voiced implosive stop [ɓ] but pronounced as the breathy-voiced explosive stop [ɓ̤], a problem that scholars such as Fortune (1972) and Mapara and Makaudze (2016) attribute to the 1955 orthography which did not clearly distinguish between a voiced and a breathy-voiced sound. As Fasi (1984:18) observes, in some cases, corruptions of certain names remained in common usage. In 1955, both [ɓ] and [ɓ̤] were to be written as 'b' and some names have remained with 'b' instead of 'bh' even after the revised orthography of 1967. This explains why, instead of having 'uHera', we have 'Buhera'. What emerges is that early Karanga orthography at Morgenster was later confused by subsequent orthographies.

The other thought, brought about by the interviewed elders, is that the colonisers, having failed to pronounce 'uHera', opted for 'Buhera' for convenience. As Dalby (1984:82) comments, the system of writing used from African languages and for African names has inevitably reflected the orthographies introduced by former colonial powers for the transcription of European languages. However, despite such variances, to the inhabitants, the name 'Buhera' as written and pronounced today has little detail to remind speakers that the place was once inhabited by mostly the Hera people. Such a situation is described by Zungu (1998:23) as 'toponymic lapse', that is, mistakes that are found in records of names which are caused by the attempt to facilitate pronunciation by non-speakers of a particular language. Such mispronunciations lead to strange and incorrect spellings and once a place name is wrongly spelt or discarded, the cultural message also gets lost (*ibid*). Reasons for the

incorrect spelling of place names may include ignorance or inadequate knowledge of the grammar or latest orthographic rules of the target language, marginalisation of the inhabitants or hypercorrection (Zungu 1998:23).

### 3.2 Gutu

Human behaviour is an important factor in human society and each human being displays different behaviour (Ardrey 1970). There are many instances in which personal names may become place names. Some Shona place names reflect the social behaviours of those people who lived in the given places. Gutu, Chirumhanzu and Mutasa are some such names. Such names are a socio-cultural interpretation of historical events and they embody individual life experiences as well as personality and individual attributes (Guma 2001:266).

Gutu is a district (and also a town) in Masvingo Province. The meaning attached to the name plays a significant role in the definition of 'personhood', because the given name not only serves to lend an identity but also determines the type of person the individual is. In this regard, the name and character of the bearer are believed to influence each other (Guma 2001:267). The place Gutu is named after **Chinomukutu**, the ancestor of those of the Gumbo (leg) totem who stayed at Gona just outside modern-day Gutu town (Chigwedere 2015). **Chinomukutu**'s original name was Mabwazhe, and he was a shrewd hunter-warrior who left Binda (in Bindura) in search of a place to settle and always carried a quiver of arrows with him (Hodza & Fortune 1979). Interviews with elders indicated that he arrived in the Gona area which was inhabited by the Shiri Hungwe people. In the area, there was a rogue rhinoceros that tormented people at a water source. When Mabwazhe arrived in the area looking for a place to stay, he was tasked to first do away with the rhino. Due to his hunting skills he waylaid the rhinoceros and killed it. When women went to fetch water, they saw the rhino dead and they rushed back, celebrating and shouting that Chinomukutu (the one who carried a quiver of arrows) had killed it. The king was happy and integrated him into the army, elevating him to one of his advisers. The chief even offered Chinomukutu the chief's stick (knopkierie) which symbolised authority. When the chief later died, Chinomukutu refused to return the symbol of authority. A war broke out between the Shiri and Chinomukutu. A known magician, Chinomukutu poisoned *mazhanje* fruits in the area, selectively killing the Hungwe people and sparing his own kindred. The Hungwe people fled the area, leaving Chinomukutu in control.

Hence Chinomukutu was a name given to Mabwazhe by the Shiri women as he was always seen carrying a quiver of arrows (mukutu). The name was thus born out of a peculiar behaviour by the founder of the Gumbo clan. Although he was originally a foreigner, the area was named after him after the Hungwe people had fled. Even today, at Chief Gutu's court, there is a picture of a man with a bunch of arrows on his back, who many believe was Chinomukutu, the founder of the Gumbo clan. Interviews indicated that the transition from Chinomukutu to Gutu possibly occurred during the colonial period as the coloniser exercised syllable elision for simplification of pronunciation. The 'colonial' version of the name has thus remained so to date.

### 3.3 Chirumhanzu

This is the name of a district in the Midlands Province. Originally, it was 'Chirimuhanzu' (that which is dressed up in clothes). Just like Chinomukutu, this name was borne out of a significant act by Mhepo who was formerly of the Tembo totem, but who later adopted the Mhazi totem to obliterate any traces after he had fled from Manicaland. The interviewed elders indicated that prior to Mhepo's arrival, the area was inhabited by Moyo chiefs, linked to the Great Zimbabwe. Being from Manicaland (Eastern Zimbabwe), Mhepo and his people had long been trading with the Portuguese where they had obtained clothes (Abraham 1959; Chigwedere 2015).

Mhepo and his people later settled in the Midlands Province where the local inhabitants used to move around in animal skins. The locals, seeing Mhepo with cloths wrapped around him, referred to him as 'the one in clothes' (Chirimuhanzu) which was later shortened to Chirumhanzu through vowel elision. The area was thus named after his distinctive clothing. However, with the advent of colonialism, it was changed to Chilimanzi. As Diagne (1984:13) observes, foreign influence on some indigenous names may lead either to the coining of new terms or to corruption of original forms. In this case, the latter happened. The alveolar trill [r] in the indigenous name was substituted with the alveolar lateral [l] in the new name. Meiring (2014:6) describes this scenario as one where "African names were pronounced by non-African speakers with sounds from their mother tongue." However, as Fasi (1984:18) rightly observes, in some instances some changes to the indigenous names may just be phonetic and hence may not result in radical modification to the original name. Such 'foreign' names disappeared as soon as independence was claimed and the places reverted to their old names which had in fact never been forgotten by the inhabitants. Chilimanzi was re-named Chirumhanzu, which was an apt description of events in the Govera clan's history. Guyot (2007:56)



comments that those ‘new’ names given after independence are mostly not new at all, but are merely the names that black people have been using for those places for decades and in some cases, centuries. The case of Chilimazi-Chirumhanzu vindicates Tort-Donada’s (2016:312) observation that some names, despite their long history and despite undergoing major upheavals as far as their ‘linguistic materiality’ is concerned, frequently retain a link with their referent (i.e. the originally designated geographical space or place) that remains unchanged over decades and centuries. The phonological changes to the name during the colonial period did nothing to change the original meaning of the place name.

### 3.4 Mutasa

This is the name of a district in the Manicaland Province. It is an area dominated by the Mbizi (zebra) totem. According to the elders interviewed, the origins of the name are the following: the Tembo clan arrived in Bingaguru in Manicaland from central Africa led by Nyamubvambire. When Nyamubvambire died, chaos reigned as many people killed each other vying for the chieftainship post (Abraham 1959; Chigwedere 2015). After many years of turmoil, it was Pfete who then ushered in an era of peace and tranquillity. His reign was described as a very straight one (*yakati twasa*) and he was affectionately called **Mutasa** (He who brought a straight form of leadership) (Chigwedere 2015). In this case, the person and the name became one (Ngubane 1998). His people, together with the area under his jurisdiction, became known as Mutasa as it is till today. Hence the name is a pointer to the era of peace and tranquillity that was experienced during Pfete’s reign. It was borne out of people’s acknowledgement and celebration of peaceful coexistence.

### 3.5 Mamunyadza

This is a place in the Manicaland Province’s Buhera district. Originally it was used only in reference to a secondary school, but later expanded to include the vast areas that constitute the school’s catchment area. The secondary school was established in 1985 (Donaldson *et al* 1997:6). Interviews showed that, prior to its establishment, there was no place with such a name. The origin of the name is linked to the secondary school’s establishment, and the name came from the four former primary schools that had been built in the area (*ibid*). The secondary school’s catchment area included **Matsveru** Primary School near Marenga Business Centre, **Mutasa** Primary School, **Nyanzira** Primary School and **Dzarova** Primary School. The interviewed elders testified that

pupils who would have completed their primary education from these schools had no close secondary school to enrol with for their first form. They would either go to Munyira secondary school or Makumbe Mission, both of which were a remarkable distance from the four primary schools. In line with the new Zimbabwean government's vision of 'Education for all', an idea was mooted to have a secondary school almost equidistant of these primary schools, which was meant to service them. This is how Mamunyadza was established. However, unlike many instances where secondary schools would assume the names of the primary school that fed them with pupils, the case of Mamunyadza was a bit different because it was not close to any one of the four primary schools and also did not get its learners exclusively from one school. Owing to its unique situation, the school was to be the first in Buhera to have a name that bore resemblance to all the four primary schools that supplied it with learners. Therefore, the name is constituted by initial syllables extracted from the names of schools that made up the toponym's sphere of influence. However, it is interesting to note that the other primary school, Mutasa, has since been given a new secondary school and its learners come mainly from Mutasa Primary school. However, this has not had an effect on the name Mamunyadza which has remained so even if it no longer gets learners from one of the primary schools constituting part of its name. This fits well into Tort-Donada's (2016:312) observation that some toponyms are "memory marks." Although one of the primary schools may no longer be supplying Mamunyadza with learners, the toponym serves to indicate that in the past the secondary school's catchment area included the four primary schools.

### **3.6 Mutiusinazita (The tree without a name)**

This is a place in the Manicaland Province's Buhera district. As Hough (2016:41) observes, some place names are indicators of a former landscape. The name Mutiusinazita is derived from, and connected to the mystery once found in the area. An explanation given was that there used to be a tree with a consortium of different types of tree leaves. Leaves from munyii/umnyiyi (pink ivory), mutohwe/uxakuxau (snot apple), mukute/imiswi/umdoni (water berry), muuyu/umkhomo (baobab) trees, among others, were all found to be on this one tree. The different types of tree leaves made it difficult for people to give it a name, compelling them to describe it as a nameless tree. The name given to this mysterious tree was then transferred to the surrounding area, and today a primary school, secondary school, business centre and market place all bear the name. The tree has since dried up, but the name has since been immortalised by the surrounding schools and business centre. Today, the name serves as a reminder of this past mystery.

### 3.7 Majiri

This is the name of an area under Chief Murinye in the Masvingo Province. Jiri means vast expanse of forests. Forests of ordinary trees were not a peculiar thing in the past. Whereas Ngubane (1998) observes that in Africa the name is the person, here is a case where the name was the place that bore it (Mapara & Makaudze 2016:246). The name was not used in reference to forests of ordinary wild trees. Instead, the area was so named because it had vast forests of fruit trees - guava and mushuku/umhobohobo (wild loquat) trees. Whereas in many places guava trees are planted in orchards and nurtured, in Majiri they constituted natural forests. Similarly, whereas in some places fruit trees are found in small quantities or in isolation from each other, here they formed a large expanse of forest.

Thus the name Majiri is derived from and linked to the population size of especially fruit trees which, in most Zimbabwean places, are few or form part of people's orchards. In Majiri the fruit trees were seen to be in more than one place and extending over vast areas. The quantity prompted people to name the place in accordance with the flora. Despite the gradual depletion of these natural forests today, the name still exists and serves as a reminder of this earlier time of abundance.

## 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study affirmed that Zimbabwean place names have socio-culturally peculiar meanings. The names are a conscious effort by the people to relate with their environment, to capture and convey a particular history or to mark the sphere of influence of a given toponym, or are a pointer to the clans or significant people who inhabited such areas. The discussed Shona names testify that the names originated from what the people saw, heard and experienced. What comes out of this discussion is that a serious study of Zimbabwe's geography and history needs to be augmented by an investigation into the etymology and meanings of some place names around the country. In addition, the spelling of some names, like 'Buhera', need to be re-visited so that their original meanings are not distorted and ultimately lost.

## REFERENCES

- ABRAHAM DP. 1959. The Monomotapa dynasty. *NADA*, 36:62-75.
- ARDREY R. 1970. *The social contract: A personal inquiry into the evolutionary sources of order and disorder*. New York: Antheneum.

- BUBERWA A. 2012. Sociolinguistic meaning of Bantu place names: The case of Ruhanya in north-western Tanzania. *Journal for Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(2):111-120.
- CHABATA E. 2012. Feature names and identity in Zimbabwe. *Oslo Studies in Language*, 4(2):45-59.
- CHIGWEDERE A. 2015. *The Mutasa Manyika dynasty 1695-2000*. Marondera: Mutapa Publishing.
- DALBY D. 1984. The transcription of ethnonyms and toponyms in Africa in relation to their historical study. In UNESCO (ed): *African ethnonyms and toponyms: Report and papers of the meeting of experts organized by UNESCO in Paris, 3-7 July 1978*. Paris: UNESCO. 80-85.
- DIAGNE P. 1984. Introduction to the discussion of Ethnonyms. In UNESCO (ed): *African ethnonyms and toponyms: Report and papers of the meeting of experts organized by UNESCO in Paris, 3-7 July 1978*. Paris: UNESCO. 11-17.
- DOKE CM. 1931. *Report on the unification of Shona dialects*. London: Austin and Sons.
- DONALDSON TJ, MARANGE T, MVUMI BM, CHIVANDI E, MARUNDA I & THOMAS M. 1997. Participatory rural appraisal of Chemuonde Village, Buhera District, 17-21 February. Crop Post Harvest Research Programme.
- FASI M. 1984. Toponym and ethnonym as scientific aids to history. In UNESCO (ed): *African ethnonyms and toponyms: Report and papers of the meeting of experts organized by UNESCO in Paris, 3-7 July 1978*. Paris: UNESCO. 18-22.
- FORTUNE G. 1972. *A guide to Shona spelling*. Salisbury: Longman.
- FORTUNE G. 2004. *Essays on Shona dialects*. Harare: Allex Project.
- GUMA M. 2001. The cultural meaning of names among Basotho of Southern Africa: A historical and linguistic analysis. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 10(3):265-279.
- GUYOT S. 2007. Identity of place names, Places of identities, change of place names in post-Apartheid South Africa. *South African Geographical Journal*, 89(1):55-63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03736245.2007.9713873>
- HODZA AC & FORTUNE G. 1979. *Shona clan praise poetry*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.
- HOUGH C (ED). 2016. *Oxford handbook of names and naming*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199656431.001.0001>
- JEPSON B. 2011. *English place name elements relating to boundaries*. Lund University: Centre for Languages and Literature.
- KOOPMAN A. 2002. *Zulu names*. Pietermaritzburg: Natal Press.
- LOUW CS. 1915. *A manual of Chikaranga language*. Bulawayo: Philpott and Collins.
- MADUBUIKE I. 1994. *A handbook of African names*. Colorado Springs: Three Continents Press.

- MAKAUDZE G. 2016. Naming the landscape: Oronyms in Chief Nyashanu area as books in miniature. *Igama: Journal of African Onomastics*, 1(1):13-22.
- MAKONDO L. 2010. An exploration of prerequisite Shona naming factors. *South African Journal of African Languages*, 30(2):154-169. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02572117.2010.10587343>
- MAMVURA Z. 2014. A Sociolinguistic analysis of school names in selected urban centres during the colonial period in Zimbabwe. PhD thesis. Pretoria: UNISA.
- MANGENA T & NDLOVU S. 2013. Decolonization-oriented naming of selected 'satellite' schools in Zimbabwe. In: O Felecan (ed). *Proceedings of International Conference on Onomastics 'Names and Naming' 2, 2013*. Baia Mare: North University. 440-446.
- MAPARA J. 2013. *Shona sentential names: A brief overview*. Bamenda: Langaa Publishers.
- MAPARA J & MAKAUDZE G. 2016. The interface between toponyms, hydronyms and geography: The case of selected names from three provinces in Zimbabwe. *South African Journal of African Languages*, 36(2):243-249. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02572117.2016.1252028>
- MBENZI PA. 2009. The management of place names in the Post-colonial period in Namibia. United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, Working Paper No.67.
- MEIRING B. 2014. Orthographic guidelines for the standardization of South African geographical names. *Nomina Africana*, 28(1):4-15.
- MÖLLER LA. 2014. Some thoughts on revised and replaced toponyms in South Africa. *Nomina Africana*, 28(1):107-142.
- NDLOVU S & MANGENA T. 2013. Selected transphonologized Zimbabwean Toponyms. In O Felecan (ed). *Proceedings of International Conference in Onomastics 'Names and Naming*. Baia Mare: North University. 347-354.
- NEETHLING B. 2005. *Naming among the Xhosa of South Africa: Studies in Onomastics* Volume 8. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- NEUMAN WL. 2006. *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Toronto: Pearson.
- NGUBANE SE. 1998. The significance of the social code in relation to names and naming of African Children. In: EM Chiwome & Z Gambahaya (eds). *Culture and development: Perspectives from the South*. Harare: Mond Books. 178-181.
- NYAMBI O, MANGENA T & PFUKWA C (EDS). 2016. *The post colonial condition of names and naming practices in Southern Africa*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- ORTHOGRAPHY COMMITTEE. 1955. *A guide to Shona spelling*. Salisbury: Chishawasha Mission Press.

- TORT-DONADA J. 2016. Toponyms as memory marks. In: C Hough & D Izdebska (eds). *Names and their environment: Theory and methodology in socio-onomastics. Proceedings from the 25th International Congress of Onomastic Sciences Glasgow, 25-29 August 2014*. Glasgow: University of Glasgow. 312
- ULUOCHA NNA O. 2015. Decolonizing place names: Strategic imperative for preserving indigenous cartography in post-colonial Africa. *African Journal of History and Culture*, 7(9):180-92. <https://doi.org/10.5897/AJHC2015.0279>
- ZUNGU PJN. 1998. Toponymic lapses in Zulu place names. *Natalia*, 28:23-33.

# THE ROLE OF TOPONYMY IN IDENTIFYING CULTURAL HERITAGE: A CASE STUDY OF PLACE NAMES IN THE BUSHMANLAND, NORTHERN CAPE

**Jani de Lange**

Department of South African Sign Language and Deaf Studies, University of the Free State, South Africa  
delangejc@ufs.ac.za

## **Abstract**

The study of geographical names is an important tool in the conservation of cultural heritage, since it contributes to the recording and documentation of all place names, including especially non-standardised names. In a 2016 study, Geršič and Kladnik found, for example, that the recording of non-standard names, especially in rural areas, contributes significantly to the conservation of, *inter alia*, field and house names carried over through generations, but because fewer people are interested in farming, cultural heritage would otherwise be lost. Although South Africa's Council for Geographic names is deliberately trying to record rural names, as is witnessed in their latest approved roster, less attention is given to the place names of rural Afrikaans language areas which previously had a strong Bushman and Khoikhoi presence, as in the Kenhardt District of the Bushmanland. Even names dictionaries such as Raper, Möller and Du Plessis' 2014 *Dictionary of Southern African Place Names* can not aspire to give an exhaustive list of all place names. The danger is, therefore, that the heritage of place names will be lost to future generations if there is not a conscious attempt to record and study the origins and meanings of the place names of such areas.

This paper reports on a study of the place-name treasure of the Kenhardt District of the Bushmanland, a sparsely populated and arid area historically associated with a strong Bushman and Khoikhoi presence. The aim of the study is to demonstrate the heritage value of place names in such a rural area in preparation of a comprehensive names study. As such, this paper presents the first draft of the names, including the names of farms, landscapes and water resources found in the region. A preliminary list of approximately 1 000 names was compiled by comparing the entries of three data sets, namely the Northern Cape Farm Name Registry, GIS maps and an official map of

the Kenhardt District. In this paper special attention is given to the classification of the recorded names, based on three variables, namely coordinates, geographical elements and language of origin. The preliminary results of this exploratory study show the legacy of at least four groups of inhabitants in the name landscape of the region, namely the Bushmen (*Nongcaip*), Dutch (*Boven End Van Keel AfsnysLeegte*), Afrikaners (*Onderste Drie Kop*) and English (*Nous West*). The recorded corpus emphasises the importance of a thorough follow-up investigation into the meaning and origin of the names and stresses the necessity to confirm the correct spelling of these rural names.

**Keywords:** Bushmanland, heritage, place names, toponymy

## 1. INTRODUCTION: TOPONYMY AND PLACE NAMES

Toponymy refers to the study of place names, whether the name refers to a town, mountain, river or any other geographical feature. These place names retain the heritage of the community and toponyms provide information on how humans experience the world and how they interpret the landscape (Henshaw 2006:52). The reason why an entity is important enough to be named is embedded in the context and background of the name-giver, thus capturing the heritage within the name. This notion of heritage and geographical names going hand in hand is supported by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) (Kerfoot 2015; Watt 2015), Raper *et al* (2014:xviii), Choo (2015:9) and Jordan (2012), to name but a few. William Watt (2015:40) also states, “Before place names were toponyms, exonyms or endonyms, they were cultural icons.”

Geršič and Kladnik (2016:3) indicated that the documentation of field and house names also contributes to the preservation of heritage. As the world changes, some of the older generation’s legacy is passed onto the younger generation and the inheritance is retained to some degree. Yet, every unlisted name is lost with each generation, simply because they do not realise the significance of place names.

This study wishes to investigate this phenomenon further to determine if a similar phenomenon can be found in the Bushmanland. The purpose of the first phase of this study was to compile a data set of names in the Bushmanland in order to identify the heritage of this area. Raper *et al* (2014) refer to 44 place names in this area, while Nienaber and Raper (1983) discuss 41. Burger (n.d.) discussed a total of 29 Bushman place names in his historical review of Kenhardt, where 24 of these are relevant to this paper’s scope, whereas the present author collected 1 099 place names in the area.



The necessity of investigating rural areas' rich name treasure is evident. Even though the author acknowledges the need to determine the origin as well as the meaning of the place names to contribute to toponymic etymology, this paper discusses the first draft of the names in preparation of a comprehensive names study.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural heritage began to receive attention when UNGEGN realised that names harbouring cultural heritage began to disappear. The United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names had already started to focus on data collection since the first conference in 1976. This group has since been adapting and expanding their resolutions on cultural heritage. The resolution on "Geographical names as part of (intangible) cultural heritage", resolution VIII/9, recognises:

*"the importance of geographical names as part of a nation's historical and cultural heritage" and the increasing difficulty of collecting geographical names because of the "rapid pace of socio-economic change impacting on society and landscape", urging countries to "undertake both the systematic collection of geographical names and the promotion of a greater understanding among the wider public of the significance of inherited geographical names with respect to local, regional and national heritage and identity." (UNGEKN 2018).*

The discussions related to data collection and the documentation of place names are ongoing. The fieldwork done by Lantmäteriet in Sweden in the 20<sup>th</sup> century yielded a record of 4 million names in their archives; with this record still being referenced in the drafting of new maps (Torensjö 2015:72). This reveals the importance of documenting place names in geography, where the main function is to assist in the standardisation of geographical names and the potential assistance in name changing processes. Lantmäteriet (2018) is also responsible, amongst others, "for the establishing of place-names according to a preserved place-name practice".

Son (2015:120-124) confirms that non-procedural place-name changes contribute to names simply disappearing – especially when a country's administration changes. Other factors contributing to this are:

- that records that are destroyed;
- the original name is no longer orally transmitted; and
- geographical features change.

Son (2015:122-123) further believes that these name changes and the loss of cultural heritage also takes place in the rural areas, especially in farming communities. As geographical features change, people either migrate to other places, or communities get separated.

The *Dictionary of Southern African Place Names* (Raper *et al* 2014) provides insightful detail in terms of the authors' research on place naming in South Africa. The latest version of the dictionary comprises around 9 000 place names. This data set is an ongoing project and is revised on a regular basis. This data set contributes to the conservation of the South African cultural heritage and the documentation of the place names in this region.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on a farming district in the Northern Cape, South Africa; the Northern Cape being one of South Africa's nine administration provinces. The *Bushmanland* is a geographical area within the Northern Cape, similar to others, for example, such as Namaqualand and parts of the Karoo. The area is very arid and due to low rainfall, infertile soil and highly saline groundwater, the area is mainly inhospitable. The area comprises a few rural towns (e.g. *Kenhardt*, *Pofadder* and *Aggeneys*) and mainly large farms. Raper *et al* (2014:42) describe the *Bushmanland* as a region "bounded approximately by the Orange River in the north, Namaqualand in the west, the Sak and Hartbees Rivers in the east, and Calvinia in the south. It is so named because the San, popularly called Bushmans, lived here." Robert Gordon also referred to the area in his 1779 travel diaries as "the wandering bushman's country" (Burger n.d.:12), but for the author of this paper it is home.

The focus of this paper is on the Kenhardt District, an administrative area within the Northern Province. This area is the second-largest district (4.28 million hectares) in the old divisional council, and is currently known as the Mgcawu District. It is also the district from whence the author hails. Helleland (2009:506) indicates that "people who are born in a particular area and have lived there for most of their lives feel stronger about the historical ties of the place names ..." The author's familiarity with the area has provided great support with data collection, as well as with discernment surrounding the authenticity of the data.

Originally, this area was the Bushman's kingdom. These people used parts of the quiver tree for their arrows and they took from nature what they needed. This community is gone, as well as the wildlife that used to roam here. Most of the Bushmen moved away, deep into the Kalahari desert. The rest have either assimilated with other peoples, died or were split up amongst the various farms in the district.

According to Tent (2015:68) there are two approaches to toponymic research: intensive and extensive. Intensive toponymic research studies the biography of the place names (who named the place, when was it named, why was it named, etc.) and it involves three basic domains – identification, documentation and interpretation. Extensive toponymic research is more straightforward and mostly easier to conduct since one can find most of the information from electronic resources. This approach is more strongly focused on the importance of identifying place-naming practices, as well as “the naming patterns and the spread of the type of name, or graphic feature and settlement patterns” (Tent 2015:72). This methodology uses what is available, e.g. toponymic corpora, gazettes and maps. This is the same approach adopted by other researchers such as Geršič and Kladnik (2016:10-11), Yeoh (1996) and Alderman (2015) in their heritage and toponymy investigations. Extensive toponymic research is often based on the intensive form, but the two approaches are not dependent upon each other (Tent 2015:70-72).

Extensive toponymic research is further concerned with the type of toponym, e.g. is it descriptive, associative, indigenous or eponymous (Tent 2015:71), but this paper wishes to illustrate the role of toponymy in the identification of cultural heritage. The extensive toponymic approach is more suitable for this investigation, since the author collected data from what is readily available. Furthermore, a triangulated approach was followed during the data collection; with data being collected from the following three main sources:

- a district map of the area that the author received from the Northern Cape Department of Agriculture;
- a list of farm names the author received from the Free State Surveyor General; and
- geographic information system (GIS) maps that the author received from the University of the Free State’s Department of Geology.

The Surveyor General’s list, as well as the Department of Agriculture’s map, were used for referencing and control, especially since the GIS maps only demarcate the Bushmanland and not the Kenhardt District. The South African Geographical Names Council’s (SAGNC) official list was also used for referencing. Even though this list consists of 59 141 national names, it did not include all the names as identified on the GIS maps. The SAGNC’s list was used to compare the co-ordinates of the names, but the author was unable to complete this part of the study by the time of publication.

The author identified a reliable source that knows the area well. He is an adult male who worked for the Northern Cape Department of Agriculture until 2001. He was the agricultural advisor of this district and still farms in the area. The author referred

back to him frequently when she was unsure about the data, and he was quite helpful. The investigator also has direct contact with the current head of the district's Department of Agriculture located in Upington in the Northern Cape. According to Geršič and Kladnik (2016:11), a reliable source to confirm information is also a valuable source when documenting and authenticating place names.

#### 4. DATA COLLECTION AND CLASSIFICATION

The GIS maps served as the main source of the study and everything written on the maps is documented (Figure 7.1 below). Names written in blue are classified as water elements (image 1), capital letters with a number indicate a farm (image 2), capital letters only indicate a town (image 3) and brown letters (image 4) indicate a landscape element.

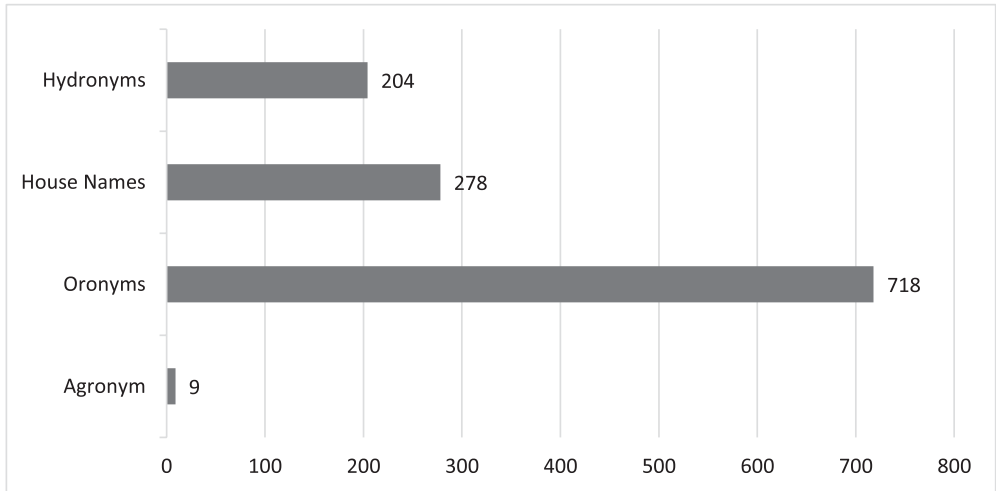
**Figure 7.1** Examples of the classification of place names on the GIS maps



The place names are classified according to the International Council of Onomastic Sciences' terminology list (ICOS 2017):

- hydronym (name of a body of water, e.g. a river or swamp);
- agronym (a populated place or name of a settlement);
- oronym (name of an elevated formation of the terrain, e.g. a mountain or hill); and
- farm name.

A total of 1 099 place names were collected from the GIS maps and the first classification (in Figure 7.2) yielded the following:

**Figure 7.2** First classification of place names

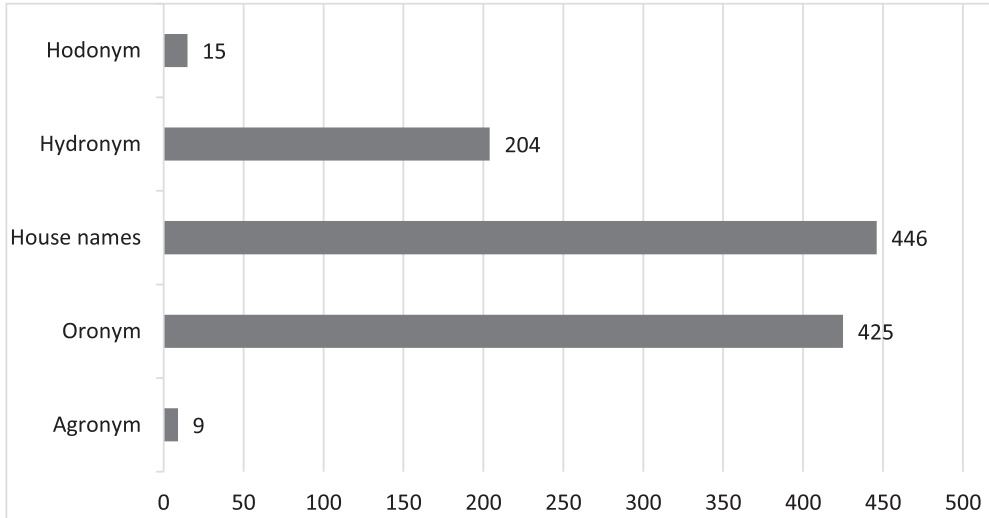
In total, there were 9 agronyms (e.g. *Pofadder*, *Onseepkans*, *Kenhardt*, *Pella* and *Kakamas*), 718 oronyms (e.g. *Abikwakop*, *Leeuwkop* and *T'Goob se Berg*), 278 farm names (e.g. *Grappies*, *Onderste Driekop*, *Liefdood* and *Kromputs*) and 204 hydronyms (e.g. *AlbertLouw se Vlei* and *Sakrivier*).

Even though this classification was performed according to how the names are reflected on the maps, the data indicated in this graph are not correct. According to the first classification, the farms known to the author, e.g. *Zandbergshoop*, *Loskop* and *Kareeboomdam*, are not included in the 278 farms, but are classified amongst the 718 landscape names.

Therefore, additional information about the farms in the district was collected by referring to a hand-drawn map used by the Agriculture District Office. This map indicates the farm names as they are indicated on the Surveyor General's information list. It correlates with the GIS maps, but it also shows the division of the farms of this area. Haarhoff (2017), who conducts research on the South African railways, also assisted with insightful information on the railway systems in this area.

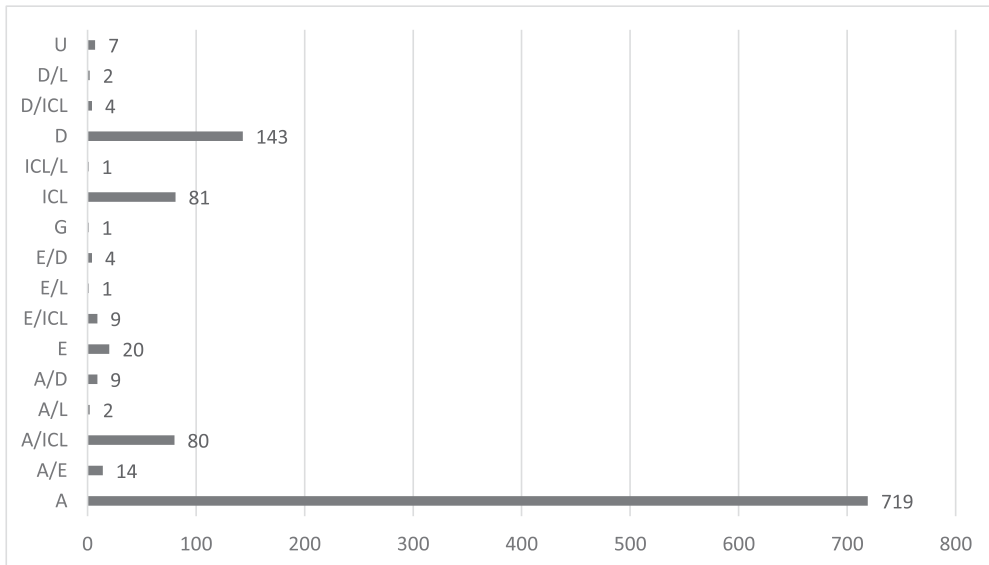
The distribution of the entities (reflected in Figure 7.3), with this new information in mind, emerges quite differently, as shown in Figure 7.2. Hodonyms are an addition to the classification and this term refers to a route name, e.g. a name of a street, railway or bridge (ICOS 2017).

**Figure 7.3** Second classification of place names



The names are also classified according to language, enabling the author to identify different language groups of this community (see Figure 7.4 below).

**Figure 7.4** Language distribution of the place names



A large variety of names is found in this area, for example:

- Afrikaans (A) – *Rooiberg, Oorkruis* and *Hartbeesrivier*
- English (E) – *Orange Fall, Mary's Rust* and *Lovedale*
- Greek (G) – *Pella*
- Indigenous Click Language<sup>1</sup> (ICL) – *Koekoep, Nouzees* and *Namies*
- Dutch (D) – *Boven End van Keel AfsnyLeegte, Kalkgaten* and *Welgenvonden*
- Unknown languages (U) – *Hellum* and *Spes Bona*

Compounded names are also prominent in this area, for example:

- Afrikaans/English (A/E) – *Driekop West* and *Adjoining Geelvloer*
- Afrikaans/ICL (A/ICL) – *T'amoeprivier, T'Caimoeeps Laagte* and *Konkonsiekop*
- Afrikaans/Dutch (A/D) – *Olyvenhoutskolk* and *Droogegrond Noord*
- English/ICL (E/ICL) – *Koegrabe West* and *Noriseep Middle*
- English/Dutch (E/D) – *Lower Zwart Modder* and *Valschvlei West*
- Dutch/ICL (D/ICL) – *N'Rougas Zuid*

Latin (L) is also reflected in the area's farm names, such as Annex in the case of *Annex Bladgrond* (A/L), *Lombardy Annex* (E/L), *Annex Koegab* (ICL/L) and *Klipbakken Annex* (D/L).

The dominant language distribution is Afrikaans (719), Dutch (143), ICL (81), or a combination of Afrikaans and ICL (80).

---

1 A term coined by Matthias Brenzinger (2017) referring to all the indigenous languages containing clicks, amongst others, Nama, Khoekhoekwab and NI I uu. This excludes the indigenous African languages, for example, Zulu, Swahili, etc.

## 5. DISCUSSION

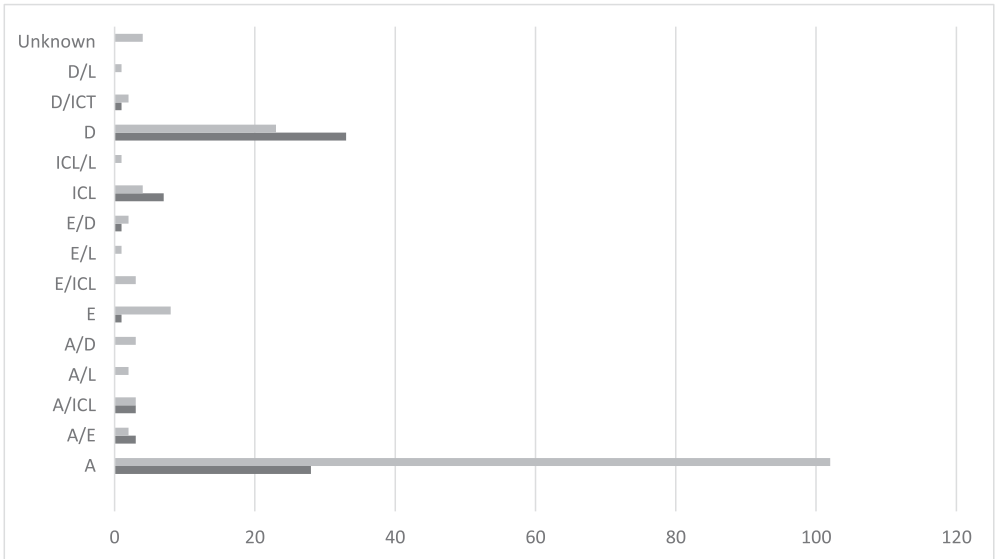
Graph 4.3 indicates the dominant groups in this area, namely Afrikaans, Dutch and ICL. The area is still dominantly Afrikaans, but no mother-tongue ICL speakers remain in this area. This agrees with the findings of Nicolaisen (1976:4), as indicated in Raper *et al* (2014:xviii), that “place names have a power of survival that other words in a language do not have, and tend to outlive in some instances even the language in which they originated.”

The language distribution of the area indicates that place names still contain the heritage of the Dutch and ICL speakers and this is something that correlates with other research pertaining to the area (Burger n.d.; McGranaghan 2012), as well as the presence of rock drawings in certain areas. However, it does not indicate why it is necessary to document these findings to conserve the surrounding area’s heritage. Therefore, the author took a closer look at the farm names since this was the only element that has changed over time and is still changing.

Originally there were 278 farms in this area, as indicated by the Surveyor General, and confirmed by the first classification of the data. Farms were sub-divided because they were too big to maintain. Furthermore, some farmers had numerous sons, with each son wanting his own piece of land. Land was also sold off on account of the harsh conditions brought on by drought and each division then got a new name. In some cases, these tracts of land were adjacent to an original farm, and it consequently got the same name as the main farm as a form of expansion and, in some cases, it was renamed by adding “Annex”. The renaming also refers to eponyms (commemorating or honouring a person or other named entities by using a proper name as a toponym), e.g. *Alicedale* and *Kotzeville* (Tent 2015:71). The author could identify 77 of the original 278 farms that were sub-divided into 161 farms (see Figure 7.5 and Table 7.1 below).



**Figure 7.5** Language distribution of the original and sub-divided farm names



**Table 7.1** Language distribution of the original and sub-divided farms (percentages)

	A	A/E	A/ICL	A/L	A/D	E	E/ICL	E/L	E/D	ICL	ICL/L	D	D/ICL	D/L	U
Original Farm	36.36	3.9	3.9	0	0	1.3	0	0	1.30	9.09	0	42.86	1.30	0	0
Sub-Divided Farm	63.35	1.24	1.86	1.24	1.86	4.97	1.86	0.62	1.24	2.48	0.62	14.29	1.24	0.62	2.48

The language distribution of the original farms, as indicated in Figure 7.5 and Table 7.1, is dominantly Dutch (42.86%), Afrikaans (36.36%) and ICL (9.09%), while the sub-divided farms are Afrikaans (63.35%), Dutch (14.29%) and English (4.97%). Compounded names, e.g. *Dwaalgeest West* and *Namies North*, are also more frequent amongst the sub-divided farms than in the original farms (12.42%).

Due to the division of farms and the name-giving process, the data show that a possible language shift is taking place with the naming of “new” farms, for example:

- *Zon-Onder* (Dutch spelling) – sub-divided into *Louisdal* (Afrikaans), *Witklip* (Afrikaans), *Alicedale* (English) and *Plessisdam* (Afrikaans)

- *Koegrabe* (ICL spelling) – sub-divided into *Koegrabe West* (Compounded ICL/English), *La Cocks Hoop* (Afrikaans) and *Rogowville* (English)
- *Kulsberg* (Afrikaans) and *Kareeboomkolk* (Afrikaans) became one farm, i.e. *Kareeboomdam* (Afrikaans).

The data, as indicated in Figure 7.5 and Table 7.1, confirms what Son (2015) states regarding the change in geographical landscapes. A new landscape within a new context results in new names and therefore a new heritage emerges due to the changing name-givers. It also refers to resolution VIII/9 of the United Nations Conference on the Standardisation of Geographical Names' (Kerfoot 2015:26), i.e. that it is important to document geographical names due to the socio-economic change affecting society and the landscape.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study was undertaken in preparation of a comprehensive names study and demonstrates the heritage value of place names in a rural area. It discusses the first draft of hydronyms, farm names, hodonoms, agronyms and oronyms found in this region, and describes the methodology used to collect the data and to classify the names.

The study furthermore contributes to the documentation of place names in a remote and inhospitable area, and it confirms, alongside other research, that place names contain or reflect heritage. The study contains anecdotal data that note the possibility of the loss of heritage, together with the place name itself, when there is no documentation about the names in a specific place.

The data show the legacy of four groups of inhabitants through the name landscape of the area, namely the Dutch (*ZevenPaard*, which translates to seven horses), Afrikaans (*Boesmanskop* – Bushman's Hill), English (*Hedley Plains*) and ICL groups, e.g. the Bushmen *Arribees*, which means 'the place of annoyance' (Nienaber & Raper 1983:77).

Follow-up research is necessary regarding the sub-divided farms. The hand-drawn map is outdated and there are still inconsistencies regarding the collected names. Further classifications regarding toponymical types of the data will in due course expand the focus of the research.

Fieldwork is necessary for the final stage of this study to assist in the formal classification of the toponyms. Son (2015:121-132) indicates other factors that contribute to place-name loss. Records have been destroyed and the original place names are no longer transmitted orally. With this knowledge in hand, it will be much easier to determine whether the younger generation is aware of the original farm names, as well as to determine their knowledge of the Bushmen's cultural heritage still distinguishable in this area. The study can also be broadened to include the entire Bushmanland and the Northern Cape, since this province is enriched by fascinating names, especially in the Namaqualand.

## REFERENCES

- ALDERMAN D. 2015. Naming streets, doing justice? Politics of remembering, forgetting, and finding surrogates for African American slave heritage. In: S Choo (ed). *Geographical names as cultural heritage: Proceedings of the International Symposium on Toponymy*. Seoul: Kyung Hee University Press. 193-228.
- BRENZINGER M. 2017. Keynote address. 18 September 2017. 2017 International Symposium on Place Names. Critical toponymy: Place names in political, historical and commercial landscapes. Windhoek: University of Namibia, 18-20 September 2017.
- BURGER W. n.d. Kenhardt-uit ons geskiedenis. Unpublished memoirs.
- CHOO S. 2015. Preface. In: S Choo (ed). *Geographical Names as cultural heritage: Proceedings of the International Symposium on Toponymy*. Seoul: Kyung Hee University Press. 9-11.
- GERŠIČ M & Kladnik, D. 2016. House names and field names as an important part of Slovenian Cultural heritage: A case study of the Lese Cadastral Municipality upper Carniola, Slovenia. *Nomina Africana*, 3(1):1-26.
- HAARHOFF J. 2017. E-mail correspondence, 7 June 2017. Name van treinstasies.
- HELLELAND B. 2009. Place names as identity markers. In: W Ahrens, S Embleton & A Lapierre (eds). *Names in multi-Lingual, multi-Cultural and multi-Ethnic Contact. Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Onomastic Sciences, August 17-22, 2008, York University, Toronto, Canada*. Toronto, Canada: York University. 501-510.
- HENSHAW A. 2006. Pausing along the journey: learning landscapes, environmental change, and toponymy amongst the Sikusilarmiut. *Artic Anthropology*, 43(1):52-66. <https://doi.org/10.1353/arc.2011.0047>
- ICOS (INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF ONOMASTIC SCIENCES). 2017. *List of key onomastic Terms*. [Retrieved 24 October 2017] <https://icosweb.net/drupal/terminology>

- JORDAN P. 2012. Place names as ingredients of space-related identity. In: OB Helleland (ed). *Names and Identities, Oslo Studies in Language*, 4(2):117-131.
- KERFOOT H. 2015. Tracing UNGEGN's evolving interest in geographical names as cultural heritage. In: S Choo (ed). *Geographical names as cultural heritage: Proceedings of the International Symposium on Toponymy*. Seoul: Kyung Hee University Press. 15-39.
- LANTMÄTERIET. 2018. *About us*. [Retrieved 12 June 2018] <https://www.lantmateriet.se/en/about-lantmateriet/Om-oss/>
- MCGRANAGHAN M. 2012. Foragers on the frontier: The IXam Bushmen of the Northern Cape, South Africa, in the nineteenth century. Unpublished thesis. Oxford university
- NIENABER G & RAPER PE. 1983. *Hottentot (Khoekhoen) place name*. Durban: Butterworth Publishers.
- RAPER PE, MÖLLER LA & DU PLESSIS LT. 2014. *Dictionary of Southern African place names*. Johannesburg/ Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers.
- SON H. 2015. The loss of place names and suggestions for its prevention in Korea. In: S Choo (ed). *Geographical names as cultural heritage: Proceedings of the International Symposium on Toponymy*. Seoul: Kyung Hee University Press. 117-138.
- TENT J. 2015. Approaches to research in toponymy. *Names: A Journal of Onomastics*, 63(2):65-74. <https://doi.org/10.1179/0027773814Z.000000000103>
- TORENSJÖ A. 2015. Good place-name practice in Sweden: Legislation and how to act as a place-name authority. In: S Choo (ed). *Geographical names as cultural heritage: Proceedings of the International Symposium on Toponymy*. Seoul: Kyung Hee University Press. 66-75.
- UNGEEN. 2018. *Resolutions adopted at the ten United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names. 1967, 1972, 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992, 1998, 2002, 2007, 2012*. Prepared for the United Nations by Natural Resources Canada. [Retrieved 29 May 2018] [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEEN/docs/RES\\_UN\\_E%20updated\\_1-10%20CONF.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEEN/docs/RES_UN_E%20updated_1-10%20CONF.pdf)
- WATT W. 2015. Getting the names right: Geographical names as intangible culture heritage and activities of the UNGEGN Working Group. In: S Choo (ed). *Geographical names as cultural heritage: Proceedings of the International Symposium on Toponymy*. Seoul: Kyung Hee University Press. 40-48.
- YEOH B. 1996. Street-naming and nation-building: Toponymic inscriptions of nationhood in Singapore. *The Royal Geographical Society with IBG*, 28(3):298-307.

# THREE TYPES OF COMMERCIAL PLACE-NAME USE – WITH EXAMPLES FROM AUSTRIA

**Peter Jordan**

Institute of Urban and Regional Research, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Austria;  
Faculty of the Humanities, University of the Free State, South Africa  
peter.jordan@oeaw.ac.at

## **Abstract**

Geographical names in general are markers and expressions of space-related identity, can relate people emotionally to geographical features and can reflect symbolically all the ingredients of their identity. This capacity of geographical names is also used by commercial enterprises and products in (at least) three different ways, as is highlighted and exemplified in this paper. A first type is the naming of enterprises and products after geographical features. Herewith the identity of geographical features and the (positive) feelings attributed to them are transferred to the enterprise or product. A second type is the naming of geographical features after enterprises to propagate the enterprise or to shape its image. As a third type, new commercial names are invented and applied to geographical features with the intention to hint at the commercially exploitable aspects of a geographical feature and to make it appear more attractive and up-to-date for commercial purposes.

The paper discusses the three types mentioned by examples from Austria with a focus on the selection mode of names, actual name use, and meaning for the linguistic landscape. The first type is exemplified by traditional landscape and region names applied to commercial enterprises and products. Prestigious names of valleys prominent through tourism, historical-cultural landscapes and provinces with a long history are reflected by names of accommodation and catering facilities, foodstuff brands, names of music groups etc. The main question considered here is why a certain name has been selected. The second type is exemplified by a sausage producer, who co-finances the local tourism

infrastructure and, in exchange, was entitled to name a mountain peak. Examples of the third type are invented names applied to tourism regions with the intention to point at the touristic assets of these regions.

**Keywords:** brand names, commerce, tourism, traditional place names

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Neither the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), nor the International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS) define the term *commercial name* in their glossaries (UNGEGN 2007; ICOS 2018). Only definitions for *product name* (proper name of a product such as a chocolate, car, cigarette etc., e.g. the Avensis by Toyota) and *brand name* (proper name of a brand, e.g. Toyota), can be found in the ICOS Glossary (ICOS 2018, p. 5, p. 1).

In the context of toponomastics, we could define *commercial name* as a name of an enterprise, a product or a brand applied to a geographical feature. However, commercial place-name use in the sense of a more comprehensive concept – as to be addressed in this paper – also includes the application of existing, sometimes very traditional and frequently prominent place names to commercial products or enterprises, i.e. in the opposite direction. This paper will consequently highlight three types of commercial place-name use:

- the use of existing place names for commercial purposes;
- the application of company, product and brand names to geographical features;
- the invention/creation of new commercial names for geographical features.

This may also be regarded as a kind of typology of commercial place-name use, but without claiming to be complete. The paper will present and discuss each of the three types and illustrate them with examples from Austria.

## 2. THE USE OF EXISTING PLACE NAMES FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES

Geographical names are markers and expressions of space-related identity, reflect symbolic ingredients of a geographical feature's identity, and support people's emotional relation to the feature marked by the name (e.g. see Helleland 2009; Jordan 2009, 2012, 2016). This capacity of geographical names is also capitalised on by commercial enterprises. By naming themselves and their products after geographical features, this transfers the imagined identity of geographical features and the image attributed to them to the enterprise or product.

This can be demonstrated by the example of landscape and region names in Austria that emerged from a study by Olivia Stummvoll (Stummvoll 2013)<sup>1</sup>. This study refers to the names of landscapes and regions, assuming they are – much more than names of populated places – used for their image and identity and not only to indicate the location or headquarter of an enterprise.

Landscape, however, is an intensively discussed concept – especially in German-speaking geography – and all but easy to handle. The author of the study thus combined it with the concept of region in the widest sub-national sense – hence including valleys, basins, “quarters”, “lands” or territorial units corresponding to the German term *Gau*, but excluding populated places (settlements), mountains and other relief features, water bodies, and in principle also administrative units – although some landscapes and regions are simultaneously administrative units.

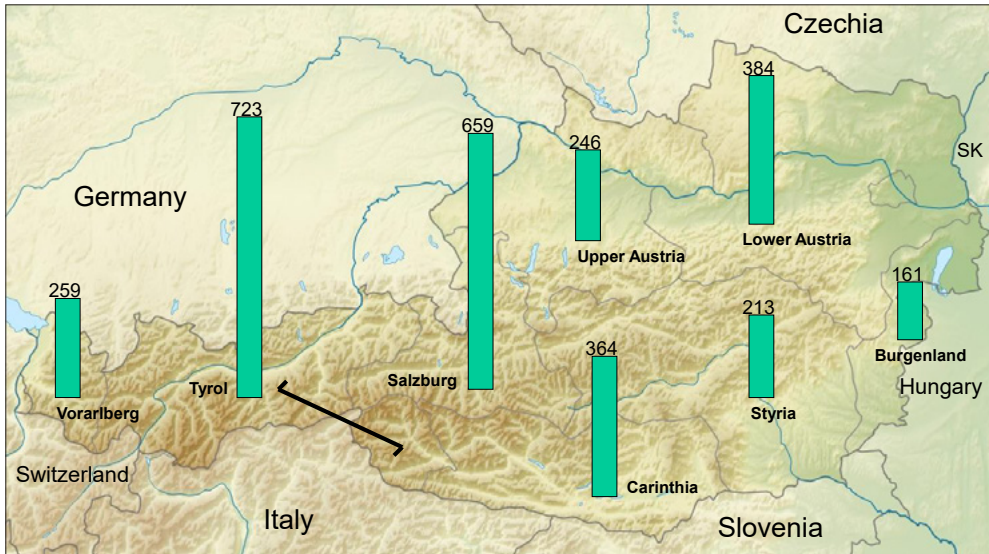
Landscapes and regions on three spatial levels were included: 8 at the level of provinces, 25 at the level of “quarters”, and 102 at the level of smaller features down to mountain valleys. Even the lowest level, however, still corresponds to features representable at the map scale 1:500 000.

Only concepts associated with landscapes and regions traditionally rooted in the consciousness of the local population were taken into account. Not regarded were recently constructed regional concepts like regions defined for tourism branding (like those discussed later in this article) or for scientific purposes (like geomorphological, agricultural or climatic regions). This means of course that on the one hand not all the territory of Austria is covered, and that overlapping of concepts may occur on the other.

---

1 Master thesis at the University of Vienna supervised by the author of this paper.

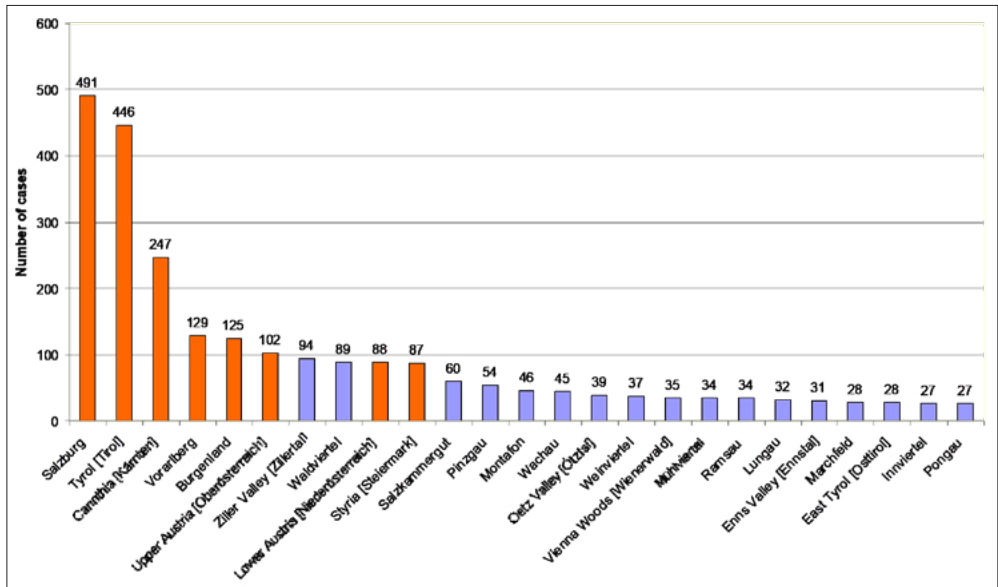
**Figure 8.1** Number of businesses using landscape & region names by provinces  
(Source: Stummvoll 2013)



One of the main findings of this study is that much more enterprises and commercial products are named after landscapes and regions in the western provinces of Austria (Tyrol [Tirol], Salzburg, Carinthia [Kärnten], Vorarlberg) than after similar geographical features in the East (Figure 8.1). This may be explained by the much stronger regional identification of people in western Austria and thus the higher prestige of landscapes and regions and their names, parallel to the public use and prestige of regional/local dialects. This in turn may be ascribed to the fact that the western provinces were distinct political entities from the Early Middle Ages with long and well-cultivated historical traditions, while the East was and is just the wider catchment area of Vienna [Wien] and Austria's central region.

Figure 8.2 shows the ranking of the top 25 landscape and region names in commercial use; in Red names of provinces (upper spatial level), in Violet names of landscapes and smaller regions (lower spatial levels). It is obvious that province names enjoy the highest ranking: 57% of all enterprises and commercial products named after landscapes and regions are named after provinces. This may be attributed to the fact that they are the first (below the federation) territorial-administrative level in the federal republic of Austria, i.e. federal units, and enjoy a high extent of self-government and autonomy. This supports their prominence and identity, and they are all well-rooted in public consciousness.



**Figure 8.2** Top 25 names in commercial use (Source: Stummvoll 2013)

It is, however, also clearly visible, that the frequency of their use decreases from West to East. This can be explained by the same reason as before: Salzburg, Tyrol and Carinthia are historical units with a long tradition. They are older than Austria and were independent states up to the High Middle Ages (Carinthia, Tyrol) and (in the case of Salzburg) even up to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The first rank of Salzburg, however, may be due to the fact that province and city bear the same name and that it was methodologically impossible to separate the two meanings. So, the prominence of the name *Salzburg* may very well be explained by the city famous for Mozart and the associated festival, rather than by the province.

An additional factor contributing to this ranking is certainly also the prestige of all western provinces (including Vorarlberg) as prominent international tourism destinations.

Burgenland is an exception in the East. It is a young province awarded to Austria from as late as 1921 and at that time received a new name. It was formerly an integrated part of Hungary and composed of several counties [megye]. However, identity building succeeded very quickly – supported by all political forces as well as tourism branding. The province has today, due to its Croatian and Hungarian minorities, a multicultural

Pannonian image with a touristic flavour. It ranks with 125 cases of commercial use ahead of Upper Austria [Oberösterreich] (102), Lower Austria [Niederösterreich] (88) and Styria [Steiermark] (87), all well-established traditional Austrian provinces.

In respect to Upper and Lower Austria this can be explained by the fact that the two are divided into “quarters” [Viertel], of which at least some are deeply rooted in public consciousness and which compete with provincial identities. The lower rank of Styria, however, is difficult to explain.

The first names of landscapes and regions other than federal provinces appear at ranks 7 and 8: *Ziller Valley* [Zillertal] and *Waldviertel*.

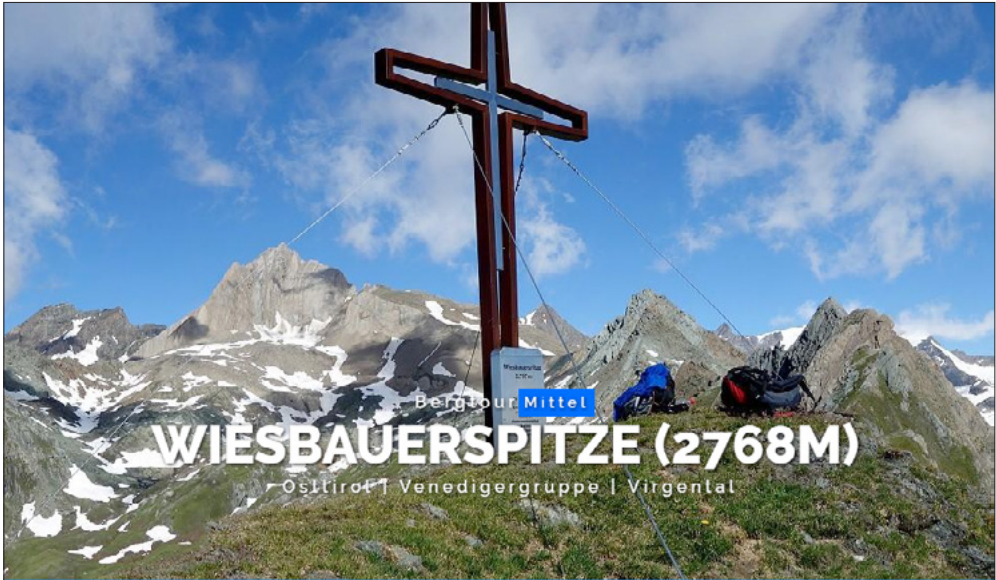
Ziller Valley in Tyrol is one of the touristic highlights in Tyrol leading into the Zillertal Alps [Zillertaler Alpen], a high mountain range. It is associated with original Alpine culture, alpinism and winter sports. In near to 70% of all cases its name is used by music ensembles and entertainers, demonstrating the name’s high level of prestige and its consequent frequent commercial use.

Waldviertel is rather an example for the opposite. It is certainly not for reasons of prestige that this name is used so frequently, but rather its strong identity and its character as an unspoiled landscape near to nature. It is a peripheric quarter of Lower Austria along the Czech border, which formed the Iron Curtain up to 1990. Its nature is characterised by a crystalline plateau with many ponds and Nordic vegetation. It is a remote, thinly populated and calm region – esteemed by the Viennese for its recreational value. This makes it very suitable as a brand for biological agricultural products, restaurants of this kind, etc.

### **3. APPLICATION OF COMPANY, PRODUCT AND BRAND NAMES TO GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES**

The application of company, product and brand names to geographical features does not cause major problems when such names are used for buildings and facilities owned by the naming company (shops, restaurants, offices, factories etc.), i.e. are used as ergonyms. It becomes problematic, however, when such names are applied to feature categories not owned by the name-giving enterprise, e.g., populated places, traffic areas and facilities, or even natural features like water bodies or relief features, i.e. in a transonymic way. This becomes even more of a problem when they replace traditional local names.

**Figure 8.3** Wiesbauerspitze ('Wiesbauer Peak') in East Tyrol (Source: Wiesbauer)



Such cases are so far rare in Austria, but one prominent case aroused some public interest: A mountain peak (altitude 2 768 m) in the federal province Tyrol with a traditional and locally used name (*Mullwitzkogel*) was, in the year 2007, renamed after a sausage producing enterprise (Wiesbauer) to *Wiesbauerspitze* ('Wiesbauer Peak') (Figure 8.3). For the sausage producer, with its focus on products for mountain hikers, this appeared a good opportunity to get his products associated with high mountains and to promote his image. He made an offer to the mayor of the local municipality to finance the rehabilitation of some hiking paths and to support tourism promotion. The mayor and the communal council accepted this offer and implemented the new name with touristic signage, tourism promotion leaflets, etc.

The mountain peak in question is certainly not one of the highest in Austria and Tyrol, and it does not have much more than local prominence. However, it does dominate the local panorama and has an old, traditional name of Slavonic origin (*Mullwitz*, derived from *mul* 'fine sand')<sup>2</sup>. The name is, moreover, the core of a local name system. Features in the surroundings of the mountain peak are named after it, e.g. a glacier (*Mullwitzkees*), a brook (*Mullwitzbach*), a forest, a shelter, hut etc. To change the core of the name system means destroying this system and concealing its origin.

<sup>2</sup> Information gratefully received from the Tyrolian Slavist Hubert Bergmann, Austrian Academy of Sciences.

It is also worth mentioning that according to Austrian legislation, the municipality has no competence in naming natural features. Its naming competence is confined to populated places (except individual buildings and farmsteads, which can be named by the owner). With natural features the competence rests with the owner, i.e. if the feature is located entirely on the owner's property – which is not the case in this matter. If the feature lies at the boundary of several properties or is shared among several owners, it is only the local usage of a name that counts. The topographers of the Austrian Federal Agency for Surveying and Mapping ask locals for the name they use for the feature – and this name then figures in the official Austrian topographical maps. Since it is still so that the local population uses predominantly the old name, this old name is still represented in the later editions of the official Austrian topographical maps (Figure 8.4).

**Figure 8.4** Mullwitzkogel as represented in the Austrian Map (Source: Federal Agency of Surveying and Mapping)



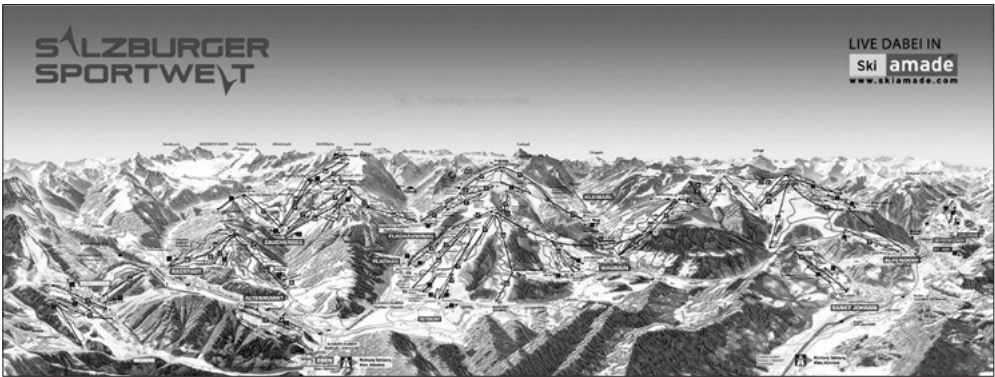
This scenario may of course change: the new commercial name is spread by signposts and tourism, and also through the internet, and it is to be expected that it is just a question of time until the name prevails in local use and until it will also be represented on official Austrian topographical maps.

The Austrian Board of Geographical Names, the Austrian expert body in this field, has commented critically on this name change and strongly objected to it. Its opinion was also spread (and predominantly supported) by the media. However, this had no effect on changing the attitude of the local communal authorities except perhaps preventing a future occurrence of the same situation.

#### 4. INVENTION/CREATION OF NEW COMMERCIAL NAMES FOR GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

This type of commercial place-name use comprises new stylish names applied to geographical features, mainly landscapes and regions, and (in Austria) mainly for the purpose of tourism branding and promotion. They figure on tourist maps and tourist leaflets as well as in articles on the internet, but not on official topographical maps and are also not in use by the local population.

**Figure 8.5** Sportwelt Amadé panorama (Source: [www.skiamade.com](http://www.skiamade.com))



One prominent example of this type in Austria is *Sportwelt Amadé* (*'Sports World Amadé'*) (Figure 8.5). The name stands for a winter sport region comprising several valleys and mountain ranges with traditional names in the federal province of Salzburg, but does not replace a traditional name. (This specific set of neighbouring valleys has no common local name.) The name alludes of course to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, the all-time hero of Salzburg, and causes people not only to associate it with the (in Austria certainly not singular) touristic offer, but also with Salzburg and its cultural image.

*Karnische Skiregion* (*'Carnic Ski Region'*) is again the touristic name for a large skiing region in Carinthia at the border with Italy, which is locally and traditionally known as *Nassfeld* (*'the wet field'*), in Friulian/Italian *Pramollo* (Figure 8.6). To tourism promoters, seemingly, the traditional name was not attractive enough and thus they replaced it with a name referring to the larger mountain range (Karnische Alpen *'Carnic Alps'*) and the touristic offer (skiing). The name achieved some prominence, but never replaced *Nassfeld* in local use, and has more recently almost been abandoned in favour of the old name.

Reasons for this lack of sustainability may have been (a) the strong persistence of the old name in local and regional use; (b) the fact that skiing is not as fashionable as before with the rising popularity of various other winter sports (e.g., snowboarding, hiking).

**Figure 8.6** Karnische Skiregion ('Carnic Ski Region') (Source: Nassfeld Pressegger See Tourism Board)



The name *Vulkanland* ('Land of the Volcanoes') was brought up in the course of an administrative reform in the federal province of Styria including the merging of several districts. The idea arose to give a district composed of two former districts this new name as the common official name. The name, alluding to the volcanic past of the region, was promoted by the regional tourism board and had already been used for tourism promotion. However, real volcanoes existed only in remote geological times. Former volcanic activity has left only small geological and morphological traces in the shape of basalt rocks and hills (Figure 8.7). Thus, 'Land of the Volcanoes' is a somewhat exaggerated name promising something that cannot really be found there. The assigning of this name to the new district was discussed for some time, but after a negative statement by the Styrian names board, it was also discarded by the local population and administrators. The name is still used as tourism brand, but not as the official name of the administrative unit.

**Figure 8.7** Basalt rocks and hills typical for southeastern Styria

## 5. CONCLUSION

According to the theories of critical toponomastics (e.g. see Berg & Vuolteenaho 2009; Rose-Redwood, Alderman & Azaryahu 2010), power relations in society determine place names and place naming. Since in our current societies commerce and commercial enterprises play an ever-increasing role and sometimes even supercede states and other public authorities, it is little surprise that naming proceeds along commercial lines. In most countries, however, it meets the fierce opposition not only of an intellectual elite, but also of ordinary local people, since traditional place names are a part of the cultural heritage and relate people to their place. The replacement of these traditional names by new commercial names interrupts identity ties, and on a more intellectual level also closes windows to the cultural history of a place, frequently also damaging an interrelated system of place names.

The examples from Austria show that commercial place-name use can mean very different things: the replacement of traditional names by names of enterprises and products, the invention of attractive names for features that had no common name before, but also the application of traditional and prominent geographical names on enterprises and their products. This latter use of the symbolic and identity-building power of place names for commercial purposes meets no objection by toponymists. To the contrary, it supports

the use of traditional names and spreads their knowledge, stabilises in this way the inherited namespace, which is fully in line with the intentions of the preservation of place names as part of the cultural heritage and place-name standardisation as promoted by the United Nations (e.g. see Jordan, Bergmann, Cheetham & Hausner 2009).

## REFERENCES

- BERG LD & VUOLTEENAHO J (EDS). 2009. *Critical toponymies: The contested politics of place naming*. Farnham (UK): Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
- HELLELAND B. 2009. Place names as means of landscape identity. In: P Jordan, H Bergmann, C Cheetham & I Hausner (eds). *Geographical names as a part of the cultural heritage* (= Wiener Schriften zur Geographie und Kartographie, 18). Wien: Institut für Geographie und Regionalforschung der Universität Wien, Kartographie und Geoinformation. 25-31.
- ICOS (INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF ONOMASTIC SCIENCES). 2018. *List of key onomastic terms*. [Retrieved 25 January 2018] <https://icosweb.net/drupal/sites/default/files/ICOS-Terms-en.pdf>
- JORDAN P. 2009. Place names as ingredients of space-related identity. In: P Jordan, H Bergmann, C Cheetham & Hausner (eds). *Geographical names as a part of the cultural heritage* (= Wiener Schriften zur Geographie und Kartographie, 18). Wien: Institut für Geographie und Regionalforschung der Universität Wien, Kartographie und Geoinformation. 33-39.
- JORDAN P. 2012. Geographische Namen als Ausdruck menschlicher Raumbindung. *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Geographischen Gesellschaft*, 154:67-88. <https://doi.org/10.1553/moegg154s67>
- JORDAN P. 2016. The meaning of bi- or multilingual naming in public space for the cultural identity of linguistic minorities. *Nomina Africana*, 30(1):27-44.
- JORDAN P, BERGMANN H, CHEETHAM C & HAUSNER I (EDS). 2009. *Geographical names as a part of the cultural heritage* (= Wiener Schriften zur Geographie und Kartographie, 18). Wien, Institut für Geographie und Regionalforschung der Universität Wien, Kartographie und Geoinformation.
- ROSE-REDWOOD R, ALDERMAN D & AZARYAHU M. 2010. Geographies of toponymic inscription: new directions in critical place-name studies. *Progress in Human Geography*, 34 (4):453-470. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132509351042>
- STUMMVOLL O. 2013. Geographische Namen als Ausdruck raumbezogener Identität. Dargestellt am Beispiel der kommerziellen Verwendung von Landschafts- und Gebietsnamen in Österreich. MA dissertation. Vienna: University of Vienna.
- UNGEGN (UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES). 2007. *Glossary of terms for the standardization of geographical names*. New York: United Nations, ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/85.



# THE CHALLENGES OF USING SLOVENIAN CHORONYMS IN BRAND NAMES

**Matjaž Geršič,<sup>1</sup> Drago Kladnik,<sup>1</sup> and Katja Vintar Mally<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Anton Melik Geographical Institute, ZRC SAZU, Slovenia

<sup>2</sup>Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

matjaz.gersic@zrc-sazu.si

## Abstract

This article begins by presenting one of the possible definitions of choronyms, which was used in the study conducted. This is followed by a presentation of various choronym sources and the various methods used to collect the choronyms, in which special attention is directed to the surveying method. In addition, the cognitive map method is also highlighted along with some of its associated results. Moreover, the article also briefly presents the corpus of Slovenian choronyms compiled as part of this study and its attributes as the starting points for further research, including from the perspective of possibly using these names for commercial purposes.

The main focus is on the role of choronyms in marketing, brand names, and the names of companies. The article highlights certain basic choronym-related characteristics that are best known among Slovenian consumers, and it evaluates the use of choronyms in marketing. It also presents the protection measures for product brands with a protected designation of origin in the EU and Slovenia.

The article elucidates some of the best-known international disputes related to this topic that Slovenia has been involved in.

**Keywords:** brand name, choronym, geographical name, Slovenia

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of place branding is well established as a place-marketing practice and has been the focus of a growing body of research. A critical element of any branding exercise is the brand name itself, and this is a topic that has received little discussion in relation to place brands. This perhaps arises from a common-sense view that a place brand name and toponym are usually synonymous. If toponyms serve the role of brand names for places, it is helpful to briefly examine how well they match these characteristics. This lays the foundations for developing a more critical perspective on the relationship between place branding activities and toponymy (Medway & Warbnaby 2014:155-156).

Choronyms make up one of the groups of geographical names. In terms of both spelling and usage, choronyms have certain specific features, among which unclear denotation of the named object is very common (Geršič 2017); a feature that is particularly prominent with the names of traditional regions.

**Figure 9.1:** *Gorenjka*, a Slovenian choronym-based chocolate and pastry brand name that has been on the market since 1958 (Gorenjka 2017)



Brand names, which are part of intellectual property and are used to distinguish between goods and services (Puharič 2001:216), are a very old phenomenon. According to Karl Moore and Susan Reid (2008), they date back to 2250 BC, when they are believed to have appeared in the Indus Valley, and David Wengrow (2008) argues that they already appeared during the Urban Revolution in Mesopotamia in the fourth millennium BC. The history of their identity and importance in marketing has been presented in a concise manner by Ross Petty (2016). Even though the importance of brand names increased significantly during the industrial revolution, they were already common during the Middle Ages (Richardson 2008). Their dimensions, especially those referring to the

development and strengthening of related legislation in the second half of the nineteenth century, have been covered by many articles (e.g. Duguid 2009; Duguid, Da Silva Lopes & Mercer 2010; Higgins 2013). Publications offering sound arguments for the exceptional potential of brand names in marketing appeared relatively early on (e.g. Hampton 1903).

In recent years there has been growing interest in geographical indications, which are also classified among distinctive signs (Puharič 2001:219), and their protection is considered an increasingly important segment of marketing strategies that emphasise the national and regional - and increasingly local - origin of diverse produce and products, which is intended to encourage potential customers to purchase them (Menapace & Moschini 2014; Rippon 2014; Charles & Spielmann 2014; Conneely & Mahon 2015). The buyer or user perspective on this topic has been elucidated by Georges Girraud (2002).

The role of geographical names in brands and geographical indications has long been overlooked. The New Zealand geographer Warren Moran (1983) was among the first to highlight it, and the Israeli geographer Naftali Kadmon (2000) also ascribes it great importance in his excellent book *Toponymy: The Lore, Laws and Language of Geographical Names*. It has gradually been recognised as a geographical discipline (Pike 2009). It should also be noted that toponym specialists have only recently elucidated the great importance of standardising geographical names from this perspective (Gammeltoft, Frani & Blake 2015).

This topic is also discussed by numerous shorter but comprehensive and serious online contributions. Here, a shorter contribution by an internationally prominent urban studies theorist, Richard Florida (2011), should first be mentioned. In it, Florida presents a new geographical discipline, calling it the “geography of global brands.”

In Slovenia, geographical names as brands have not yet been systematically analysed, although there have been a few articles that have examined chrematonyms from this perspective (e.g. Gložančev 2002; Dobrovoljc 2009). The first Slovenian study to also cover the basic commercial aspects of geographical names deals specifically with choronyms (Geršič 2016). A similar topic, only within a regional and thematically narrower scope, was already examined a few years earlier using the case of Croatian Istria (Oliva & Marjanović 2011).

This article presents the findings of an extensive choronym-related study (Geršič 2016) that examines the role of choronyms in marketing. The introduction presenting the state of the art in this area is followed by a presentation of the methodology used, theoretical background, and, finally, research results, which are presented in four separate subsections. Key findings are summarised in the conclusion.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Based on the definition of the Slovenian term *pokrajina*, i.e. ‘region’—“an area with a unique combination of natural and social elements that distinguish it from neighbouring regions and carries a proper name or is perceived as a region by its inhabitants, who identify with it, and in the technical sense is considered an area of land that is presented on maps of various scales as a delimited area and named, but does not involve a state (even though it may also be an administrative unit)” (Geršič 2016:10)—various sources were first analysed to identify the Slovenian choronyms they contain. The study used sixty-five (65) historical maps (created before 1900), 749 maps created after 1900, eight official registers from the Slovenian Surveying and Mapping Authority, thirteen geographical regionalisations, and a few other sources.

In the second phase of the study, a survey was conducted to determine how familiar people are with Slovenian regions in general. Based on a random sample of fifteen to seventy-five years old inhabitants prepared by the Slovenian Statistical Office, the survey included 2500 residents from eastern Slovenia and 2500 residents from western Slovenia. The response rate was around 14%. In addition to general questions intended for statistical analysis of the population, the survey questionnaire comprised two main parts: the first included various questions about the names and naming of regions (e.g. What name do you use for the region you live in? Please provide the names of your neighbouring regions. Please list old names of regions that have mostly been forgotten. Do you think it makes sense to use the names of regions in the names of products, brand names, and names of companies? Why? List the names of products or brands that contain the names of regions, etc.), and in the second part respondents had to draw a cognitive map.

Respondents were given an A3 1:650,000 map of Slovenia as the basis for their graphic expression. The map contained the national border, major towns, the basic river network, and Mount Triglav as the highest Slovenian mountain. Respondents were asked to

draw or delimit the Slovenian regions and name them. They were given the following instructions: “Draw the Slovenian regions that you know on the map” and “Name each region drawn.”

The cognitive maps created, which contained both the regions’ borders and names, were first scanned and then digitised. Digitisation was carried out manually: the demarcated areas were copied into a geographic information system. The data obtained and the thematic maps were analysed using ArcMap 10.3.1. The following operations were used: 1) Polygon to Raster, 2) Zonal Statistics – Sum, 3) Zonal Statistics – Majority, 4) Zonal Statistics – Variety, 5) and Raster Calculator – Divide/Sum/Minus.

### **3. BRANDS AND GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS**

Brands and geographical indications fall within the substantive framework of intellectual property (Puharič 2001:209). They are part of a comprehensive range of marketing products and services because, if properly designed, they enhance the profile of a specific area, product, or service, and strengthen their positive image among users (Geršič & Nared 2014). From the legal perspective, a brand entails “any sign or combination of signs that distinguish the goods or services of one company from those of another company and can be graphically presented” (Puharič 2001:217). Brands evoke various associations in consumers, and so a strong emotional relationship may develop between them and the brand over time. Consumers perceive brands as bearers of a specific value and hence positive associations are a guarantee for the brand’s market success (Pucelj 2013). The name of a brand has many associations in people’s minds, and these make up the overall brand image (Kotler 2004:11).

The main skill of marketing specialists is their ability to design, maintain, protect, and strengthen brands, which is defined as the art and foundation of marketing. The American Marketing Association defines a brand as a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods or services of a seller and to differentiate them from competitors. Marketing specialists argue that a brand is a complex symbol that can convey up to six levels of meaning: attributes, benefits, values, culture, personality, and user (Kotler 2004:418-419).

Brands are not only about the external appearance, but also the content that is hidden at first glance. A brand’s multifaceted nature can be compared to an iceberg. The logo and the name make up the visible part, and the values, intellect, and culture make up the larger, hidden or invisible part of the branding iceberg (De Chernatony 2002:23).

The development of a brand's identity requires additional decisions on the brand's name, logo, colours, slogan, and symbols (Kotler 2004:420). The branding of products and services presents many challenges, in which decisions on the brand itself (whether to use a brand on the market or not), sponsorship, the brand's name, strategy, and its positioning are of key importance (Kotler 2004:425).

The majority of brands are linked to everyday consumption. The names of landscapes, cities, individual buildings, and other geographical features can also have important symbolic value. This gave rise to the concept of a territorial brand, which can be understood as a destination management product. There are several definitions of destination management. It is generally accepted that this entails complex management of tourism in a specific geographical area, where tourism is an important industry (Brezovec 2004:2). A destination must be set up as a strategic business unit. Only if it is managed professionally can it present an independent and high-quality brand. The destination should be linked with supra-regional sites, special farm products, and so on (Ovsenik 2003:63).

Sue Warren highlights the importance of a brand and its six dimensions for effective destination management: people (those living at the destination), icon (visual attraction of the destination), entrepreneurs (tourism providers), individuality and authenticity of tourism services, and discoveries (new destinations and stories) (Brezovec 2004:2). The profile of individual landscapes can also be raised through certification, whereby landscapes turn into brandscapes. Hence, the term "brandscaping" has become established with regard to certification in the English-speaking environment and international communication. Something similar applies to cities. For example, Paris cannot be imagined without its Eiffel Tower, London without its Big Ben, New York without the Statue of Liberty, Sydney without its picturesque Opera House etc. (Robinson 2008:19). These types of symbols could certainly be found in the majority of Slovenian regions as well, which would help raise their profile at various levels (local, regional, and national).

The most common values that reflect an area's orientation include quality, openness, innovation, responsibility, fairness, respect for the individual, empowerment, passion, flexibility, teamwork, and pride. One should be aware that values are difficult to communicate. Overt marketing may seem disingenuous, but not communicating these values may result in people not knowing the basic characteristics of a specific area or

what it stands for. Personality or identity depends on how the big idea, vision, and values are communicated to the public. When it comes to communicating your brand to the public, the following is worth considering (Design Council 2013):

- **Storytelling:** an established technique is to tell a story through communication elements, such as corporate identity, stationery, brochures, and so on;
- **Credibility:** the credibility of your brand's offer must be solid;
- **Differentiation:** a great deal of branding is about defining and presenting a point of differentiation in the sector you are operating in; success in this area may be a great advantage;
- **Engaging with stakeholders:** cooperation with stakeholders can also raise your profile; if your communication is convincing, they will listen to what you have to say;
- **Focusing your product portfolio:** think carefully about the best way to present what you are offering, even though this means setting things up differently from your internal organisation;
- **Multiple brands and brand "stretch":** if you have a wide range of products or services, you will have to consider whether it is best to use an umbrella brand to present what you have to offer or whether it makes more sense to develop a completely distinct brand for each set of services;
- **Endorsed brands:** this is where you create a new brand in its own right, but allow the "parent" brand to feature as an endorsement of the new brand;
- **Reinvigorating your brand:** it is important to refresh the brand every once and a while and to adapt it to new demands, challenges, and trends;
- **Naming:** brand names are an important aspect of setting the tone and personality of your brand, as well as being a key element in marketing activity. A name can be a means of differentiation and should reflect the overall brand strategy.

Geographical indications are also distinctive signs, just like brands. They inform the business participants of where a certain item comes from, but at the same time they can also convey a message about a special quality or any other special product feature that is linked directly to a specific place or a wider area or region. Their function is to help distinguish products of the same type from one another based on their geographical origin. France is among the leading countries in ensuring legal protection of geographical

indications and has developed two types of indications of origin: *indications de provenance* 'indications of provenance' and *appellations d'origine* 'designations of origin' (Puharič 2001:219-220). Three types of geographical indications are used in Slovenia; they are presented in detail in Section 4.3.

## 4. RESEARCH RESULTS

### 4.1 The role of choronyms in marketing

Considering that naming is a basic element of brands and especially geographical indications, the role of geographical names and especially choronyms was also examined among the respondents. To this end, they were given the following question: "Do you think it makes sense to use names of regions in brands and why?" This was an open-ended question and so, to make analysis easier, the answers were sorted into several logical categories.

We received 305 replies from western Slovenia. The majority of respondents (241) believed that the use of choronyms made sense, 33 thought it did not, and the rest (31) did not have a clear opinion on the matter.

Among the reasons for using choronyms in marketing, the majority of respondents highlighted identifiable origin; this means that the name itself makes it clear where an individual product or business comes from.

Because this was an open-ended question, many answers could not be categorised, and so the second place in frequency was the category "Other." This was followed by replies from respondents indicating that they believed that such a name makes a product or service better known, promotes the entire country or individual regions, and increases the market value of a product, service, or company. Five percent of respondents or less thought such a name promotes a region, enhances tradition, makes a product or service better known, helps promote a product or service, and provides identity to the product.

Respondents that disagreed with using choronyms this way provided various arguments for this. The majority believed that they should more strongly emphasise Slovenian identity and they also listed several reasons that were categorised under "Other." In addition, many of them argued that the regions are too small or that using choronyms makes no sense. This was followed by argumentation that the regions are poorly known or that their names are unknown, and that it makes sense to use such names only for certain products.



Some respondents, who answered that they did not have a clear opinion on the matter, added that promoting the country is more important than promoting regions, that the price of the product is more important than such promotion, that they had not thought about it yet, or that this area shows too great an interference of politics.

We received 323 replies from eastern Slovenia. The majority of respondents (247) believed that using choronyms for marketing made sense, 36 disagreed, and 40 did not have a clear opinion on the matter.

These respondents, too, provided identifiable origin as the main reason for using choronyms in the names of products, brands, and companies. This was followed by those that highlighted that using choronyms in marketing results in greater market or added value for the product, and those whose answers were categorised under "Other." The same share of respondents believed that using choronyms makes a product or service better known and that it helps promote a specific region. Fewer than 5% stated that this could help promote Slovenia, that the names reflect the features of individual regions, that this helps enhance a region's profile, and that such names draw attention to a higher quality of products or services.

Respondents that were against using choronyms in brand names and the names of companies largely argued that it is sufficient to highlight Slovenian origin, that the regions are too small, and that in general it does not make sense to use choronyms in brand and company names. In terms of frequency, this was followed by respondents that believed the regions are too poorly known; some replies were categorised under "Other;" and some respondents thought that such names are associated with the region rather than the product, that there are more suitable methods available to promote products, and that such promotion is restricted by EU standards.

Respondents that did not have a clear opinion on this nonetheless added certain comments. Among other things, they stated that it is difficult to generalise and that using choronyms in marketing would make sense for certain products, whereas it would not for others, that quality is more important than the information on where a product came from, that Slovenia is too small, and that promotion should focus on Slovenia as a whole rather than individual regions.

A comparison of replies from western and eastern Slovenia showed no significant differences.

We were also interested in how well the respondents knew specific Slovenian brands that contain choronyms. At least 2% listed the following ten brands: *Gorenjka* chocolate (derived from *Gorenjska* ‘Upper Carniola’), *bohinjski sir* / *Bohinc* ‘cheese from the Bohinj Valley’, *alpsko mleko* ‘Alpine milk’, *prleška tunka* ‘Prlekija pork confit’, *idrijske čipke* ‘Idrija lace’, *belokranjska pogača* ‘White Carniolan cake’, *celjske mesnine* ‘Celje processed meat’, *nanoški sir* ‘Nanos cheese’, *bovški sir* ‘Bovec cheese’, and *štajerska vina* ‘Styrian wines’.

## 4.2 Geographical indications and related disputes

Slovenia uses three types of geographical indications at the national level that can reflect regional identity (geographical origin). Individual types of national protection have their relevant equivalents at the EU level. Differences can only be found in the naming and appertaining symbols, whereas the content is the same. Producers that wish to protect their product must first do so at the national level and afterwards also with the European Commission (Ministrstvo za kmetijstvo... 2015). In terms of geographical names, a distinction is made between *geografsko poreklo* ‘geographical origin’ and *geografska označba* ‘geographical indication’. At the EU level, geographical origin is equivalent to “protected designation of origin” and geographical indication is equivalent to “protected geographical indication.” The third type of national protection is referred to as *tradicionalni ugled* ‘traditional reputation’, for which the term “traditional speciality guaranteed” is used at the EU level (Ministrstvo za kmetijstvo ... 2015; Seznam slovenske hrane ... 2015). A fourth type of protection is also used at the national level, referred to as *višja kakovost* ‘high quality’, but this is not necessarily connected with a specific geographical area (Ministrstvo za kmetijstvo ... 2015).

**Figure 9.2** Slovenian and EU product indications and designations (Kraševka 2017)

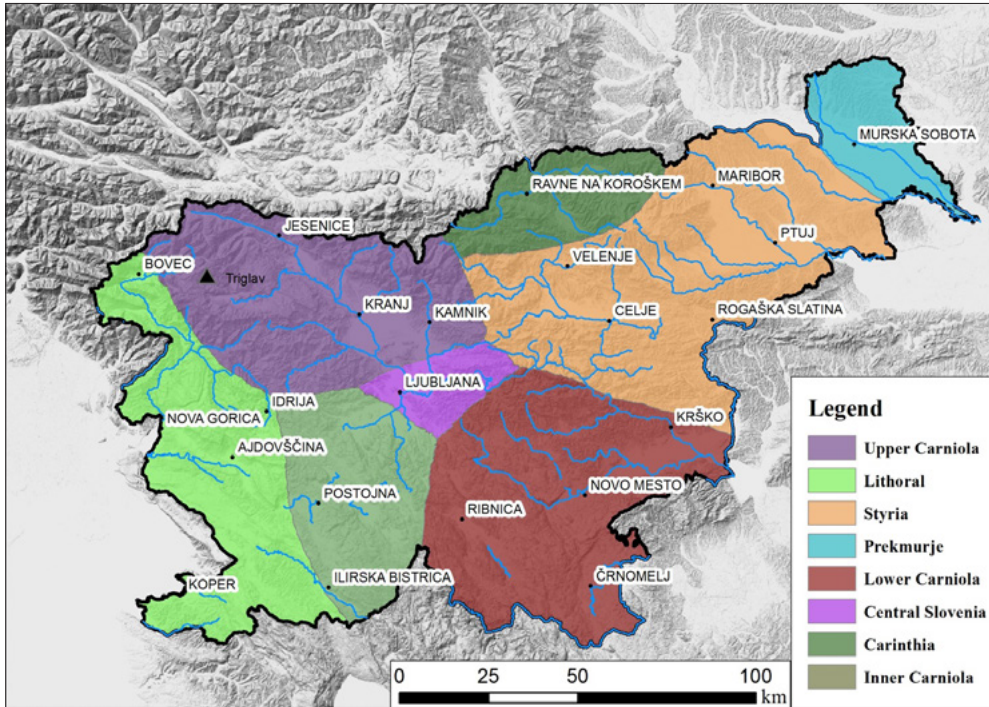


The rules for protecting a specific product through a specific indication or designation are governed by the Slovenian Agriculture Act, the Rules on the Procedures for Granting Certificates of Specific Character for Agricultural Products and Foodstuffs, and the Rules on the Protection of Geographical Indications and Designations of Origin for Agricultural Products and Foodstuffs. At the EU level, this area is governed by Council Regulation (EEC) no. 2081/92 and Council Regulation (EEC) no. 2082/92 (Ministrstvo za kmetijstvo ... 2015).

The procedure for obtaining the statuses mentioned above begins based on the application prepared by the applicant and addressed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Food later in the procedure. In the next stage, the application is addressed by the certification authority, which assesses conformity and control, and, in the final stage it is again handled by the responsible ministry, which grants the relevant certificate to the product. Protection procedures may take up to ten years (Posebni kmetijski pridelki in živila 2015). "Protected designation of origin is the name of a geographical area (region) or country used as a designation for an agricultural product or foodstuff that comes entirely from such an area and is made from raw materials produced in that same area" (Ministrstvo za kmetijstvo ... 2015). This status can be obtained by products whose qualities or properties are exclusively determined by natural and human factors, and whose production, processing, and preparation take place within the determined geographical area, whose influence is mirrored in the product (Ministrstvo za kmetijstvo ... 2015).

With this type of protection, one comes up against the issue of the extent of an individual region. In the survey, we sought to address this challenge through cognitive maps. Respondents delineated and named a total of 3769 areas. If, based on all the areas named, the predominant names (taking absolute values into account) are established and the territories named are delimited, eight main regions can be identified at the level of the entire country (Figure 9.3).

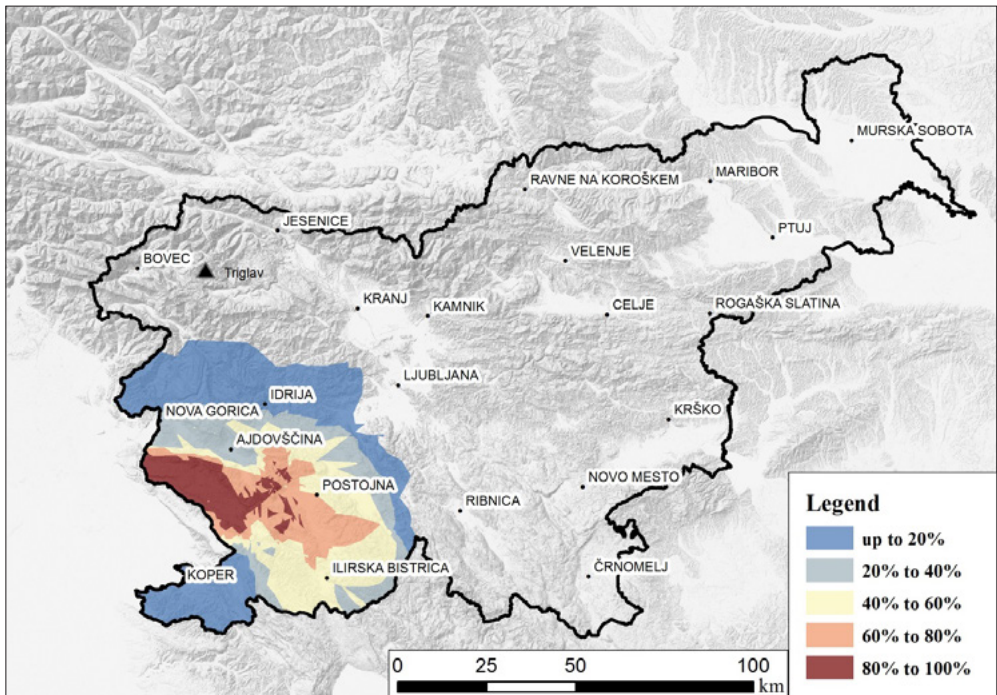
**Figure 9.3** The most frequently named Slovenian regions



A map with inserted borders of individual regions (Figure 9.4) can form a credible basis for determining the borders of the geographical area (or region) of origin of a product that holds a protected geographical indication status and contains the name of a specific region.

A similar analysis was carried out for the individual names of regions that were provided by more than ten respondents.

**Figure 9.4** The region *Kras* 'Karst Plateau' as delimited on the cognitive map by respondents from all of Slovenia



Eleven Slovenian products currently hold protected designation of origin (PDO) status: *nanoški sir* 'Nanos cheese', *sir tolminc* 'Tolmin cheese', *bovški sir* 'Bovec cheese', *mohant* 'a pungent cheese product', *ekstra deviško oljčno olje Slovenske Istre* 'extra virgin olive oil from Slovenian Istria', *kočevski gozdni med* 'Kočevje forest honey', *kraški med* 'Karst Plateau honey', *piranska sol* 'Piran salt', *kraška jagnjetina* 'Karst Plateau lamb', *kraški ovčji sir* 'Karst Plateau sheep cheese', and *namizne oljke Slovenske Istre* 'olives from Slovenian Istria'. Seven of them have already been certified, and eight have also been registered with the European Commission (Commission européenne 2015; Posebni kmetijski pridelki in živila 2015).

In order for a product to obtain protected geographical indication (PGI) status, at least one of its production stages must take place within the determined geographical area and a link must be indicated between the product and the area (Ministrstvo za kmetijstvo ... 2015). Twenty-three (23) Slovenian products currently hold this status: *šebreljski želodec* 'Šebrelje pressed sausage', *kraški pršut* 'Karst Plateau prosciutto', *štajersko-prekmursko bučno olje* 'Styria–Prekmurje pumpkin seed oil', *zgornejavinjski*

*želodec* 'Upper Savinja pressed sausage', *prleška tünka* 'Prlekija pork preserved in lard', *ajca izpod Kamniških planin* 'Kamnik Hills eggs', *vipavski pršut* 'Vipava prosciutto', *ptujski luk* 'Ptuj onions', *kraški zašinek* 'Karst Plateau ham', *kraška panceta* 'Karst Plateau pancetta', *vipavska panceta* 'Vipava pancetta', *vipavski zašinek* 'Vipava ham', *kranjska klobasa* 'Carniolan sausage', *vipavska salama* 'Vipava salami', *gorenjski tepkovec* 'Upper Carniolan pear brandy', *brkinski slivovec* 'Brkini Hills plum brandy', *kraški brinjevec* 'Karst Plateau juniper brandy', *kosteljska rakija* 'Kostel rakia', *dolenjski sadjevec* 'Lower Carniolan fruit brandy', *slovenski med* 'Slovenian honey', *brinjevec* 'juniper brandy', *domači rum* 'rum', and *pelinkovec* 'wormwood liqueur'. Twelve of these are certified and the same number are registered with the European Commission (Commission européenne 2015; Posebni kmetijski pridelki in živila 2015; Ministrstvo za kmetijstvo ... 2015).

**Figure 9.5:** Štajerski hmelj 'Styrian hops' is the most recent Slovenian product protected by the European Commission (Flickr 2017)



Products holding the status of a “traditional speciality guaranteed” or “traditional reputation” are products whose production method or raw materials are traditional (Šeme Irman 2008). Products currently registered as such in Slovenia include *prekmurska gibanica* 'Prekmurje layered pastry', *idrijski žlikrofi* 'Idrija-style miniature ravioli', and *belokranjska pogača* 'White Carniola cake'. All three have also been

registered with the European Commission (Commission européenne 2015; Posebni kmetijski pridelki in živila 2015). Except for one product, their names are derived from the name of a town, a region, or the country itself, which firmly confirms their link to their geographical environment.

Such names can also cause various disputes, which has also been the case with some Slovenian brands. Slovenia has been experiencing most problems with this type of certification with neighbouring Croatia. The best-known examples are presented below.

In the case of *kranjska klobasa* 'Carniolan sausage', Slovenia also had problems with Austria and Germany, with which it reached an agreement, whereas Croatia was strictly against Slovenia protecting the name (Alibeg 2008). The dispute between the two countries dating back to 2010, when Slovenia applied for protection, was resolved by the European Commission through a compromise proposal that Croatia may use the name *kranjska klobasa* until 2030 (Kranjska klobasa bo ... 2014).

**Figure 9.6:** *Kranjska klobasa* 'Carniolan sausage', the best-known Slovenian product that holds the status of protected geographical indication (STO 2017)



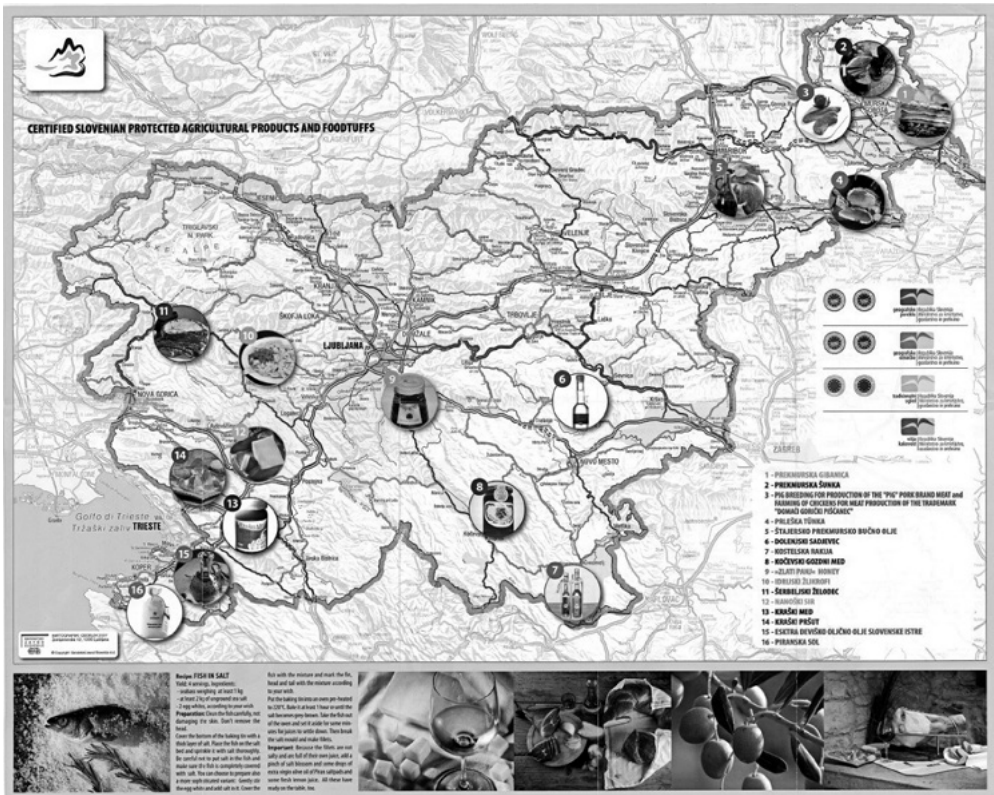
Things also became complicated with protection of *teran* ‘Terrano’ as a wine brand. This problem is somewhat different because it involves a generic name and the use of a choronym might have solved the dispute. The name *teran* was already protected under Yugoslav legislation of 1970 and, after Slovenia joined the EU, it also protected it in accordance with EU regulations. This protection has been in force since 2010, and hence suggesting that wine produced in Croatian Istria (which has been shown to be genetically different) could also be marketed as *teran* is out of the question (Cerar 2015a). Another suggestion was that the Slovenian wine could be marketed under the name *Kraški teran* ‘Karst Plateau Terrano’ and the Croatian under the name *Istrski teran* ‘Istrian Terrano’, which is also unacceptable, but despite strong Slovenian opposition the European Commission nonetheless enforced this solution through a delegated act in the first half of 2017. Here attention should be drawn to the findings of our survey, which showed that in relation to the name *Istria*, the majority of respondents tended to first think of the Slovenian part of Istria or Istria as a whole. Of course, one has to bear in mind that all of the respondents were Slovenian citizens.

The latest dispute arose due to Croatia’s application for protecting the geographical origin of the cured-meat product *Slavonski kulen* ‘Slavonian pork sausage’ (Slovenci tvrde ... 2016; Cerar 2015b). Slovenia protested against it, highlighting that it wished to protect the Slovenian manufacturers of that product (Slovenci tvrde ... 2016). Slovenia is now required to send additional argumentation for its objections to the European Commission within two months. However, *kulen* is not the only source of the current dispute between Slovenia and Croatia in terms of the protection of foodstuffs. Another dispute revolved around the protection of the name *varaždinsko zelje* ‘Varaždin cabbage’. The European Commission has called upon Slovenia and Croatia to reach an agreement within three months.

Hence, *istrski pršut* ‘Istrian prosciutto’ remains the only bright exception: Slovenia and Croatia have jointly agreed on its “cross-border” protection (Cerar 2015b). Perhaps such practice could also be used with some other products.



**Figure 9.7** Certified Slovenian protected products and foodstuffs (Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Food 2007)



## 5. CONCLUSION

We identified 1563 different Slovenian names of regions or choronyms as part of this study. The majority (75%) appear in only one source. Based on the number of various sources in which individual names appeared, they were classified into three groups: established names (used in fifteen sources or more), known names (used in five to fourteen sources), and rare names (used in up to five sources).

The corpus compiled can serve as a basis for selecting choronyms that could be used in marketing. The findings show that as many as 75% of respondents believed that using choronyms in marketing made sense.

The main reason for using choronyms in brands is the traceability of their origin. Therefore, caution should be exercised in using individual choronyms, especially if a product originates from the edges of a region.

Cognitive maps were used to determine the borders of individual regions, which can form the basis for naming a specific product with a brand that contains a choronym. Those that are sceptical about using choronyms in this way point especially to the fact that Slovenian regions are (too) small and that it is vital to promote Slovenian origin as a whole.

These are only some of the concluding findings regarding the role of choronyms in marketing. A better understanding of this topic requires further research that should focus on the marketing potential of not only Slovenian choronyms, but also other types of geographical names.

## REFERENCES

- ALIBEG S. 2008. Čigava je »kranjska klobasa«? [Retrieved 15 November 2015] <http://saal.blog.siol.net/2008/03/19/cigava-je-%C2%BBkranjska-klobasa%C2%AB/>
- BREZOVEC A. 2004. Destinacijski menedžment - celovito upravljanje turizma v kraju, spet "samo" brending ali še huje: le predmet trženja organizatorjev potovanj? *Turizem: časopis za menedžment in trženje v turizmu*, 8(71):2-4.
- CERAR G. 2015a. *Hrvaška zahteva za uporabo imena teran za istrsko vino je nesprejemljiva*. [Retrieved 15 November 2015] <https://www.rtvlo.si/gospodarstvo/hrvaska-zahteva-za-uporabo-imena-teran-za-istrsko-vino-je-nesprejemljiva/372497>
- CERAR G. 2015b. *Slavonski ali slovenski kulen?* [Retrieved 2 February 2016] <https://www.rtvlo.si/gospodarstvo/slavonski-ali-slovenski-kulen/386145>
- CHARLES S & SPIELMANN N. 2014. Characteristics of strong territorial brands: The case of champagne. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(7):52-55. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2013.07.020>
- COMMISSIONEUROPÉENNE.2015.[Retrieved28March2015][http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/door/list.html?recordStart=0&recordEnd=10&sort.milestone=desc&recordPerPage=25&filter.dossierNumber=&filter.comboName=&filterMin.milestone\\_\\_mask=&filterMin.milestone=&filterMax.milestone\\_\\_mask=&filterMax.milestone=&filter.country=SI&filter.category=&filter.type=&filter.status](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/door/list.html?recordStart=0&recordEnd=10&sort.milestone=desc&recordPerPage=25&filter.dossierNumber=&filter.comboName=&filterMin.milestone__mask=&filterMin.milestone=&filterMax.milestone__mask=&filterMax.milestone=&filter.country=SI&filter.category=&filter.type=&filter.status)
- CONNELLY R & MAHON M. 2015. Protected geographical indications: Institutional roles in food systems governance and rural development. *Geoforum*, 60:14-21. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2015.01.004>

- DE CHERNATONY L. 2002. *Blagovna znamka: od vizije do vrednotenja : strateško oblikovanje in vzdrževanje blagovnih znamk*. Ljubljana: GV založba.
- DESIGN COUNCIL. 2013. *The power of branding*. [Retrieved 12 June 2014] <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/news-opinion/power-branding>
- DOBROVOLJC H. 2009. Pravopisna obravnava imen znamk in industrijskih izdelkov ter posledice spreminjanja njihovih lastnoimenskih funkcij. *Jezik in slovstvo*, 54(6):3-16.
- DUGUID P. 2009. French connections: The international propagation of trademarks in the nineteenth century. *Enterprise and Society*, 10(1):3-37. DOI: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23701140>
- DUGUID P, DA SILVA LOPES T & MERCER J. 2010. Reading registrations: An overview of 100 years of trademarks registrations in France, the United Kingdom and the United States. In: T da Silva Lopes & P Duguid (eds). *Trademarks, brands, and competitiveness*. New York: Routledge. 9-30.
- FLICKR. 2017. [Retrieved 10 September 2017] <https://www.flickr.com/search?text=hops&structured=yes>
- FLORIDA R. 2011. *The geography of global brands*. New York. [Retrieved 1 August 2017] <https://www.citylab.com/life/2011/12/geography-brands/354/>
- GAMMELTOFT P, FRANI V & BLAKE C (EDS). 2015. *The benefits of geographical names standardization*. Geographical Names Information Bulletin 49. New York: United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN).
- GERŠIČ M. 2016. Slovenska pokrajinska imena kot dejavnik identitete. PhD Thesis. Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani.
- GERŠIČ M. 2017. Changing denotations of selected Slovenian choronyms. *Acta geographica Slovenica*, 57(1):77-96. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3986/AGS.4600>
- GERŠIČ M & NARED J. 2014. Environmental planning recommendations. In: J Nared & N Razpotnik Viskovič (eds). *Cultural heritage as a brand. Managing cultural heritage sites in Southeastern Europe*. Ljubljana: Založba ZRC. 64-68.
- GIRRAUD G. 2002. Consumer Perception of Typical Food Products in Europe. Paper prepared for presentation at the Xth EAAE Congress 'Exploring Diversity in the European Agri-Food System', Zaragoza (Spain), 28-31 August 2002. [Retrieved 30 July 2017] <http://ageconsearch.tind.io/record/24833/files/cp02gi49.pdf>
- GLOŽANČEV A. 2002. Hrematonimi. *Jezikoslovni zapiski*, 8(2):109-131.
- GORENJKJA. 2017. *Gorenjka*. [Retrieved 28 March 2015] <https://gorenjka.si/>
- HAMPTON B. 1903. *The value of advertised trademarks*. New York: Ben B. Hampton Co.

- HIGGINS DM. 2013. Forgotten heroes and forgotten issues: Business and trademark history during the nineteenth century. *Business History Review*, 86(2):261-285. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007680512000402>
- KADMON N. 2000. *Toponymy: The lore, laws and language of geographical names*. New York: Vantage Press.
- KOTLER P. 2004. *Management trženja*. Ljubljana: GV.
- KRANJSKA KLOBASA BO ČEZ 15 LET SLOVENSKA. 2014. [Retrieved 15 November 2015] <http://www.zurnal24.si/kranjska-klobasa-bo-cez-15-let-le-slovenska-clanek-240376>
- KRAŠEVKA. 2017. *Ponudba*. [Retrieved 15 November 2017] <http://www.krasevka.si/index.php?id=3>
- MEDWAY D & WARNABY G. 2014. What's in a name? Place branding and toponymic commodification. *Environment and Planning A*, 46:153-167. [Retrieved 31 July 2017] <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1068/a45571>
- MENAPACE L & MOSCHINI GC 2014. Strength of protection for geographical indications: Promotion incentives and welfare effects. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 96(4):1030-1048. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ajae/aau016>
- MINISTRSTVO ZA KMETIJSTVO, GOZDARSTVO IN PREHRANO. 2015. *Slovenski zaščiteni kmetijski pridelki in živila*. [Retrieved 14 December 2015] [http://www.mkgp.gov.si/fileadmin/mkgp.gov.si/pageuploads/publikacije/Zasciteni\\_proizvodi\\_SLO\\_ANG/Zasciteni\\_brosura\\_SLO\\_SPLET.pdf](http://www.mkgp.gov.si/fileadmin/mkgp.gov.si/pageuploads/publikacije/Zasciteni_proizvodi_SLO_ANG/Zasciteni_brosura_SLO_SPLET.pdf)
- MINISTRY FOR AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FOOD. 2007. *Certified Slovenian protected products and foodstuffs*. Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Food: Ljubljana.
- MOORE K & REID S. 2008. The birth of brand: 4000 years of branding. *Business History*, 50(4):419-432. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00076790802106299>
- MORAN W. 1983. Rural space as intellectual property. *Political Geography*, 12(3):263-277. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/0962-6298\(93\)90057-E](https://doi.org/10.1016/0962-6298(93)90057-E)
- OLIVA E, PALIAGA M & MARJANOVIĆ BOŽAC D. 2011: Agricultural produce of Istria used in Regional branding – Strategic concept. In: D Križman Pavlović & D Benazić (eds). 22<sup>nd</sup> CROMAR Congress: *Marketing challenges in New Economy*. Pula: University of Pula. 572-591.
- OVSENIK R. 2003. *Perspektive in protislovja razvoja turističnega področja – model turističnega managementa na območju slovenskih Alp*. PhD thesis. Maribor: Fakulteta za organizacijske vede Univerze v Mariboru.
- PETTY RD. 2016. A history of brand identity protection and brand marketing. In: DGB Jones & M Tadajewski (eds). *The Routledge companion to marketing history*. London: Routledge. 97-114.
- PIKE A. 2009. Brand and branding geographies. *Geography Compass*, 3(1):190-213. DOI: 10.1111/j.1749-8198.2008.00177.x

- POSEBNI KMETIJSKI PRIDELKI IN ŽIVILA. 2015. [Retrieved 28 March 2015] [https://www.gzs.si/zbornica\\_kmetijskih\\_in\\_zivilskih\\_podjetij/vsebina/Dokumenti/Nacionalna-zakonodaja/Posebni-kmetijski-pridelki-in-%C5%BEivila](https://www.gzs.si/zbornica_kmetijskih_in_zivilskih_podjetij/vsebina/Dokumenti/Nacionalna-zakonodaja/Posebni-kmetijski-pridelki-in-%C5%BEivila)
- PUCELJ EU. 2013. *Fenomen blagovnih znamk*. [Retrieved 28 March 2015] <http://www.e-neo.si/si/atrativno/fenomen-blagovnih-znamk/>
- PUHARIČ K. 2001. *Gospodarsko pravo z osnovami prava*. Ljubljana: Uradni list Republike Slovenije.
- RICHARDSON G. 2008. *Brand names before the industrial revolution*. Working Paper 13930. NBER Working Paper Series. Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3386/w13930>
- RIPPON MJ. 2014. What is the geography of geographical indications? Place, production methods and protected food names. *Area*, 46:154-162. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12085>
- ROBINSON M. 2008. *The experiences of cultural tourism. Cultural heritage and tourism*. Vilnius: Department of Cultural Heritage under Ministry of Culture.
- ŠEME IRMAN M. 2008. Geografske označbe. Diploma Thesis. Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede Univerze v Ljubljani.
- SEZNAM SLOVENSKE HRANE Z OZNAKAMI - ZAŠČITENA OZNAČBA POREKLA (ZOP, PDO), ZAŠČITENA GEOGRAFSKA OZNAČBA (ZGO, PGI) IN ZAJAMČENA TRADICIONALNA POSEBNOST (ZTP, TSG). 2015. [Retrieved 28 March 2015] <http://www.blog.uporabnastran.si/2012/04/01/seznam-slovenske-hrane-z-oznakami-zascitena-oznacba-porekla-zop-pdi-zascitena-geografska-oznacba-zgo-pgi-in-zajamcena-tradicionalna-posebnost-ztp-tsg/>
- SLOVENCİ TVRDE DA PRIGOVOROM NA SLAVONSKI KULEN SAMO ŠTITE SVOG PROIZVOĐAČA. 2016. [Retrieved 15 March 2017] <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/slovinci-tvrde-da-prigovorom-na-slavonski-kulen-samo-stite-svog-proizvodaca-1061329>
- STO. 2017. [Retrieved 10 May 2017] <https://www.slovenia.info/sl/mediateka/fotografija/kranjska-klobasa-34881>
- WENGROW D. 2008. Prehistories of commodity branding. *Current Anthropology*, 49(1):7-34. DOI: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/523676>

# PLACE NAMES, PLACE, AND PLACE-RELATED IDENTITIES IN THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF RURAL SOUTH AFRICA

**Chrismi-Rinda Loth**

Department of South African Sign Language and Deaf Studies, University of the Free State, South Africa  
lothc@ufs.ac.za

## **Abstract**

Place names generally serve two purposes. Firstly, they designate specific places by demarcating areas of physical space. Secondly, place names serve as identity markers by enabling people to link experiences to a specific location. The act of using place names on public signs (i.e. in the linguistic landscape) validates the name itself as well as the demarcation of the 'place'. It also reinforces place-related identities. Three variables influence the use of place names in the linguistic landscape (LL), namely function, agency, and locality. Place names can be displayed on public signs to indicate locations or directions (pragmatic function). Sometimes they form an integral part of an institution's name (symbolic function). Various agents are responsible for the display of place names on public signs, working from either the government or the private sector; or from local or externally situated contexts (agency). Furthermore, different place names are displayed in the various suburbs of towns (locality).

The research site for this case study is the LL of the nine towns comprising the Kopanong Local Municipality, situated in the Xhariep District Municipality in the southern Free State province (South Africa). Signs displaying the names of the three tiers of government (municipality, district and province) of the nine towns, as well as of the suburbs of these towns, were isolated, comprising a database of 502 signs. The display of place names on these signs was analysed on the basis of the three mentioned variables (function, agency, and locality). The results reveal a significant variation in the use of place names across these three categories.

The repeated use of place names in different LL contexts suggests that the names are accepted and therefore collectively validated. It also serves to confirm the existence of the places as designated by their names. Furthermore, agencies use place names

on their public signs to signal different power positions and identities. Official or non-local agencies use place names to claim authority in a certain place, thereby also linking the identity of the target audience to that place. Local agencies, especially those acting from private contexts, use place names to signify their right to act in a specific place and to indicate a sense of belonging there. These results reveal the dynamics between place, place names and place-related identities. It also provides evidence of the fruitful theoretical collaboration between LL and place-name research.

**Keywords:** Kopanong Local Municipality, linguistic landscape, place identity, place names, power relations

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Following the critical turn in toponymy, place names are now understood as being more than referential labels to physical locations in space. Naming places is a performative action, wrought with ideologies related to power dynamics and competing identities. While not everyone can name places, anyone can use place names. What happens when place names are used in written form in the public space, i.e. in the linguistic landscape? This paper explores how the linguistic landscape (LL) acts as a performative platform that facilitates the various functions of place names, i.e. in creating 'place', in claiming space, and in constructing place-related identities.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Van Patten and Williams (2008:448-449) highlight three aspects of 'place', namely material form, scale and a relational aspect. The physical setting, which includes both natural and human-made features, constitutes the material form of a place. Every place is located and nested in multiple scales, from local to global. The relational aspect refers to the way humans establish meaning within places. This meaning can be constituted by the inherent properties of the landscape itself, by individual mental perceptions, or can be constructed by social discourse. This means that 'place' is an emergent concept – it is (physical) space to which people continually attach meaning via material and symbolic practices (Blommaert, Collins & Slembrouck 2005:206; Cheng, Kruger & Daniels 2003:90).

'Place' is important, since humans develop what Hidalgo and Hernández (2001:274) refer to as place attachment, i.e. "an affective bond or link between people and specific places". Place attachment comprises two components, namely place dependence and

place identity (Kostanski 2014:277-278). The first, a functional attachment, relates to human interaction with and dependence on a particular location and its physical qualities. The psychological attachment to place constitutes place identity, which is a sense of people belonging to a specific place (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira 2016:239-240; Hernández *et al* 2007:311). While people seem to develop a preferred place of attachment (Hernández *et al* 2007), they can also develop multiple place attachments. Bernardo and Palma-Oliveira (2016:241) find that people develop identification for different scales of place, which allows them to enact whichever best serves their purposes in a specific context.

Not only do people develop attachment to more than one place, but places also contain multiple meanings since different (groups of) people attach different meanings to the same physical space (Cheng *et al* 2003:99; Mayes 2008:125-126; Yung, Freimund & Belsky 2003:855-856). Place meaning is of vital importance, since defining a place means defining who and what is allowed there, and who has the power to act (Nash, Lewis & Griffin 2009:45-46). This means that place meaning is fluid and dynamic, being constantly negotiated, imposed and contested by means of symbolic and material practices (Nash *et al* 2009; Yung *et al* 2003:856).

One such type of symbolic and material practice is the naming of places. As stated by Tilley (1994:18, in Helleland 2012:100), “place names are of such vital significance because they act so as to transform the sheer physical and geographical into something that is historically and socially experienced”. To understand this aspect, it is useful to determine between the dual function of place names, namely referential and connotative (Helleland 2012). Concerning the former, the names of places function as labels that reference physical locations. However, (groups of) people attach various associations to place names, which then acquires an extended meaning and in this way serves as a “spatial repertoire” (Nash *et al* 2009:49). Using a place name (as a spatial repertoire) is a shorthand way to refer to a specific conceptualisation of place. This means that place names are not neutral. Place naming is thus in essence a performative practice, which is acknowledged by the critical turn in place-name studies. With this turn, the focus shifted from cataloguing place names to understanding naming as an ideological practice, which is used to control social dynamics (Rose-Redwood, Alderman & Azaryahu 2010), including the politics of identity (Kearns & Berg 2002).



Place names support place identities (i.e. the sense of belonging to a place). According to Jordan (2012), place names inscribe meaning (cultural values, identities) into the landscape; which the place names then reflect back at society. In this way the names of places enforce politics of inclusion and exclusion.

Naming also functions as a form of claiming place (place belongs to people). As stated by Meiring (2009:31): “The social importance of geographical names is important when we take into consideration that societies identify with a place name to the extent of claiming ownership to the place and the special meaning or significance of its name.” Naming a place not only defines a place, but also claims control over it (Nash *et al* 2009:54). While the power to name a place is exclusive, anyone can use it since place names belong to everyone (Jenkins 1991:23), regardless of etymology. People can therefore use place names as a spatial repertoire to affect different identities and power relations. This performative potential of place names is exemplified when it is used in the LL.

The LL refers to the written use of language in the public space (for a discussion on the extended definition that includes other semiotic devices, see Jaworski and Thurlow (2010) as well as Shohamy and Ben-Rafael (2015)). Of course, the LL is used to convey information and messages, but written language in the public space has unique semiotic properties that extend beyond its communicative function. It indexes power relations and identities, and is therefore utilised to impose, contest or negotiate these. In this way, the LL functions as a “symbolic construction of public space” (Ben-Rafael 2009:41). This means that the LL itself is also a performative discourse, used to create and define ‘place’ as well as the associated politics of inclusion and exclusion (Lou 2010; Muth 2014; Stroud & Jegels 2014; Stroud & Mpendukana 2009).

When a place name is used in the LL, the symbolism of that name is combined with a material concretisation which adds to the weight of the place name (Kearns & Berg 2002:285; Puzey 2009:821). The LL is a performative arena and using or ignoring place names which embody performative discourses, on public signs, is a further performative action. As argued by Scollon and Scollon (2003:x), one of the most effective ways to control the public space is to control the discourses in that space.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The data was collected as part of a larger LL study in the Kopanong Local Municipality, which is situated in the Xhariep district in the southern Free State province of South Africa. It is a rural area that is isolated from the nearest urban centre (i.e. Bloemfontein). All public signs displaying written text in the towns were recorded, resulting in a database of 5 773 signs. Of those, 502 signs displaying place names were identified. The use of place names on these was analysed according to LL variables. It is useful to explore how frequently place names are used in different LL contexts, since, as Jordan (2012:127) observes, regular repetition of a name indicates a strong place identity. The results are then interpreted in terms of scalar place identity.

Du Plessis (2011) identifies three variables that influence patterns of language use on public signs, namely functionality, agency and locality. Functionality refers to the perceived purpose of a sign. Agency explores the creators of the sign, i.e. whether it originated from the official (top-down) or the private (bottom-up) domain, and whether it was created by local or external agents. Locality refers to the geoterritorial site in which the LL is situated. These three variables were adapted in order to discover the patterns of place-name use.

Place names serve either a pragmatic or a symbolic function on public signs. The former function refers to place names that are displayed in order to give directions, to indicate location (such as the signs at the entrances/exits of towns) or to indicate the address of an organisation. Place names are used symbolically when they form an integral part of a government, business or cultural organisation's name (i.e. its ergonym), or are used on private homes.

Various agents are responsible for the public signs that display place names, working from either the government (top-down) or the private (bottom-up) sector; or from either local (internal) or externally situated contexts. There are thus four agent types associated with public signs displaying place names. External top-down agencies have official authority on district level and higher, while the authority of internal top-down agencies lies on the local municipal level. Concerning the private sector, external bottom-up agencies are mostly constituted by regional or national business franchises. An assortment of local economic endeavours, including shops, goods for sale, taverns, guesthouses and professional services, as well as homeowners, comprise the internal bottom-up agencies.

Statistics South Africa (SSA 2011) differentiates locality between 'Main' places and 'Sub' places. Main places are usually towns, small cities or regions of large cities, while Sub places refer to suburbs, villages or smaller localities. In this research area, towns are usually divided into three parts (the main town, Coloured neighbourhoods and townships), a remnant from the apartheid policy which enforced racial segregation. The main towns are generally the economic and administrative headquarters of each town and constitute the Main place in the present dataset. These are also historically the 'white' neighbourhoods (mostly Afrikaans-speaking, but also some native English speakers). The Coloured neighbourhoods (primarily inhabited by Afrikaans-speaking Coloured residents) and townships (originally occupied by what Census (SSA 2011) classifies as Black Africans) are usually situated some distance out of the main town, separate from each other. They constitute the category of Sub place.

Place literature suggests that place identities are scaled. According to Guyot and Seethal (2007:55), (groups of) people perceive the places and their scales as described by place names differently, meaning the same place name has different connotations for different (groups of) people. Van Langevelde and Pellenbarg (2001) find that not only do different economic sectors tend to use different place names of different scales, but the choice is also influenced by the market scope of the business, i.e. whether it serves a regional or a wider market. The dataset is analysed to determine whether or not a scalar place identity can be determined for different agencies, localities and place name functions.

In the present dataset, there are seven different place name scales, namely:

- National (South Africa),
- Provincial (Free State province),
- District (Xharies district),
- Local (Kopanong Local Municipality),
- Town (the names of the nine towns),
- Suburb (since the Main place names are the same as the town names, only the names of the 19 Sub places are included), and
- Street (the numerous street names).

## 4. RESULTS

Some signs display multiple place names concurrently. For example, an ergonym containing a place name might appear on the same sign as the address of the organisation, and the address might include two place names (a street and town name). The 502 public signs display 1,158 place names altogether.

### 4.1 Data

Table 10.1 below shows a comprehensive overview of the results in terms of the analytical categories (the totals are indicated per pane). In the interest of not overwhelming the reader with statistics, only the most pertinent results are discussed.

**Table 10.1** Summary of place name use in the Kopanong Local Municipality

Agency	Locality	Function	Scale						
			National	Provincial	District	Local	Town	Suburb	Street
External top-down	Main place	Location				1,20%	2,41%		
		Address of organisation			7,23%		9,64%		1,20%
		Ergonym	9,64%	18,07%	1,20%	1,20%	46,99%	1,20%	
	Sub place	Location							1,69%
		Address of organisation		3,39%	5,08%	1,69%	27,12%	6,78%	8,47%
		Ergonym		10,17%	5,08%		11,86%	18,64%	
Internal top-down	Main place	Direction	0,23%		0,23%	0,23%			1,15%
		Location					3,44%	0,23%	90,14%
		Address of organisation					0,46%		0,46%
		Ergonym	0,23%			0,69%	2,52%		
	Sub place	Direction						2,56%	
		Location				0,85%	3,42%	5,13%	73,50%
		Address of organisation					0,85%		
		Ergonym				4,27%	8,55%	0,85%	
External bottom-up	Main place	Location					5,88%		
		Address of organisation					64,71%		17,65%
		Ergonym					11,76%		
Internal bottom-up	Main place	Location							0,71%
		Address of organisation					17,50%		21,07%
		Ergonym	1,43%	1,07%	1,07%		47,14%	1,79%	
		Home							8,21%
	Sub place	Location					0,75%		0,75%
		Address of organisation					9,77%	6,77%	16,54%
		Ergonym	0,75%		0,75%		15,79%	2,26%	0,75%
		Home						0,75%	44,36%

Given that there is a greater volume of internal agencies operative in both locality types, both top-down and bottom-up internal agencies contribute the majority of signs displaying a place name. Signs with place names most often appear in Main places, but this is the result of Main places hosting a greater volume of economic and administrative activity. In addition, the streets in Main places are more consistently named than in Sub places, thereby producing a large number of street name signs (i.e. road signs). For the same reason, the function for which place names are most often used is to indicate location (i.e. street name signs). There is a noticeable trend of displaying street names on homes as well. Place names are used almost equally frequently in ergonyms and to indicate the addresses of organisations. Given that the dataset only includes signs within the parameters of the towns, there are comparatively few direction signs.

Town and street names are the most often used place names. The rest are used significantly less. Street names are by far the most displayed place name. This is the effect of the number of location street signs erected by the internal top-down agency as part of their administrative duty. Given the volume of street name signs, this means they are the agency that displays the most place names of all. Street names are used frequently across all variables to provide the address of organisations. In Main places, internal bottom-up agencies use street names more often for this purpose than town names. Street names are also displayed for symbolic purposes, i.e. on homes. While this place name use is a prevalent trend in both Main and Sub places, it is more noticeable in the Sub places, where street names are used more often on homes than for addresses or in ergonyms (regardless of agency).

Town names are the second most frequently used place name. It is most often used for symbolic purposes, i.e. in the ergonyms of both bottom-up and top-down agencies. In fact, the only context where another place name type is used more often in ergonyms, is the inclusion of suburb names by external top-down agencies in Sub places. When external agencies (both top-down and bottom-up) use town names in their ergonyms, its purpose appears to be to indicate a local branch of a larger organisation. Town names are never used on homes. With regards to pragmatic function, while town names are used to indicate location, it more often serves to indicate the addresses of organisations. External bottom-up agencies, who have relevant signs only in Main places, are most likely to use place names this way. Most agencies are more likely to use town names rather than street names for the address. The exception is found with the internal

bottom-up agencies that use street names slightly more for this purpose. Since the town falls under the jurisdiction of the internal top-down agency, this agency is more likely than the others to use town names in its ergonyms.

Suburb names are used significantly less than town and street names, but slightly more than the large-scale place names. The only locality in which suburb names are used to indicate address, is in Sub places. External top-down agencies use suburb names in this way to indicate a local branch of an external agency, while internal bottom-up agencies use it similarly to the way in which agencies use town names in their addresses. It is important to note that Main places are not subdivided into named suburbs and therefore results might be skewed with regards to this place-name type.

The name of the local municipality is the least used place name of all; it is exclusively used by top-down agencies. Its major use is found in the ergonyms of internal top-down agencies. Since external top-down agencies use the place name associated with their level of authority, they are the most likely agency type to use the larger scale place names (national, provincial and district). It is the only agency that makes noticeable use of large-scale place names in ergonyms, and they do this more often in Main places than in Sub places. In the latter locale, they use the suburb name more frequently in the ergonym.

All three large-scale place names are more likely to be used in Main places than Sub places, especially the national one. The national place name is used almost exclusively in ergonyms, by all agencies (except external bottom-up). It is also more likely to be used on signs in Main places. The provincial place name is used almost exclusively by external top-down agencies and is mostly displayed for symbolic reasons, i.e. in ergonyms. District names are used most often by external top-down agencies, where it serves both pragmatic and symbolic purposes (address and ergonym). Internal bottom-up agencies use it in ergonyms, but it is unclear whether it refers to the administrative unit (Xhariep District Municipality) or the geographical area (the trans-Xhariep area, also spelled Gariep).

In summary, internal agencies are most likely to display signs that include a place name, mostly due to a larger number of these agencies than external ones. This outcome reflects the isolated nature of the research area. The high number of street name signs means that this is the most frequently used type of place name. Removing such displays of street names from consideration, the display of town names would be more prominent. Street names are used both to indicate location and address. However, regarding symbolic display, it is almost never used in ergonyms but quite often on homes. Town names, on

the other hand, are never displayed on homes, although they are prominently used in ergonyms. Large-scale place names are mostly used by external top-down agencies. The next section discusses the implications of these results.

## 4.2 Discussion

In this research site, top-down agencies were found to base their choice of place names to be displayed on their signs on their corresponding locus of authority, while the deciding factor for bottom-up agencies is their (scaled) place identity.

Top-down agencies use place names to claim authority to act in a certain place; notably if the place falls in the administrative unit for which they are responsible. For instance, a provincial agency uses the provincial place name to identify itself as a larger-scale entity that has administrative power in a smaller-scale place, such as a town or suburb. Another example is the use of town names in their ergonyms to indicate themselves as the official service provider of a certain type within the town. By using place names on its official public signs, top-down agencies, as representatives of government, validate place names and by implication their related discourses. In addition, when top-down agencies use the place names associated with their level of authority, they define the 'place' itself by demarcating it as part of an administrative unit. This imposes a place identity on the inhabitants.

Commercial bottom-up agencies frequently use smaller-scale place names, especially town and suburb names in ergonyms. While top-down agencies use place names symbolically to claim authority, private agencies have no such authority. However, it is a tactic that mimics the claim to power by top-down agencies. This indicates a sense of belonging to a place, which includes the right to act in a specific place (i.e. to conduct business and erect public signs). Considering that place names support place identities, their use could also serve as an appeal to collective place identity with the target audience as a marketing strategy.

The voluntary use of street names in private space in both locales (i.e. on homes) reveals an attempt to construct a place-related identity or sense of belonging in a specific place. In this way the function of the street name as identity marker is more important than the (potentially contested) discourse that the name encapsulates. Using street names on homes is also a way not only to participate in public space, but also to shape it by trying to define 'place'. Internal bottom-up agencies, which represent the local inhabitants, display a strong scalar place identity, the scale being town and street names. These place

names are repeated in different contexts, this revealing a degree of coherence between the place identities that are imposed from the top down and those that are constructed and negotiated on grassroots level. In certain cases, then, what the name signifies (i.e. the ‘place’) is more important than its etymology.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Textual displays in the linguistic landscape contribute to the shaping of the public space. When the textual display is a place name, which in itself is a performative discourse, the ‘shaping’ revolves around constructing and defining ‘place’, claiming space and constructing identities. This article shows that the linguistic landscape is a performative platform that intensifies the functions of place names. It confirms the proposal that an intersection between LL studies and place-name research is a fruitful endeavour (Puzey 2009; Puzey & Kostanski 2016).

The results affirm a definite link between level of power and scale of place identity. It is not compulsory for private agents to use place names on their public signs. Therefore, to associate with a place name is a definitive choice. People and organisations do not choose to display place names exclusively because it signifies the places that they identify with. Often, this very identification is dependent on the agent’s realm of power, whether they consider themselves to be relevant to the town community as a whole or only in a suburb – or merely in their homes. Individuals might not have the power to name streets and towns, but they choose whether or not they want to validate a specific name on their signage. In this way, even seemingly powerless entities have a degree of autonomy. Indeed, as Bourdieu (1991: 105) states, “[t]here is no social agent who does not aspire, as far as his circumstances permit, to have the power to name and to create the world through names”.

## REFERENCES

- BEN-RAFAEL E. 2009. A sociological approach to the study of linguistic landscapes. In: Shohamy E & Gorter D (eds). *Linguistic landscape: Expanding the scenery*. New York/London: Routledge. 40-54.
- BERNARDO F & PALMA-OLIVEIRA J-M. 2016. Urban neighbourhoods and intergroup relations: the importance of place identity. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 45:239-251. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2016.01.010>
- BLOMMAERT J, COLLINS J & SLEMBROUCK S. 2005. Spaces of multilingualism. *Language and Communication*, 25:197-216. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2005.05.002>



- BOURDIEU P. 1991. *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- CHENG AS, KRUGER LE & DANIELS SE. 2003. "Place" as an integrating concept in natural resource politics: propositions for a social science research agenda. *Society and Natural Resources*, 16(2):87-104. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920309199>
- DU PLESSIS T. 2011. Language visibility and language removal: a South African case study in linguistic landscape change. *Communicatio*, 37(2):194-224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02500167.2011.604170>
- GUYOT S & SEETHAL C. 2007. Identity of place, places of identities: change of place names in post-apartheid South Africa. *South African Geographical Journal*, 89(1):55-63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03736245.2007.9713873>
- HELLELAND B. 2012. Place names and identities. In: Helleland B, Ore C-E & Wikstrøm S (eds). *Names and Identities: Oslo Studies in Language*, 4(2):95-116.
- HERNÁNDEZ B, HIDALGO MC, SALAZAR-LAPLACE ME & HESS S. 2007. Place attachment and place identity in natives and non-natives. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 27:310-319.
- HIDALGO MC & HERNÁNDEZ B. 2001. Place attachment: conceptual and empirical questions. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 21(3):273-281. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1006/jevps.2001.0221>
- JAWORSKI A & THURLOW C (EDS). 2010. *Semiotic landscapes: language, image, space*. London/New York: Continuum.
- JENKINS ER. 1991. Linguistic and sociolinguistic issues in South African place names. *English Usage in Southern Africa*, 22:23-33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10228199108566057>
- JORDAN P. 2012. Place names as ingredients of space-related identity. In: Helleland B, Ore C-E & Wikstrøm S (eds). *Names and identities: Oslo studies in language*, 4(2):117-131.
- KEARNS RA & BERG LD. 2002. Proclaiming place: towards a geography of place name pronunciation. *Social and Cultural Geography*, 3(2):283-302. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1464936022000003532>
- KOSTANSKI L. 2014. Duel-names: how toponyms (placenames) can represent hegemonic histories and alternative narratives. In: Clark ID, Hercus L & Kostanski L (eds). *Indigenous and minority place names: Australian and international perspectives*. Canberra: ANU Press. 273-292. <https://doi.org/10.22459/IMP.04.2014.15>
- LOU JJ. 2010. Chinatown transformed: ideology, power, and resources in narrative place-making. *Discourse Studies*, 12(5):625-647. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445610371055>
- MAYES R. 2008. A place in the sun: the politics of place, identity and branding. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 4(2):124-135. <https://doi.org/10.1057/pb.2008.1>
- MEIRING B. 2009. Geographical names and social cohesion. *Nomina Africana*, 23(1):31-50.

- MUTH S. 2014. Informal signs as expressions of multilingualism in Chisinau: how individuals shape the public space of a post-Soviet capital. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 228:29-53. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2014-0004>
- NASH N, LEWIS A & GRIFFIN C. 2009. 'Not in our front garden': land use conflict, spatial meaning and the politics of naming place. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 20(1):44-56. DOI: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/casp.1013/>
- PUZEY G. 2009. Opportunity or threat? The role of minority toponyms in the linguistic landscape. In: W Ahrens, Embleton S & Lapierre A (eds). *Names in multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic contact: Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Onomastic Sciences*. Toronto: York University. 821-827.
- PUZEY G & KOSTANSKI L (EDS). 2016. *Names and naming: people, places, perceptions and power*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783094929>
- ROSE-REDWOOD R, ALDERMAN D & AZARYAHU M. 2010. Geographies of toponymic inscription: new directions in critical place-name studies. *Progress in Human Geography*, 34(4):453-470. DOI: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0309132509351042>
- SCOLLON R & SCOLLON SW. 2003. *Discourses in place: language in the material world*. London/New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203422724>
- SHOHAMY E & BEN-RAFAEL E. 2015. Introduction: Linguistic Landscape – a new journal. *Linguistic Landscape*, 1(1/2):1-5.
- SSA (STATISTICS SOUTH AFRICA). 2011. *Census 2011*. [Retrieved 29 October 2017] [http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page\\_id=3839](http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=3839)
- STROUD C & JEGELS D. 2014. Semiotic landscapes and mobile narrations of place: performing the local. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 4:179-199. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2014-0010>
- STROUD C & MPENDUKANA S. 2009. Towards a material ethnography of linguistic landscape: multilingualism, mobility and space in a South African township. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 13(3):363-386. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9841.2009.00410.x>
- VAN LANGEVELDE AB & PELLENBARG P. 2001. What's in a Frisian business name? Regional identity in the Netherlands. *Tijdschrift voor Economische and Sociale Geografie*, 92(3):309-323. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9663.00159>
- VAN PATTEN SR & WILLIAMS DR. 2008. Problems in place: using discursive social psychology to investigate the meanings of seasonal homes. *Leisure Sciences*, 30:448-464. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400802353190>
- YUNG L, FREIMUND WA & BELSKY JM. 2003. The politics of place: understanding meaning, common ground, and political difference on the Rocky Mountain front. *Forest Science*, 49(6):855-866.

# NAMING A PLACE, PLACING THE SELF: TOPONYMY AND IDENTITY IN TWO CENTRAL AMERICAN REPUBLICS

**Kathryn M. Hudson**

Department of Anthropology and Department of Linguistics, University at Buffalo, USA  
khudson@buffalo.edu

## **Abstract**

This paper explores the ways in which the indigenous toponymy of El Salvador and Honduras motivates the development of postcolonial identities in several geographically distinct communities by providing evidence of a connection with deep history and the legitimacy that is thought to derive from it; by supporting claims of contemporary association; and by facilitating the assertion of cultural and linguistic competency. In this view, which is rooted in the perspectives of critical topography, the physical referents of place names are secondary to their historical and sociocultural connotations.

The geographic dimension of a toponym matters less than the fact of its use, which symbolises affiliation with a distinct history, identity and patrimony that is reified by the etymologies of the terms with which they are associated. Place names thus function as sources of cultural, historical, and linguistic information that is accessible to the individuals who make use of them, particularly when non-indigenous alternatives are also available. Association with immutable geographic features (such as mountains, rivers, and lakes) offers evidence of ancient historical presence and supports contemporary claims of connections to particular geographic spaces, and claims to rights that may be thought to come with them. Users of these terms thus situate themselves within landscapes whose physical features carry cultural, social and political – not only topographic – significance. These functions of toponymy are particularly significant in El Salvador and Honduras, where the effects of colonial and postcolonial histories on cultural and linguistic landscapes have been particularly dramatic. Here, the use of indigenous toponyms contributes to the formation of identity on two levels: a pan-indigenous identity and a specifically Lenca identity. Each of these is simultaneously associative and contrastive. The use of indigenous toponyms, as easily recognised forms

of (shared) cultural and linguistic heritage, asserts relationships with non-ladino groups such as the Lenca and other indigenous populations. However, such usage also explicitly and pointedly contrasts their users with the ladino groups dominant in the two republics and affiliates them with distinctive historical and sociocultural milieus. In Honduras, moreover, using Lenca toponyms is subversive of the national project to create a Mayan identity. In Honduras and El Salvador, therefore, place names have been and continue to be critically important as symbolic markers of cultural identities and as a mechanism for asserting and building sociocultural and socio-political relations. They also provide a rich field for investigating the ways in which the significance of toponyms may change even though their referents remain the same.

**Keywords:** Central America, identity, indigenous place names, postcolonial societies

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the ways in which the indigenous toponymy of El Salvador and Honduras motivates the development of postcolonial identities in several geographically distinct communities. In this mountainous region of Central America, place names function as sources of cultural, historical, and linguistic information that are accessible to and claimable by the individuals and communities who make use of them, particularly when non-indigenous alternatives are also available. The physical referents of place names are thus secondary to their historical and sociocultural connotations, and the geographic dimension of a toponym matters less than the fact of its use. By considering the historical context of this toponymy in combination with its contemporary functions, it is possible to examine how the use of indigenous place names – which have functioned to mark generic and specific cultural identity, group membership, and connection to history and therefore legitimacy – has persisted in the face of five centuries of foreign domination.

## 2. EL SALVADOR, HONDURAS, AND THEIR HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

It is useful to begin with a brief consideration of the histories and historical inheritances of El Salvador and Honduras. Both countries are situated in the northwestern part of Central America, and both include territories that were historically significant (Figure 11.1). El Salvador is located between the Pacific Ocean to the south and the Sierra Madre mountain range to the north; Honduras is bounded by the Sierra Madre in the west

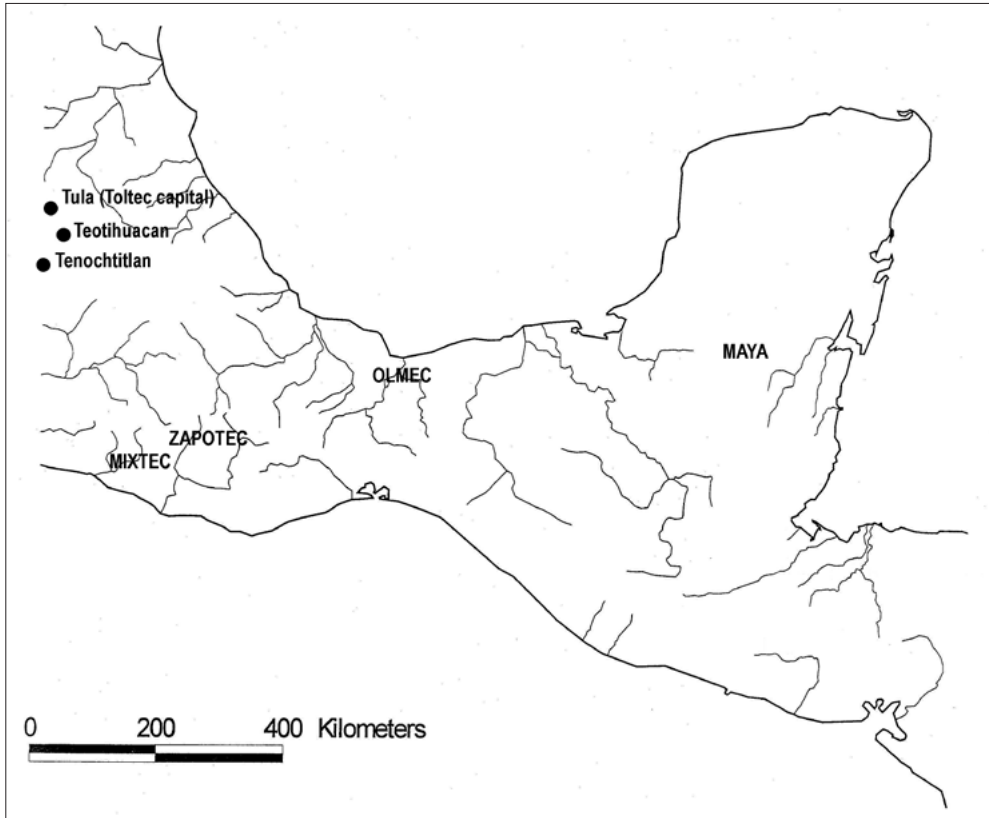
and southwest, the Caribbean in the north, and the Río Coco and Río Choluteca in the east. It encompasses the Sierra La Esperanza and a broad network of rivers that feed an extensive system of fertile river valleys – notably the lower Ulúa, Aguán, and Patuca.

**Figure 11.1** A regional map showing the locations of El Salvador and Honduras



Prior to the arrival of the Spanish during the first half of the sixteenth century, the inhabitants of both territories – which included the Ch’orti’ Maya as well as the Lenca, Miskito, Pech, Pipil, and Tol – were active participants in the broader Mesoamerican world (Figure 11.2). This culturally defined region encompassed a pattern of sociocultural and political features shared by indigenous people from northern Mexico to Costa Rica; these included cultivation of the so-called ‘three sisters’ (corns, beans, and squash), production and consumption of beverages produced from the pulp of cacao pods, corbelled vaulting as an architectural style, the ballgame, a 260-day calendar cycle, and a suite of cosmological features.

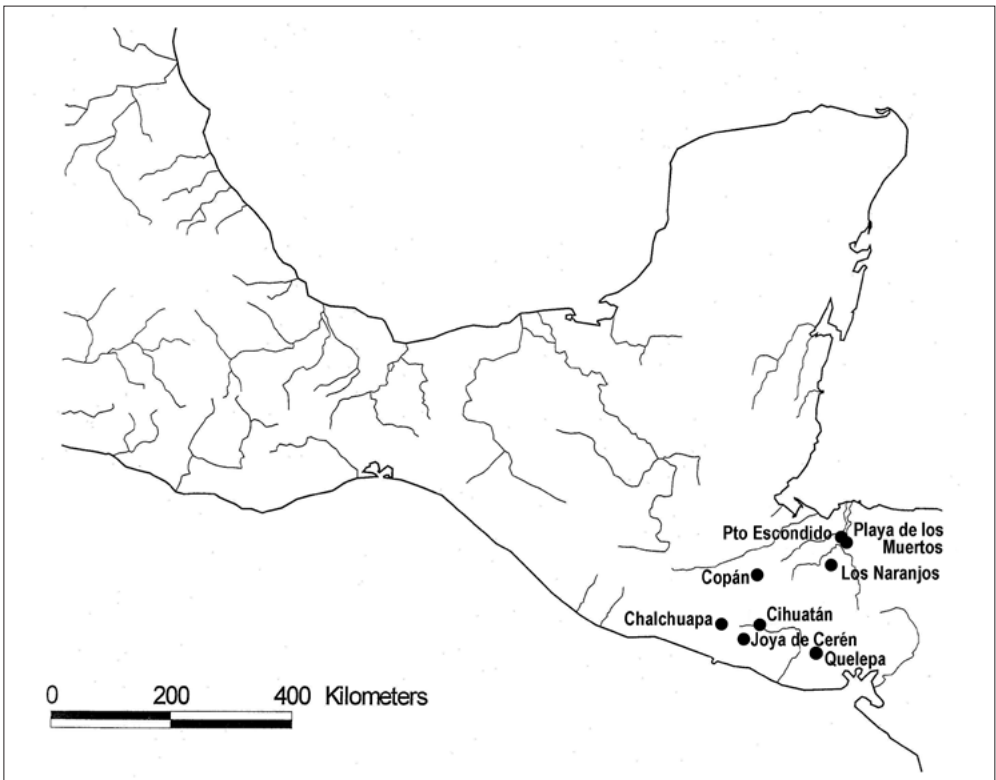
**Figure 11.2** A map of Mesoamerica, including the cultural traditions mentioned here



The region was home to several well-documented cultural traditions. These included the Olmecs (who are generally believed to have developed many of Mesoamerica's defining characteristics), the ancient Maya (whose territories stretched from eastern Mexico to Honduras), as well as the Zapotecs and Mixtecs of Oaxaca. In central Mexico, major traditions included the inhabitants of the central Mexican city of Teotihuacan, Tula – capital of the Toltec state – and Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Aztec Empire.

In El Salvador and Honduras, local incarnations of Mesoamerican cultural traditions – most notably the Olmec and Maya – are well attested in the archaeological record (Figure 11.3).

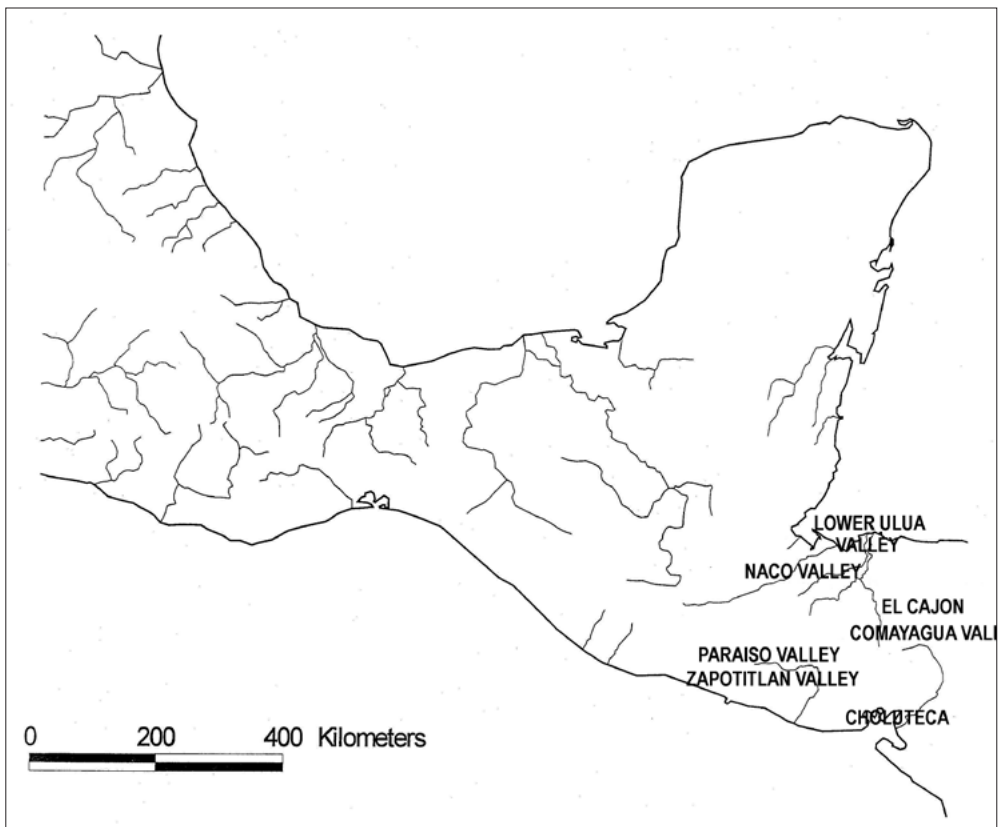
**Figure 11.3** A map showing the locations of Chalchuapa, Cihuatán, Copán, Joya de Cerén, Los Naranjos, Playa de los Muertos, Puerto Escondido, and Quelepa



Pottery made by the earliest villagers at the Honduran site of Puerto Escondido (c. 1600–1100 B.C.) closely resembles contemporary ceramics found along the Pacific coast, and by 1100 B.C. the site was clearly part of the Olmec world (Henderson & Hudson 2012, 2015). By approximately 900 B.C., an Olmec affiliation is also apparent at the Honduran sites of Playa de los Muertos and Los Naranjos as well as at the site of Chalchuapa in El Salvador. By the late Formative period (c. 300 BC), stelae at Chalchuapa began to show evidence of association with the Maya cultural sphere. Other population centres in El Salvador – most notably Joya de Cerén and Cihuatán – were also part of a southeastern Maya sphere, while the small city of Quelepa functioned as a point of articulation between Maya merchants and their counterparts from Honduras and the lower regions of Central America. In Honduras, the Maya city of Copán was a significant player in regional political and economic networks that stretched as far as central Mexico during the Classic period (c. 400 – 800 AD). Notably, its founding also reflects the political and cultural influence of Teotihuacán.

Distinct regional traditions also developed that contributed significantly to the economic, political, and social landscapes of the region (Figure 11.4). Honduras' Lower Ulúa Valley was a dominant source of cacao, painted ceramics, and other coveted prestige materials that were traded throughout Mesoamerica as well as a facilitator of trade in quetzal feathers and metal ores from the surrounding mountains. It did not, however, develop the kind of hierarchical sociopolitical structures found in other parts of the region (see Henderson & Hudson 2015). Distinct cultural traditions also appeared in central Honduras – most notably in the Comayagua valley (Canby 1949; Stone 1957; Dixon 1987, 1989, 1992; Dixon *et al* 1994) and in the El Cajón region (Hirth, Lara-Pinto & Hasemann 1989) in the centre – as well as in the Choluteca region in the south. In the northwest, the site of Naco was a major economic and political centre at the time of the Spanish invasion (see Henderson 1977; Henderson *et al* 1979; Wonderley 1981; Schortman & Urban 1994a; Schortman & Urban 1994b).

**Figure 11.4** A map showing the locations of the distinct regional traditions of El Salvador and Honduras





In El Salvador, sites in the Zapotitlán and Paraíso valleys reflect another distinct regional tradition in which elements of the Maya cultural sphere blended with local cultural features (Sheets 1983, 1992; Kelley 1988; Fowler 1989; Bruhns 1980; Bruhns & Amaroli Bertolucci 2009).

When the Spanish began their conquest of the mainland of the Americas in the early 16th century, El Salvador and Honduras were not spared. The region was the location of early conflicts between Spanish invaders and indigenous people and between Spanish factions from New Spain – largely what is now Mexico – and from Panama. In 1524–1525 Hernán Cortés marched to Honduras to check on the progress of his subordinates in subduing the economic centre of Naco (Henderson 1977). In 1532, the king of the Maya centre of Chetumal sent a force to the lower Ulúa Valley to protect his interests in the region's cacao, but these efforts were unsuccessful. Intense slaving, the spread of diseases such as smallpox, and forced population relocations combined with the ongoing military efforts of the Spanish to devastate the indigenous populations of Honduras and El Salvador; the rate of population decline in the region was faster than in almost any other area of Mesoamerica. Local political and economic systems were systematically dismantled, land was incorporated into the emergent colonies, and indigenous cultural and linguistic traditions were methodically suppressed.

Despite the brutality of the colonisation process, resistance to the Spanish invasion was widespread during the early years of the colonial period. Indigenous leaders in El Salvador and Honduras – including the Ch'orti' ruler Q'alel, the Pipil king Atlacatl, Sicumba, a chief from the lower Ulúa valley, and the legendary Lenca leader known as Lempira – organised sustained but ultimately unsuccessful attacks against the Spanish. Many communities joined in their efforts, but countless others – unable or unwilling to adapt to the colonial situation and devastated by war and the effects of disease – fled into the mountains to seek safety in isolation. This pattern of semi-selective displacement continued throughout the colonial and early postcolonial periods and prompted the remnants of previously distinct cultural groups to band together for safety and the practicalities of survival. It also laid the foundations of a new indigenous identity and motivated the creation of a new indigenous landscape in which members of this emergent group could construct a new place for themselves within a radically changed world.

### 3. INDIGENOUS LANDSCAPES AND NAMING

Contemporary indigenous populations in El Salvador and Honduras navigate these altered landscapes in a variety of ways. Some tactics – such as grassroots political organisation and the establishment of community-based agencies capable of advocating for social and economic benefits – operate from within a range of postcolonial economic, political, and social establishments. However, other strategies are agentic in subtler and more subversive ways that have led to the emergence of powerful new categories of identity. One of the most significant of these for many individuals is the persistent and insistent use of an indigenous toponymy, even – and, perhaps, particularly – when it differs from the official labels assigned to various geographic features and physical locales. This pattern of naming creates contrast with ladino and other non-indigenous groups while also generating affiliation with a distinctly indigenous set of historical understandings and sociocultural milieus. It also reinforces claims of historical legitimacy and contemporary validity by asserting affiliation with the physical landscape, thus causing the physical referents of place names to become secondary to their broader historical and sociocultural connotations.

This paper takes as its examples a representative set of indigenous place names collected by the author during the last decade as part of ongoing ethnographic and ethnohistorical work in villages scattered throughout El Salvador and Honduras. The identities of these settlements will not be given at the request of their inhabitants, for whom confidentiality and anonymity are significant concerns due to ongoing patterns of ethnic and political violence. However, it is possible to note that all of the locations considered here are situated within the eastern regions of El Salvador and the western and northwestern areas of Honduras. These examples do not represent an exhaustive list of place names pertinent to the issues considered here, but – when considered collectively – they do provide a concise and illustrative example of the toponymy that motivates and perpetuates the indigenous identities that have emerged in postcolonial Central America. They also illustrate the crucial fact that indigenous understandings of the region's topography reference features of both the physical landscape and the built environment, suggesting that conceptualisations of the indigenous landscape are not inherited and unchanging cultural relics but rather function as active and agentic practices capable of adapting to a changing world.

A majority of place names within the indigenous topography of this region refer to specific features of the physical landscape (Figure 11.5). Many of these reference natural features or formations that are seen as impressive or important, either by

indigenous communities or – in some cases – by non-indigenous entities and their interests. Indigenous labels, sanctioned by centuries of usage during the Colonial and independence periods, are “official” in the sense that they appear on maps approved by – and often produced by – government agencies. Few have Spanish counterparts. Non-indigenous people rarely if ever know the meanings of the native names, and often are unaware that the labels are not Spanish. Nonetheless, their use, by people of native descent and by non-indigenous people and institutions, serves to create a conscious contrast between local and outside perspectives.

**Figure 11.5** A map showing indigenous toponyms specifying particular features of the physical landscape



One example of this kind of toponym is *jiquitapa*, which identifies a specific gorge located in the Honduran state of Yoro. The name means water or stream of the *jiquiletes*, referring to the bush from which indigo is derived. The etymology is Nahuatl, from *xiuhquilitl*, and might be a post-invasion name applied by Nahuatl-speaking allies of invading Spaniards. There is no evidence that Pipil or any other Nahuatl language was ever widely spoken in Yoro, where Pech and Tol are the primary indigenous languages.

Similarly, the term *guicama* is used to refer to a specific mountain – also called Cerro Lapaterique in some versions of the indigenous toponymy – that is located near the Honduran city of Tegucigalpa. *Guicama*, more commonly spelled *jicama*, describes an

edible root and is derived from the Nahuatl *xicamatl*. An ancient Pipil speaking population in the Tegucigalpa region is not impossible, but there is no evidence for it; Lenca, the likely source of Lapaterique, was widely spoken in the general area. *Guasaule* is the indigenous name for the Río Negro, which forms part of the border between the modern republics of Honduras and Nicaragua near the Gulf of Fonseca. Its etymology is uncertain; it is sometimes related to the Nahuatl word *uaxin*, which describes a flowering tree or shrub, but there is no apparent Nahuatl derivation for the rest of the name.

More generalised locations within the physical landscape are also named (Figure 11.6). One common example of this kind of toponym is *managuara*, which refers to the ancestral territory of the Lenca and a variable set of related indigenous groups.

**Figure 11.6** A map showing indigenous toponyms referencing generalised locations in the physical landscape



The geographical referent of this term lacks precise physical boundaries, though its approximate location – which encompasses much of eastern El Salvador and western/northwest Honduras – is widely understood within the region’s indigenous communities. These groups represent a much greater range of diversity, culturally and linguistically, than is typically implied in academic usage of the Lenca label. The possibility that this identification with an ancient *managuara* homeland may be part of an ongoing process of ethnogenesis is an intriguing possibility. Similarly, *nikepuke* references the ancestral

territory of the Pipil, which similarly lacks precise boundaries but invokes a distinct geographic and historical space in the western half of El Salvador. It is sometimes used in conjunction with *managuara*, to suggest a complementary distribution of ethnic/linguistic groups within El Salvador.

The region's indigenous toponymy also includes place names used to describe locations within the built environment (Figure 11.7). Perhaps the clearest example refers to the Maya city of Copán in northwestern Honduras, which features prominently in the region's archaeological and historical discourses as well as in national programmes of heritage building and in many tourist brochures.

**Figure 11.7** A map showing indigenous toponyms specifying locations within the built environment



Members of the communities considered here reject the Copán name, however, and use it only when practical considerations demand it; they instead refer to the site with the indigenous term *Oxwitique*, derived from modern academic decipherment of one of Copán's ancient texts. Its precise reference is unclear, but it may be to a legendary place connected with the mythic origins of the city and/or its patron deities.

*Xukpi*, a much more common term in the hieroglyphic texts, refers to the entity ruled by the ancient kings of Copán. It is widely understood as the ancient equivalent of the Copán name, though in technical terms it is probably not a place name. The term is heavily used in marketing in the modern town near the archaeological site, largely by merchants who may be choosing it in preference to *Oxwitique* because they are more attuned to the terms that tourists may be familiar with. Similarly, there is a village in the Honduran department of Yoro – in a deep depression surrounded by mountains – that was abandoned when ladino settlers arrived. Contemporary Hondurans identify the site as *Pueblo Viejo* – “Old Town” – but in the indigenous topography the settlement is called *jocon* instead. The referent is to a kind of reed used locally to make baskets; its etymology is unknown, but it clearly relates to indigenous craft production rather than ladino practice.

#### **4. TOPONYMY AND IDENTITY**

The indigenous landscape that contains these terms is, at its core, a critical topography in which the physical referents of the place names it encompasses are secondary to their historical and sociocultural connotations. The geographic dimension of a toponym matters less than the fact of its use, which symbolises affiliation with a distinct identity, history, and patrimony that is reified by the etymologies of the terms with which they are associated. As Jordan (2012:129) points out, such terms are “important in their symbolic function as a label as well as in their function to support emotional affiliation.” It is worth noting that these functions are, at their core, inextricable, since emotional affiliation requires a toponym to be affiliated with a referent that is imbued with a sociocultural semantics that extends beyond the physical world. This, in turn, allows toponyms to develop a kind of sociocultural capital that can be deployed in a variety of ways and that can enable their users to position themselves agentively within a variety of situations. Three dimensions of this capital are particularly significant: the emergence of a complex multi-referential identity within indigenous populations, the reclamation of historical relevance and legitimacy, and the assertion of cultural and linguistic competency. Each of these will be considered in turn.

#### 4.1 A Multi-referential identity

In the communities considered here, a key consequence of the use of distinct indigenous place names is the motivation and perpetuation of two distinct but related identity categories: a pan-indigenous identity and a generalised Lenca identity. These identifications co-exist and do not conflict in the minds of the individuals and groups that claim them. Instead, they possess a symbiotic relationship that provides a highly flexible means of response to broader sociocultural and political realities. At their core, both identities assert and reify association with non-ladino and non-European groups. They explicitly contrast users of indigenous toponyms with the ladino groups dominant in the two republics and affiliate them instead with distinctive historical and sociocultural milieus. These conceptual spaces are, in turn, reified through their connection to locations named within the physical world. Indigenous place names link these heritages to tangible places in ways that mark them as real.

The pan-indigenous identity motivated by the use of indigenous place names is, at its core, a reflection of the historical mixing that occurred during the colonial era and led to the blurring of cultural and genetic boundaries between indigenous groups. It is also an appropriation and reclaiming of political manipulations of the notion of the indigenous self that accompanied the emergence of the nation-state. In both El Salvador and Honduras there is a state-level emphasis on indigenous achievement that is divorced from actual populations but used as a source of national identity and legitimation. This use of indigeneity as a concept serves a dual political function: it facilitates international recognition and interest, particularly financially, and it also roots the relatively young republics in a deeper historical narrative believed to validate their existence. For indigenous populations such as the communities considered here, this misappropriation is seen as a continuation of colonial patterns of cultural homogenisation. However, it is also viewed as an official sanctioning of the indigenous self that presents an opportunity for the assertion of a distinct indigenous identity that is viable because it is both officially recognised and appropriately reflective of their blended heritage.

The generalised Lenca identity that has developed in El Salvador and Honduras – and the associated use of many Lenca toponyms in the indigenous landscape – functions as a more targeted reaction to political manipulations of the notion of the indigenous self. This is particularly true for populations living in Honduras, where official accounts of precolumbian history have focused on the role of the ancient Maya – builders of the city of Copán in northwest Honduras – to the exclusion of other cultural groups in an attempt to create a national history and identity. The fact that the Maya are internationally

recognised and deemed worthy of study and support by international scholars and tourists is a reinforcing bonus, and intellectual and popular interest in Copán and the Maya was politically sanctioned by the Honduran government in ways that socially and economically benefit ethnically Maya populations. Identifying as Lenca – irrespective of ethnic heritage – is thus a rejection of this politicised narrative and the government that sanctions it through association with a different archaeologically and historically documented heritage. It is as much a non-Maya identity as a specifically Lenca one.

Equally significant is the fact that this identity provides a means of labeling the broader pan-indigenous identity such that it can more easily articulate with these alternative narratives and affiliate with an ethnic group that is significant within them. The Lenca are archaeologically and ethnohistorically connected to the Ulúa Valley, which was the source of an array of valuable products that included elaborate polychrome ceramics, carved marble vases, and the region's earliest cacao. They are also affiliated with the legendary figure known as Lempira, a national hero who is credited with leading an indigenous revolt against the Spanish and the namesake of the Honduran currency that bears his image. It is important to note that claiming a generalised Lenca identity does not preclude simultaneous affiliation with a pan-indigenous categorisation but rather reinforces it and offers an alternative perspective on what it means to be indigenous in Salvadoran and Honduran contexts.

## 4.2 Reclaiming historical legitimacy

In both cases, the use of distinct indigenous place names is viewed as evidence of a connection with deep history and the legitimacy that is thought to derive from it. As Jordan (2012:129) points out, cultural minorities – such as the groups inhabiting the communities considered here – often feel “a special need to demonstrate that they exist, have been present for generations, and have co-shaped the culture and cultural landscape of a certain place.” That need can be addressed through the use of distinct toponyms. This is particularly true in postcolonial situations where indigenous identities and achievements have been intentionally diminished, since the erasure of history was a common and effective tactic used to subjugate and “civilize” subject populations.

In El Salvador and Honduras, as in many other postcolonial situations, the historical associations implied by the use of indigenous place names support claims of an ancient presence that can be used, in turn, to support contemporary constructions of legitimacy and worth. By linking themselves with immutable features in the physical world in this way – for example, through the use of *guicama* or *lapaterique* to describe the mountain



near Tegucigalpa – indigenous communities attempt to connect themselves to particular locations in a permanent and incontrovertible way. The existence of this kind of place name is seen as evidence of historical existence, since – as one informant described – these terms have been passed down through the generations from ancestors who created them to describe places that were theirs. Place names used to describe locations in the built environment – such as, for example, the use of Oxwitique instead of Copán – supplement these claims of existence with assertions of past achievements or involvement in historically significant things. By using indigenous names for locations associated with recognised historical importance, contemporary individuals and communities can claim connections to the relevant accomplishments (political, sociocultural, or otherwise).

### **4.3 Displaying cultural and linguistic competency**

Additionally, the use of a distinct indigenous toponymy facilitates the assertion of cultural and linguistic competency, even – and, perhaps, especially – when actual knowledge of the relevant cultural and linguistic systems has been lost or eroded. It is important to emphasise that the populations considered here have been markedly affected by this kind of attrition. Their cultures have been significantly altered due to processes of conversion, mestizaje – which drastically reduced the number of distinct indigenous ethnic groups – and cultural assimilation that are intertwined with systems of social and economic benefit. Similar damage has been done to the region’s linguistic landscape. Lenca – which is the source of many toponyms used in these communities – is completely extinct with no remaining speakers, and many other languages relevant here – including Pech, Tol, and the Honduran variety of Ch’orti’ – are severely endangered.

In the context of these changes to the cultural and linguistic landscapes, the knowledge and use of indigenous place names are often seen as proof of cultural and linguistic competency. Turning again to the words of Jordan (2012:127), we can see that

“[i]n the symbolic function of a label a place name represents a space-related concept filled with contents. The name conveys these contents to inhabitants of the place as well as to people from the outside...[so that] the latter know these contents or have learned about them.”

The key observation is that the use of an indigenous place name reflects access to the cultural knowledge associated with it and, by extension, indicates sufficient understanding of this knowledge to use it appropriately. By using these place names, therefore, individuals assert both the continuation of the cultural traditions with which they are associated and their own competency as cultural practitioners.

Perhaps more significantly, the knowledge and use of indigenous place names reflect a change in conceptualisations of what it means to “know” or “speak” a language. In the situation described here, speaking a language has been redefined as knowing the proper words for places in the landscape. This is particularly true in relation to Lenca, which is extinct and survives only in the place names that it contributed to the indigenous toponymy of El Salvador and Honduras. Inquiries about words other than place names always produce the same expected result: no one knows those things any more, and no one has known them for at least two generations. However, in conversations about geography and other topics pertaining to the physical landscape, Lenca place names are routinely cited and often prefaced with the phrase *en nuestra lengua...* (“in our language...”). Individuals with knowledge of these terms are described as speakers of Lenca and/or “the indigenous language,” and community meetings are sometimes held to teach the children how to speak by instructing them in the proper names for features of the physical and built environments. Community members who do not know or fail to use the indigenous place names are said to have forgotten their language and, in some cases, the authenticity of their indigeneity is brought into question.

## 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The persistent use of indigenous place names is thus a means of supporting an array of claims of contemporary association. They facilitate connections with history and with the legitimacy that comes from historical presence and activity, underlie assertions of cultural and linguistic competency, and serve as a focal point for a dualistic identity construction through which various kinds of indigeneity can be invoked. They also provide a means of association with others who are interested in reclaiming and perpetuating a distinct indigenous patrimony. In effect, the use of indigenous place names facilitates the agentic reformulation of the region’s indigenous population. Interestingly, non-indigenous ladinos who use *Xukpi* – the ancient Mayan name of Copán – in their commercial activities employ a similar process to claim a fictive connection with the Maya identity that is not only promoted by the state but that can be mobilised to enhance profit from the limitless appetite of tourists for the “authentic.”

In Honduras and El Salvador, therefore, place names have been and continue to be critically important as symbolic markers of cultural identities and as a mechanism for asserting and building sociocultural and socio-political relations. They also provide a rich field for investigating the ways in which the significance of toponyms may change even though their referents remain the same. Although a more detailed look at the

significances of individual place names within this emergent indigenous topography is required to fully understand the mechanisms of identity construction considered here, it is hoped that the observations presented here will be articulated with similar studies in different parts of the world and contribute to the ongoing discussion of how naming places is, in effect, a placing of the self.

## REFERENCES

- BRUHNS KO. 1980. *Cihuatán: An Early Postclassic town of El Salvador: The 1977-1978 excavations*. Monographs in Anthropology, No. 5. Columbia: Museum of Anthropology, University of Missouri.
- BRUHNS KO & AMAROLI BERTOLUCCI PE. 2009. An Early Postclassic round structure at Cihuatán, El Salvador. *Arqueología Iberoamericana*, 2:35-45.
- CANBY J. 1949. Excavations at Yarumela, Spanish Honduras. Ph.D. thesis. Cambridge: Harvard University.
- DIXON B. 1987. Conflict along the southeast Mesoamerican periphery: A defensive wall system at the site of Tenampua. In: EJ Robinson (ed). *Interaction on the Southeast Mesoamerican Frontier: Prehistoric and Historic Honduras and El Salvador*. Oxford: BAR Publishing. 142-153.
- DIXON B. 1989. A preliminary settlement pattern study of a prehistoric cultural corridor: the Comayagua Valley, Honduras. *Journal of Field Archaeology*, 16:257-272.
- DIXON B. 1992. Prehistoric political change on the southeast Mesoamerican periphery. *Ancient Mesoamerica*, 3:11-25. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0956536100002261>
- DIXON B, JOESINK-MANDEVILLE LV, HASEBE N, MUCIO M, VINCENT W, JAMES D & PETERSEN K. 1994. Formative-period architecture at the site of Yarumela, central Honduras. *Latin American Antiquity*, 5:70-87. <https://doi.org/10.2307/971903>
- FOWLER WR. 1989. *The cultural evolution of ancient Nahua civilization: The Pipil-Nicarao of Central America*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- HENDERSON JS. 1977. The Valle de Naco: ethnohistory and archaeology in northwestern Honduras. *Ethnohistory*, 24:363-77. <https://doi.org/10.2307/481388>
- HENDERSON JS & HUDSON KM. 2012. The Southeastern Frontier. In: D Nichols & C Pool (eds). *Oxford handbook of Mesoamerican archaeology*. New York: Oxford University Press. 482-494.
- HENDERSON JS & HUDSON KM. 2015. The myth of Maya: Archaeology and the construction of Mesoamerican histories. In: H Kettunen & C Helmke (eds). *On methods: How we know what we think we know about the Maya*. Acta Mesoamericana Vol. 28. Markt Schwaben: Verlag Anton Saurwein. 7-24.

- HENDERSON JS, WALLACE IS, WONDERLEY A & URBAN PA. 1979. Archaeological investigations in the Valle de Naco, northwestern Honduras: a preliminary report. *Journal of Field Archaeology*, 6:169-192.
- HIRTH KG, LARA-PINTO G & HASEMANN G. 1989. *Archaeological research in the El Cajon region 1: Prehistoric cultural ecology*. Memoirs in Latin American Archaeology. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, Department of Anthropology.
- JORDAN P. 2012. Place names as ingredients of space-related identity. *Oslo Studies in Language*, 4(2):117-131.
- KELLEY JH. 1988. *Cihuatán, El Salvador: A study in intrasite variability*. Publications in Anthropology. No 35. Nashville: Vanderbilt University.
- SCHORTMAN EM & URBAN PA. 1994a. Living on the edge: core/periphery relations in ancient southeastern Mesoamerica. *Current Anthropology*, 35:401-430. <https://doi.org/10.1086/204293>
- SCHORTMAN EM & URBAN PA (EDS). 1994b. *Sociopolitical hierarchy and craft production: The economic bases of elite power in a Late Classic Southeastern polity 3: The 1992 Naco Valley Season*. Tegucigalpa: Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia.
- SHEETS PD. 1983. *Archaeology and volcanism in Central America: The Zapotitlan Valley of El Salvador*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- SHEETS PD. 1992. *The Ceren Site: A Prehistoric village buried by volcanic ash in Central America*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- STONE DZ. 1957. *The archaeology of Central and Southern Honduras*. Papers of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Vol. 49, No. 3. Cambridge: Harvard University.
- WONDERLEY AW. 1981. Late Postclassic excavations at Naco, Honduras. PhD thesis. Ithaca: Cornell University.

# THE DIALECTICS AND POLITICS OF FOOTBALL AS REVEALED IN THE NAMES AND NICKNAMES OF THREE SELECTED ZIMBABWE STADIUMS

**Liketso Dube**

Curriculum Studies Department, Great Zimbabwe University, Zimbabwe  
liketsodube@gmail.com

## **Abstract**

This paper delves into the dialectics of football as both the beautiful game and a point of conflict. Football, like most sporting disciplines, is said to unify people of different backgrounds but can, at the same time, turn friends into foes if they root for different teams. Hooliganism is a problem that football administrators and tournament organisers have to factor in and anticipate whenever they organise soccer tournaments. The thoroughness of preparing for tournaments also differs depending on which teams will participate and in which stadium, so that the behaviour of the specific home team supporters is taken into consideration, with the names of the stadiums and the seating bays giving clues as to the behaviour that the tournament organisers are to expect. The rivalry between soccer fans of different teams is almost similar to that of supporters of political parties, but interestingly soccer fans have to share the same venue. This paper analyses the names and nicknames of Barbourfields Stadium, Rufaro Stadium and Baghdad Stadium. The names of the seating bays in which the home team supporters are usually located are also explored to reveal the relationship between them and the violence that is associated with respective parts of the stadiums. It is the contention of this article that the names of stadiums and home team seating bays influence the behaviour of home team and visiting team supporters accordingly, thereby turning these supposedly family places into war zones. Some of the names and nicknames of the stadiums and seating bays are metaphors of war and have a corresponding psychological effect on the fans. The volatility of the atmosphere in stadiums, i.e. moving from joy to sadness or even violence within a very short space of time and within the same geographical space, is viewed as resembling the political landscape where neighbours are turned into enemies by the spirit of competition, whereas after the election they are expected to work together in building the country.

**Keywords:** football, stadium names, nicknames

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Soccer, like most sporting phenomena, is regarded to have unifying capabilities since it can be a rallying point for fans of football clubs. The support of football clubs is a social activity which lends people certain identities corresponding with the concerned football club, with supporters' associations being set up and regalia being designed to identify those who support certain clubs in a fashion that is similar to that of the supporters of political parties. Interestingly, supporters of football clubs have to be housed in the same stadium at the same time, unlike the supporters of political parties who usually take turn to make use of a soccer stadium. The fact that people who are locked in such fierce competition with each other share a physical space, and are expected to maintain a spirit of friendship, is very curious and renders the support of a football team and the keeping of peace within the stadium a delicate balancing act. Clearly, from the names given to stadiums and the seating bays within certain stadiums, the act of being a soccer supporter is a controversial activity which sets those involved in the business of organising soccer competitions, the supporters and those who must maintain order within stadiums, on a collision course. Hence, this article wishes to demonstrate that it is misleading to think of soccer competitions as being unifying events, since these matches can result in disasters that have been witnessed the world over. According to Guzura and Ndimande (2015:2) "the encounter between football and identity has always been inevitable as football clubs tend to be formed on the basis of social identity, in this instance a group identity, they identify with a geographic location, social class, racial group, ethnic group and in some cases religious group." The names of seating bays within Barbourfields stadium tend to discriminate along the lines of geographical location and ethnic grouping as will be subsequently demonstrated. It is high time the world realised that football is about competition and rivalry, hence some names of the various seating bays are metaphors of war. Pannenburg (2012:94) aptly explains how football should be regarded, especially in Africa, by saying:

In Africa, there exists a correlation between football and war. George Orwell once described sports, referring to football in particular, as 'war minus the shooting'. Football is often explained through war-like metaphors, and in Africa the game can be regarded as a pacified form of tribal warfare.

It is not surprising that football matches and political gatherings take place in the same spaces. Names like Soweto and Vietnam, for seating bays, and Baghdad for a stadium in Zimbabwe, could inspire football fans to behave violently during football events.

Names are very powerful in shaping behaviour. Galinsky *et al* (2003:222) argue that “names are powerful [...] the mere presence of a group label can activate stereotypic information about the group.” A label on a group can give that group a particular attitude towards itself and towards others since a name lends a certain identity and separates the named from others. The seating arrangements within soccer stadiums follows a particular pattern and spaces are named in such a way that sub-groups are created within these spaces, with the particular names creating a sense of belonging for a group. Helleland (2012:96) asserts that “place names are social signals of belonging to a group, and the more names that are shared; the stronger the bonds are within the group.” Groups that occupy specific seating bays that carry positive labels are bound to display good behaviour, while those who occupy bays that carry negative labels could exhibit negative behaviour. Helleland (2012:107) further argues that groups that adopt certain spaces develop an attachment to them, saying that “place attachment may be defined as an affective bond that people establish with specific areas where they prefer to remain and where they feel comfortable and safe.” It is the argument of this article that the names of football spaces impact strongly on the behaviour and attitude of football stakeholders; from fans and administrators through to those who are responsible for upholding security in stadiums. Spaaij (2007:375) propounds that “Territorial identifications play an important role in the construction of hooligan identities and inter-group rivalries. Hooligans identify specific spaces as their home ‘turf’ or territory.” Territorial marks obviously encompass naming those certain spaces within stadiums as belonging to certain groups or individuals.

The major stadiums in Zimbabwe, i.e. Boubourfields Stadium (the home of Highlanders Football Club) and Rufaro Stadium (the home ground of Dynamos Football Club) have names that do not link them with any negativity. Even the nicknames of these stadiums are positive. Boubourfields is nicknamed *Emagumeni* which means ‘a people’s place’, while Rufaro Stadium is nicknamed the ‘Ceremonial Home of Football’ implying that fans can expect to watch good football and consequently enjoy themselves. There are other names of the seating bays which convey alternative messages about the fans that occupy these bays. The behaviour of the soccer fans who sit in these different bays is different, and the security officers treat them differently. Fans who sit in different bays develop attitudes towards one another even if they are fans of the same team. Their views about football issues and reactions to a decision on the football pitch are also different. Friends who belong to different seating bays cease to be friends once they are inside the stadium and have taken their seating positions in the respective bays. Names, whether they inspire negativity and hooliganism or positive behaviour, serve to discriminate and identify

groups and individuals according to the spaces they occupy in these stadiums. It is very important for football spectators to know the seating bays because such knowledge or lack of it has implications for their security within the stadium. Unfortunately these names cannot be seen anywhere as clear labels, but those who frequent these stadiums know exactly where to position themselves so as to avoid trouble.

This article therefore explores the names Barbourfields Stadium and its seating bays, i.e. Soweto Stand, *Embankweni/Empankweni* Stand, *KoEdgars* Stand, *Isitendi SeSaints*, and the VIP Stand. It discusses the behaviour of football spectators found in these spaces. Rufaro Stadium and the popular, if not notorious, Vietnam stand are also explored as named spaces that are associated with soccer. The naming of Baghdad Stadium is also examined to reveal the implications of the name on the behaviour of soccer fans and other stakeholders in the game.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is guided by the self-fulfilling prophecy theory which is defined by Sharma and Sharma (2015:41) as “a false definition evoking a new behaviour which makes the originally false conception come true”. In essence, Merton (1968) believed that false expectations held by people could come true or they could create their own reality by causing other people to change their behaviour to match and fulfil the initial expectations. Names inspire certain expectations from the naming and the named. Closely linked to the self-fulfilling prophecy theory is labelling theory, which is popular in education circles but is quite relevant to onomastics in the sense that names are labels. Research on the relationship between name and behaviour indicates that there is a strong link between a name and behaviour. Ifarn (2014:12) points out that:

In his research, Garwood (1976) equated academic achievement of a group of boys having desirable names with the group of boys having undesirable names, he concluded that the group of boys having the desirable names were having two times high scores as comparison with the other group of boys [...] Children performance in the schools is influenced by the names as well as the teacher’s reactions to the name stereotypes.

As has previously been pointed out, names are labels which influence the behaviour of their bearers and the reactions and attitudes of those that use those names to identify individuals in accordance with whether the name is positive or negative. “Self-fulfilling prophecies are related specifically to the phenomena of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination” (Pugh 1989:1). Prejudice and discrimination are key negatives



associated with certain labels. Those spectators and fans found at Soweto and Vietnam stands are usually discriminated against by the security agents inside the stadium and those responsible for football administration usually allocate more security personnel to those 'hot spots' of violence than to any other part of the stadium. In the same vein, the occupants of the specific areas in the stadiums usually feel they must do what is expected of them, i.e. be violent. In this direction, Quirk (2017:12) explains the impact of the self-fulfilling prophecy on everyone involved in the prediction of behaviour of the concerned by arguing that: "The self-fulfilling prophecy or Pygmalion Effect was first studied by social psychologist and educational researcher Robert Rosenthal, who gathered and proved that the Pygmalion effect can significantly influence the behavior of others around us." Social expectations or prophecies exert pressure on those who carry certain labels, and those who are expected to monitor them. Certain labels, like the names of seating bays within stadiums, e.g. Soweto, Vietnam, *KoEdgars* and others mentioned in this article, can influence the behaviour of the occupants of these bays and the attitudes of security personnel.

### **3. BARBOURFIELDS, RUFARO AND BAGHDAD STADIUMS**

The official name Barbourfields Stadium has no direct links with controversy since the stadium was named after a former Mayor, H. R. Barbour, a mayor who during the colonial era was greatly interested in the welfare of the indigenous people (Nyathi 2014). The nickname of the stadium is *Emagumeni*, which means 'a people's place'. Based on the self-fulfilling prophecy theory and the labelling theory, the nickname is expected to inspire happiness and positive behaviour from soccer fans that throng the stadium when Highlanders Football Club plays host to other clubs. One would then expect a happy and welcoming atmosphere at Barbourfields. However, the names of the seating bays tell a different story. The most notorious seating bay at Barbourfields is the Soweto stand. Chiweshe (2014:213) explains that "Highlanders have got the 'Soweto' (named after a group of suburbs inhabited by black South Africans in Johannesburg) stand in Barbourfields stadium which is a no go area for supporters of a rival team and if found there the likelihood of being assaulted physically and verbally is great." The Soweto stand occupants display quite a number of predictable behavioural characteristics, i.e. violence, intolerance, pitch invasion, throwing of missiles, risky behaviour (sitting precariously on billboards at the highest point of the stand) and general rowdiness. Police officers in the stadium are now aware of this behaviour and have developed attitudes towards fans who occupy those stands, so that their presence in the stadium is concentrated in these

areas. On the other hand, the fans in these stands display behaviours demonstrating a readiness to go to war with everyone who is opposed to them. They react angrily to any decision that goes against their team, regardless of whether or not the decision is correct.

This article argues that the name Soweto impacts negatively on the behaviour of the fans that occupy this stand and influences other football stakeholders like police officers to have a negative attitude towards the Soweto stand occupants. According to Daimon (2010:2), "Soweto' is associated with bloodshed reminiscent of the killings in Soweto Township during the apartheid era in South Africa." Even songs that are sung at the Soweto stand bay are songs of war, e.g. *boph' ijambo, boph' ijambo sitshay' abantu* (tighten your shoe of war so that we can beat up people). These types of song are mostly initiated at the Soweto stand, where hardcore Highlanders supporters are found, before it spreads to *Embankweni/Empankweni* (where lizards are found/place for lizards) stand. Occupants of the Soweto stand are regarded, and indeed also regard themselves, as the 'foot soldiers' of the team who are ever ready to fight whoever they deem to be opposed to their team. They claim to belong to Highlanders more than anybody else in the stadium. Their duty is to defend the interests of their team at all costs. To them Soweto means resisting and defying anyone whose behaviour seems to go against the interests of their club. Helleland (2012:108) explains the link between a place name, occupants of the place and their identity by contending that;

Place identity may be said to encompass an individual's personal identity [...] It is therefore a component of personal identity, a process by which, through interaction with places, people describe themselves in terms of belonging to a specific place [...] thereby creating the source of meaning for a given setting by virtue of relevant cognitive clusters that indicate what should happen in it, what the setting is supposed to be like, and how the individual and others are supposed to behave in it.

Individuals who occupy the Soweto stand are expected to make the atmosphere electrifying and unbearable for those that are not passionate enough about the Highlanders Football Club. Even some Highlanders fans that are not passionate enough cannot bear the demands of the Soweto stand since they could be viewed as not being Ndebele enough. Guzura and Ndimande (2015:10) postulate that "One may adduce that the vanguard of Ndebele culture and identity sit at the Soweto stand, they are symbolically acting as the Praetorian Guard, the protectors and defenders of Ndebele identity." Clearly the seating bays' names discriminate along ethnicity lines since only the Ndebele can occupy the Soweto stand. The Soweto stand is now associated with supporting one's team with passion. School-going soccer fans create their own 'Soweto

stands' within soccer grounds in schools in Bulawayo. A certain student from Mzilikazi High School, a school that is close to Barbourfields Stadium, was once punished by the headmaster for inviting his friends to go and occupy the 'Soweto stand' within the school grounds since the mentioning of the name Soweto had ethnic connotations. Soweto has become a 'travelling' toponym in the sense that passionate Highlanders fans follow the team wherever the team plays games and set up their 'Soweto' stand marked by the black and white regalia worn by the fans and the flags they wave around.

Within the Soweto stand there are further divisions to create spaces that also become 'places' that are occupied by people of a particular identity. Ncube (2014:203) notes that:

Legitimate occupants of the Soweto stand believe that they trace their origins from the 'original' Khumalo/Ndebele group [...] Some of these people's surnames today include 'Dlodlo', 'Khumalo' and 'Gumede' [...] these 'legitimate' fans actually have permanent places reserved for them at Soweto. When newcomers to Soweto sit in one of these seats, it is quite common for them to be warned that 'leyo indawo kaDlodlo (that is Dlodlo's place)'. A hierarchy of legitimacy and authenticity is thus played out over seats in the Soweto stand.

As pointed out above, within the Soweto stand one also finds places named 'Dlodlo's', 'Khumalo's', 'Gumede's', 'Khanye's' or any other originally Nguni surname. Other Ndebele fans with non-Nguni surnames occupy Soweto stand but do not have permanent seats. Interestingly, those with non-Nguni surnames act as the 'running dogs' of the fans with Nguni surnames, since they get into the stadium early enough to caution and orient newcomers into the culture of permanent seats for the Nguni, while those with permanent seats can enter the stadium when they feel like it and still find their seats reserved for them. The foregoing scenario further divides fans into even smaller ethnic groupings, bringing into question the argument that soccer unites people and is the 'the world's most beautiful game.'

Closely related to Soweto stand in terms of fan behaviour is a seating bay found at Rufaro Stadium in Harare, namely Vietnam stand. Rufaro Stadium is the home ground of the Dynamos Football Club. Rufaro means joy, implying that fans and spectators visit the stadium to enjoy watching soccer. Even the nickname of the stadium, i.e. the 'Ceremonial Home of Football', could inspire players to raise their game so as to give joy to their fans. Spectators and fans also visit the stadium in large numbers expecting to watch good football in a positive atmosphere. The stand for the home team's staunch supporters, i.e. Vietnam stand, contradicts the name and nickname of the stadium. According to Chiweshe (2014:213), "Violence and hooliganism are also integral parts of football.

For example, Dynamos have got the 'Vietnam' (named after the Vietnam War) stand in their home ground Rufaro stadium." Daimon (2010) also notes that "in Harare's Rufaro Stadium, which is the home of Dynamos FC [...] arguably with the most violent supporters, there is an area popularly known as the 'Vietnam' stand. The name 'Vietnam' is a metaphor for the brutality of the Vietnam War of the 1960s." The labelling of seating bays with war metaphors such as Vietnam, strongly links soccer with war, yet the sport is also known as the world's 'most beautiful game'.

Occupants of the Vietnam stand, like those found in the Soweto stand, discriminate along ethnic lines. The Vietnam stand occupants believe that only those who are Shona support the Dynamos Football Club and that they must be the only ones who occupy the Vietnam stand. The foregoing argument can be substantiated by Ncube's (2014:204) assertion that "the Vietnam stand, like Soweto, is one of the key sites where ethnic rivalries and contestations are played out." The Shona in the Vietnam stand sing songs that denigrate the Ndebele and one of the songs has the following lyrics:

*MaNdevere munoapireiko doro?* (Why do you give the Ndebeles beer?)

The song has connotations that the Ndebele misbehave once they are intoxicated and hence they must be treated like children who must not be given beer. Chiweshe (2014:219) also mentions the discrimination along ethnic lines seen at the Vietnam stand, where one of the fans interviewed said: "There is no way I can ever befriend a Highlander supporter..." The fans at the Vietnam stand even call the Highlanders fans *dzetse* (frogs). The behaviour of fans in the stadium and particularly at the Vietnam and Soweto stands is strongly impacted by the stadium atmosphere, as confirmed by Chiweshe (2014:219)'s interviewee who said: "I do not use vulgar language or sing the songs but within the stadium that is what happens so if you want to come then get used to it." Vulgar language becomes a form of identity for those who occupy the Vietnam and Soweto stands in line with the labels they are associated with.

*Embankweni*/*Empankweni* occupants consider themselves to be the next after those at the Soweto stand in terms of passion and real belonging to the Highlanders Football Club. Belonging to Highlanders implies being a true Ndebele. They are usually a nuisance in that they shout obscenities to assistant referees as they go about their business along the edges of the pitch. If the ball is accidentally kicked to the *Embankweni*/*Empankweni* stand, it can be kicked around several times before it is kicked back across the perimeter fence and onto the pitch. The name of the *Embankweni*/*Empankweni* stand comes from the fact that the stand is located in the eastern direction of the stadium, where

the sun shines directly on the occupants around three o'clock in the afternoon. Lizards seem to enjoy basking in the sun and they are generally considered poor animals in both the Ndebele and Shona culture. The occupants of this stand are also considered poor since they cannot afford the fares for the grand and VIP stands, which are more expensive. The foregoing argument brings about another form of discrimination that is associated with the seating patterns within stadiums caused by the affordability of the seating bays. The VIP stand, which hosts a section called *KoEdgars*, is for the rich who do not want to expose themselves to the rough and violent atmosphere at stands like Soweto, *Embankweni/Empankweni* and other bays where the basic fare is charged. Fans at the cheapest seating bays treat those at the VIP section with disdain and argue that where they sit is the place to be for real soccer fans, by declaring that "*Ndokubhora kana usingade enda unogara kushade*" (If you feel offended then you can always go and watch from the expensive seats). It is clear therefore that some of these names of the seating bays carry labels along the lines of one's level of material wealth. Curiously, the poor seem to believe that since they can make more noise and be more violent than those seated at the stands with more expensive seats; they are the most genuine of all football fans in the stadium. Clearly the mass of fans in a stadium is divided along several different socially constructed lines; hence football is viewed as being as controversial as it is loved.

The other stand that is quite popular is *KoEdgars* stand. This is the grand stand to the right of the VIP stand when one is facing the western direction. Here one finds fans that dress immaculately and tend not to display their passion as openly as those in the Soweto and *Embankweni/Empankweni* stands. Sitting at *KoEdgars* is a symbol of affluence and most of the fans that sit there are present for more things than just watching soccer, chief among those being to display the latest fashion from Edgars Stores. The *KoEdgars* stand is opposite *Embankweni/Empankweni* and occupants of the two stands named these two stands to describe each other's behaviour. Fans from both stands seem to live up to their labels, with those from *Embankweni/Empankweni* continuing to bask in the sun because they cannot afford the fares for *KoEdgars*, while those at the *KoEdgars* and VIP stands are magnificently dressed. This is also the stand where one finds the majority of nicely dressed women. The VIP stand is to the right of the *KoEdgars* stand and to its right is an unnamed part of the grand stand. Generally the stands on the western side of the stadium accommodate the wealthy and well-behaved fans; hence even the police usually populate the other stands to the neglect of the western side of the stadium. The names

of the stands on the western side, namely *KoEdgars*, the VIP and the Grand stands, are positive labels and fall in line with the self-fulfilling prophecy and the labelling theories, i.e. their occupants and the police elicit good behaviour towards one another.

The last stand to be examined is *Isitendi-Se-Saints*. *Isitendi-Se-Saints* was named after a football club named Zimbabwe Saints, which was originally Mashonaland United. Guzura and Ndimande (2015:8) note that “Shonas within Bulawayo founded a team called Mashonaland United; this was to act as a home and shelter for Shona identity in Bulawayo in the midst of being surrounded by the Ndebele who had Matabeleland Highlanders as their vehicle for self-expression.” Zimbabwe Saints Supporters were sheltered in the Mpilo Hospital end stand that also houses visiting teams. Guzura and Ndimande (2015:10) argue that “It is generally regarded as the stand where Shonas sit, it is interesting to observe that the Mpilo and Soweto stands are directly opposite each other, further heightening the polarization and confrontation between the two teams and by extension the ethnic groups as well.” The division of the stadium into various compartments through naming tends to over-emphasise rivalry between the two competing soccer clubs.

Baghdad stadium is found in Kwekwe and was once the home ground for a team called Lancashire Steel Football Club. The name of the stadium was taken from the name of the capital city of Iraq, which became very infamous in Zimbabwe after the Gulf war. Costar Maradzike and Phillip Matshona are soccer players that were suspended by their own club, i.e. Lancashire Steel Football Club, for engaging in violence when they broke through an entranceway into the stadium to let supporters in for free against club policy (Herald 4 October, 2002). This was the only incident where soccer players engaged in such a form of violence which took place off the pitch. It is to be expected from the view of the self-fulfilling prophecy theory that soccer players, whose home ground is named after a capital city of a country that waged an infamous war, could have viewed themselves as soldiers who had the duty to free their fans from paying to watch them play football. Names that are metaphors of war make football a controversial game, as opposed to it being a unifying sport.

Football is as controversial as politics is. Even the language that is used by journalists to describe matches between big and popular clubs contains metaphors of war. Guzura and Ndimande (2015:20) note that “matches between the two teams are described with war metaphors as ‘the battle of Zimbabwe’”, thereby juxtaposing football with politics. The spaces where political rallies and soccer games take place are usually the same, thereby forcing people to try to find similarities between soccer and politics.

#### 4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The naming and nicknaming of stadiums, especially with war-related terminology, can greatly change the view of soccer as a game of competition where fairness must lead, into war where violence becomes the supreme aim of the spectators, and where the football fans as well as the security personnel are also geared for war. When the situation is so charged with emotions, a minor mistake from the match officials can be disastrous. Naming the seating bay for Highlanders Football Club ‘Soweto Stand’ and the one For Dynamos Football Club ‘Vietnam Stand’, in line with the self-fulfilling prophecy, is a bad idea because it can modify the reality it intends to explain (Ferraro, Pfeffer & Sutton, 2005). It is the argument of this article that soccer, a hugely popular and potentially unifying sport, can also separate people from one another and discriminate along socially constructed lines through the names that are allocated to the seating bays within the stadiums.

#### REFERENCES

- CHIWESHE M. 2014. One of the boys: Female fans’ responses to the masculine and phallogocentric nature of football stadiums in Zimbabwe. *Critical African Studies*, 211-222. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21681392.2014.940077>
- DAIMON A. 2010. The most beautiful game or the most gender violent sport? Exploring the interface between soccer, gender and violence in Zimbabwe. In: Shehu J (ed). *Gender, sport and development in Africa: Cross-cultural perspectives on patterns of representations and marginalization*. Dakar: CODESRIA. 1-12.
- FERRARO F, PFEFFER J & SUTTON RI. 2005. Economics, language and assumptions: How theories can become self-fulfilling. *Academy of Management Review*, 30(1):8-24. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2005.15281412>
- GALINSKY AD, HUGENBERG K, GROOM C & BODENHAUSEN G. 2003. The reappropriation of stigmatizing labels: implications for social identity. *Research on Managing Groups and Teams*, 5:221-256. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1534-0856\(02\)05009-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1534-0856(02)05009-0)
- GUZURA T & NDIRIMANDE J. 2015. Highlanders football club and Ndebele identity amongst fans in Zimbabwe. *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(4):1-23.
- HELLELAND B. 2012. Place names and identities. In: Ore CE & Wikstrøm S (eds). *Names and Identities, Oslo Studies in Language*, 4(2):95-116.
- IFARN S. 2014. Names and behavior: Case of the name “Muhammad”. *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 2(4):185-198.

- NCUBE L. 2014. The interface between football and ethnic identity discourses in Zimbabwe. *Critical African Studies*, 6(2-3):192-210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21681392.2014.951153>
- NYATHI P. 2014. *Township names: a history narrative*. Chronicle May 31. [Retrieved 28 April 2017] <http://www.chronicle.co.zw/township-names-a-history-narrative-2/>
- PANNENBORG A. 2012. *Big men playing football: Money, politics and foul play in the African game*. Leiden: African Studies Centre.
- PUGH D. 1989. *Discuss how self-fulfilling prophecies operate*. [Retrieved 22 December 2017] <http://www.donpugh.com/Psych%20Interests/Essays/Discuss%20how%20self-fulfilling%20prophecies.pdf>
- QUIRK AK. 2017. *Implicit bias and the self-fulfilling prophecy phenomenon and their affects on literacy performance in elementary students*. [Retrieved 11 January 2018] [http://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse\\_cp/34](http://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse_cp/34)
- SHARMA N & SHARMA K. 2015. Self-fulfilling prophecy: A literature review. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies (IJIMS)*, 2(3):41-52.
- SPAAIJ RFJ. 2007. *Understanding football hooliganism: a comparison of six Western European football clubs*. Amsterdam: Vossiuspers.
- THE HERALD, 4 OCTOBER 2002. Harare: Zimpapers.



# NAMING, SPACE AND POWER IN NOVIOLET BULAWAYO'S *WE NEED NEW NAMES* (2013) AND LAWRENCE HOBA'S 'THE FIRST TREK – THE PIONEERS' IN *THE TREK AND OTHER STORIES* (2009)

Elda Hungwe

Department of Applied Education, Midlands State University, Zimbabwe  
hungweelda@gmail.com/hungwee@staff.msu.ac.zw

## Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between place naming, space and power in Lawrence Hoba's 'The First Trek – The Pioneers' and NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*. I argue that place naming is a concept fraught with exclusionary and inclusionary tendencies and results in the creation of physical, cultural and imaginative borders and boundaries. The ability to include/exclude and create borders and boundaries is chiefly an exercise of power and dominance. These borders and boundaries testify to the fact that space is heterogeneous and unevenly constituted. Political and economic considerations largely influence this unevenness, which chiefly translates into the realm of the social and symbolic given that space is a social construct. Place naming is also reflective of the desire to control, manage and police spaces. In NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*, I focus on the street names (Mzilikazi Street, Hope Street and Chimurenga Street) and place names such as Paradise, Budapest and Shanghai, which I read as reflecting the racial, class and gender dimensions of spacing in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Bulawayo uses place naming as a trope to reflect the heterogeneous nature of space in post-colonial Zimbabwe and challenges the conventional nationalist myth of sameness and equality. In Lawrence Hoba's 'The First Trek - The Pioneers', I examine how place naming is used as a trope to underscore the racial, class and gender dimensions of the land reform programme executed by the Zimbabwean government in post-2000. I argue that such place naming is largely exclusionary as it marginalises women and the poor.

**Keywords:** exclusion, identity, inclusion, literature, place naming, power, space

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the relationship between place naming, space and power in Lawrence Hoba's story 'The First Trek -The Pioneers' and NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*. I argue that place (re)naming is a concept fraught with exclusionary and inclusionary tendencies and results in the creation of physical, cultural and imaginative borders and boundaries. The ability to include/exclude and create borders and boundaries is chiefly an exercise of power and dominance. These borders and boundaries testify to the fact that space is heterogeneous and unevenly constituted. Political and economic considerations largely influence this unevenness, which translates into the realm of the social and symbolic given that space is a social construct. Place (re)naming is also reflective of the desire to control, manage and police spaces. The very act of (re)naming calls something into existence and therefore is an exercise of power and creation. To (re)name is also to (re)define and as Pfukwa(2007) intones, definitions by their very nature belong to the definers and not the defined and also that names have a formal aspect as an authoritative means of identifying individual people, places and so on and they have a communicative function among people (Helleland 2016:52).

## 2. PLACE NAMING AS METAPHOR OF SEGREGATED SPACES IN *WE NEED NEW NAMES*

In NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*, I focus on place names, namely Paradise, Budapest, Shanghai, Fambeki, and Vodloza's place. Bulawayo uses place naming as a trope to reflect the heterogeneous nature of space in post-colonial Zimbabwe and challenges the conventional nationalist myth of sameness and equality. The narrator Darling and her friends live in Paradise. Paradise is a temporary makeshift location created because of Operation Murambatsvina (Operation Restore Order) in May 2005 when there was a massive onslaught on the informal sector carried out as a militarised urban 'clean up' [also] punishment of the urban areas for their consistent support of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) [opposition party] (Raftopolous 2009:221).

Vambe (2008) notes that the government of Zimbabwe embarked on Operation Murambatsvina which was perceived as 'cleansing' the urban spaces of 'dirt'. *We Need New Names* explores the effects of this operation which can be interpreted as the actions of a post-colonial government characterised by "loss of limits or sense of proportion" (Mbembe 2001:119), on the urban poor, the main victims. The operation, according to Tibaijuka (2005), involved the destruction of "flea markets and housing used for many years by informal traders and vendors. It also involved bulldozing, smashing

and burning of structures housing many thousands of poor urban dwellers” (p. 12). Tibaijuka (2005:13) notes further that the most devastating and immediate effect of this operation was the fact that hundreds of thousands of people were rendered homeless and left without any viable form of livelihood.

The name ‘Paradise’ evokes the idea of timeless harmony where there is only peace, happiness and prosperity. Biblically, Paradise is a place where all Christians hope to go in the afterlife as it is associated with the biblical promises of everlasting life, abundance and luxury, harmony, contentment, and delight without all earthly problems. The biblical Paradise was the first home of mankind, a place with everything where there is no poverty, a holy place where everyone has equal access to everything and everyone is equal but in this case it is totally the opposite.

However, the ‘Paradise’ in *We Need New Names* is contradictory and the complete opposite of the paradise hoped for, as Darling describes it as:

all tin and stretches out in the sun like a wet sheepskin nailed on the ground to dry; the shacks are the muddy color of dirty puddles after the rains. The shacks themselves are terrible but from up here, they seem much better, almost beautiful even, it’s like I’m looking at a painting’ (p. 32).

Thus, Paradise is the abode of the poor and is characterised by lack. This description precisely explains why Darling and her friends are always ‘escaping’ Paradise and making excursions into Budapest foraging for food. By naming the place ‘Paradise’, Bulawayo mocks the whole concept of Zimbabwean independence, as she seems to be arguing that Zimbabwe as a country has nothing much to celebrate given that its people inhabit spaces of deprivation such as Paradise, after decades of supposedly being free from colonialism. Place names such as ‘Paradise’ are as a consequence used by Bulawayo to underscore the ‘meaninglessness’ of Zimbabwean independence. We see hegemony of the elite class which reflects capitalist aspects and an extension of the colonial segregation acts in the independent Zimbabwe. By naming the place Paradise, Bulawayo is mocking the Zimbabwean independence and its leaders who brag about independence and celebrate equality yet there are still huge traces of poverty in the promised land (paradise) with only a few benefiting. Alderman (2009) contends that names found in virtual environments explore the motives behind the user’s choices and this helps us understand how people see themselves and their place and position in relation to others. This Paradise becomes an adulterated paradise which does not reflect the true sense of ‘Paradise’ as it is understood both biblically and socially.

Then there is Budapest. This is a low-density suburb where the rich and affluent dwell. Darling describes Budapest as:

This place is not like Paradise, it's like being in a different country altogether. A nice country where people who are not like us live. But then you don't see anything to show there are real people living here; even the air itself is empty: no delicious food cooking, no odors, no sounds Just nothing. (p. 4).

Furthermore, Darling describes Budapest as a menacing and discriminatory space:

Budapest is big, big houses with satellite dishes on the roofs and neat gravelled yards or trimmed lawns, and the tall fences and the Durawalls and the flowers and the big trees heavy with fruit that's waiting for us since nobody around here seems to know what to do with it. It's the fruit that gives us courage, otherwise we wouldn't dare be here. I keep expecting the clean streets to spit and tell us to go back where we came from (p. 4).

The fact that Budapest is characterised by “big houses with satellite dishes on the roofs and neat gravelled yards or trimmed lawns, and the tall fences and the Durawalls and the flowers and the big trees heavy with fruit” (p. 4) testify to the classed nature of Budapest as the abode of the rich. Therefore, Darling and her friends, given that they are poor, are transgressing spaces when they ‘invade’ Budapest. The very name ‘Budapest’, like the name Shanghai, underscores how certain spaces in postcolonial Zimbabwe are differentiated based on class. The name ‘Budapest’ refers to the Hungarian city of Budapest and by having such a name, Bulawayo seems to argue that some spaces in postcolonial Zimbabwe are ‘foreign’ to the local population who cannot afford to stay in them.

Furthermore, in Budapest there are demarcating boundaries visibly marked by walls and fences thus also separating the spaces in Budapest itself. These fences and walls prevent access to house units and act as security from intruders and to prevent access by those who do not belong. Ironically, regardless of the fences/walls, the kids from Paradise are able to find their way into these barriers to steal guavas because they are hungry. They actually reclaim these spaces in their imaginations as they play. For example, Darling and her friends are in Budapest streets and Sbho tells the others that one day she will live in Budapest in a house like the one she points to others. While they are talking, Bastard throws a guava at the Durawall of Sbho's [imaginative] house (the one she points out). The guava explodes and stains the wall' and she gets angry at him for staining the Durawall, saying;

why did you do that ...? Because you just heard me say I like the house, so you are not supposed to do anything to it. Why don't you pick another that I don't care about, there are many houses here (p. 12).

It becomes evident that the kids yearn for a better life with decent accommodation and not the shacks they live in. These segregatory boundaries put in place by the elite show how they are exclusive as reiterated by Lefebvre (1991:319) who connotes that barriers protect the spaces of the elite and the rich neighbourhoods from intruders. In this case these intruders are the hungry kids from the neighbouring Paradise slums. Thus Helleland (2012:99) states that "place names not only function as expressions referring to particular objects but also as a way of communicating cognitively, emotionally, ideologically and socially". Through giving the name Budapest, the place is actually ideologically and socially representing its referents the affluent. The poor kids also try to claim and access these restricted elite spaces. On that account, Bayat (2000) contends that the urban poor have strategies of encroaching the property of elite groups, similar to what the children are doing.

The place name 'Shanghai' is the next place name I consider in the text. Shanghai is under construction and it is described as:

It's just madness inside Shanghai; machines hoist things in their terrible jaws, machines maul the earth, machines grind rocs, machines belch clouds of smoke, machines iron the ground Everywhere machines (p. 42).

Interestingly, the place is named 'Shanghai' assumedly after China's biggest city, which is a global financial hub. It is therefore not a surprise that the workers who are engaged in this construction are Chinese, as narrated thus:

The Chinese men are all over the place in orange uniforms and yellow helmets; there's not that many of them but from the way they are running around, you'd think they are a field of corn (p. 42).

This points to the typical present Chinese operations in Zimbabwe since President Mugabe's 'look East policy', which he regarded as an effective measure to counter Western imposed sanctions and to empower Zimbabweans as well as creating a diplomatic relation to strengthen ties with China (Valy 2008). Bulawayo (2013), however, depicts China's construction and infrastructural development as highly problematic. Darling and her friends are victims of Operation Murambatsvina (Operation Restore Order) which was executed by the Zimbabwean government in 2005 and had catastrophic

implications for the livelihoods of many urban dwellers who were rendered homeless (Tibaijuka 2005; Vambe 2008). Darling recalls that prior to Operation Murambatsvina she used to live in a modest house:

We didn't always live in this tin, though. Before, we had a home and everything and we were happy. It was a real house made of bricks, with a kitchen, sitting room, and two bedrooms. Real walls, real windows, real floors, and real doors and a real shower and real taps and real running water and a real toilet you could sit on and do whatever you wanted to do (pp. 62-63).

The Chinese, however, instead of constructing homes for the displaced and homeless such as Darling because of Operation Murambatsvina, are constructing a shopping mall. Bulawayo (2013) seems to suggest that the construction of a shopping mall underscores China's insensitivity in its relations with ordinary Zimbabweans, who were the main victims of Operation Murambatsvina. One of the Chinese officials informs the children that:

We build you a big big mall. All nice shops inside, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Versace, and so on so on. Good mall, big, the Chinese man says, flicking ash off his cigarette and looking up at the building. We laugh and he laughs as well, and Fat Mangena laughs too (p. 47).

The building of the shopping mall will bring in imported goods to the community and will be catastrophic to the local retail and clothing industry as the industry will be forced to downsize or virtually close its operations, as Zimbabwe will be flooded with imported material. Ironically, the mall that is being constructed will house Gucci, Louis Vuitton and Versace, famous Western clothing designer labels that are representative of global consumerism and western cultural imperialism. These designer labels are mainly associated with the privileged few and further underscores how the shopping mall that is being constructed by the Chinese will serve the interests of the rich and not the majority of Zimbabweans who have been rendered poor as a consequence of the Zimbabwean crisis that imploded in the years post-2000. The very name 'Shanghai' highlights how naming is closely related to control or lack of control of and over certain spaces. In addition, the name 'Shanghai' is also metaphoric of how Zimbabwe has become an extension of China. The name is also suggestive of how China is colonising and exploiting Zimbabwe. We are told that the Chinese 'are all over the place' and this is suggestive of a seeming Chinese invasion and colonisation of Zimbabwe. The idea of seeing China as a 'new' coloniser is subtly implied by the children who want the Chinese out of Zimbabwe:

We are booing and yelling when we walk out of Shanghai. If it weren't for the noisy machines, the Chinese would hear us telling them to leave our country and go and build wherever they come from, that we don't need their kaka mall, that they are not even our friends (p. 47).

There is also Fambeki, a place created for worship by a self-styled prophet Mborro in the text, where he cheats his unsuspecting followers of their money through church offerings and fake healing miracles. He becomes a desperate man driven by poverty to assert himself by claiming land spaces which he names, and thus prophet Mborro names his space Holy Chariot Church of God which is located on top of Fambeki Mountain. He consequently becomes feared and retains some level of superiority over his congregation, the members of which regard him as spiritually powerful, hence the constant consultations with him. Furthermore, the fact that he uses space right at the top of a mountain indicates his yearning for power and domination amidst the economic meltdown affecting the society.

Linked to this is Vodloza's place. This is a popular shack in Paradise named after its owner, a self-proclaimed healer who is also feared in Paradise. When Mother of Bones is passing with Darling on their way to church, the narrator shows her fear and respect as she says, "When we pass people standing in line outside Vodloza's shack, Mother of Bones only waves; here she cannot shout because it's a healer's place" (p. 27).

In these two places (Fambeki and Vodloza's place), the production and naming of space is necessitated by poverty and economic hardships, hence the Prophet and the healer are marking their boundaries exclusively and they earn a favourable living out of dominating those spaces. This is contrary to their other counterparts, hence Lefebvre's (1991:26) view that "space is a means of control domination and power".

Some street names in *We Need New Names* reflect legendary heroes and iconic figures in the Zimbabwean history. Bulawayo makes use of Muzilikazi Street, Hope Street and Chimurenga Street. Darling takes us through the streets when she says 'After crossing Mzilikazi we cut through another bush, zip right along Hope Street for a while before we cruise past the big stadium with the glimmering benches we'll never sit on, and finally we hit Budapest' (p. 2). The name Mzilikazi points to King Mzilikazi, the legendary Ndebele king who was tricked into signing the Rudd Concession by colonialists, and Hope Street points to the optimism and expectation of something better after independence. Chimurenga Street points to the war of liberation, the uprising, and the fighting spirit of the people, and also alludes to freedom themes. What becomes ironic is that the kids meet a white lady who lives in this street as she visits her father. She starts taking pictures of

the kids with her camera and eating in front of the hungry kids and then throws the food away. The sense of the 'Chimurenga' war and hope raised after the liberation struggle is clouded as we continue to see the offspring of the coloniser living a lavish life while black offspring live in poverty. The street names become valueless as they do not imply what they should stand for in this new context of independence.

From an analysis of *We Need New Names*, NoViolet Bulawayo uses the aspect of naming to reflect how those in power create borders and boundaries that are exclusionary as they border on segregatory tendencies.

### **3. PLACE (RE)NAMING AS DIALOGICAL AND SUBVERSIVE IN HOBA'S 'THE FIRST TREK- THE PIONEERS'**

Hoba's 'The First Trek - the Pioneers' explores the experiences of the Magudu family as they migrate from their 'old' home to their 'new' home. The family has just acquired a commercial farm because of the land reform programme. The Magudu family are migrating to 'colonise' land that formerly belonged to a White commercial farmer. Interestingly, the term 'pioneers' implies migration and the Magudu family moves from their old home and its associated peasant identities to a new home and its promised new identities. However, poverty chiefly characterises the Magudu family's migration as underscored by the scotch cart and the family's few possessions:

The old scotch cart makes its way slowly along the old beaten down track [...] *Baba* has a pair of *Manyatera* and yellow overalls written 'NRZ' at the back [...] I am also hungry. *Mhama* gives me a gourd of sour milk to drink. Some pots and pans lie clattering in a corner. I hate the noise. A sack of maize meal, almost empty, sits next to the pots, in an old 20 litre tin. *Mhama* uses the tin to fetch water from the well every day, for washing Chido's old nappies, for cooking sadza and *muriwo*, and for father's bath [...] An old mattress lies rolled up with some blankets inside, tied with *gudza* rope, next to the mats. There is no bed base. Father erects one with sticks dug into the ground. My own bed, which we left behind, had a mattress made from sacks filled with soft straw. *Mhama* must have emptied the sacks and put them somewhere because I cannot see them from where I sit next to her. Some old sacks lie next to the rolled mattress, they contain all our clothing. A few old nappies for Chido, *mhama's* dresses, *baba's* trousers and shirts, and my torn shorts and T-shirts. There is also *baba's* old suit that he wears on special occasions (pp. 1-2).



The 'old scotch cart' has 'J J Magudu, Zimuto' scribbled on "both sides in black paint against the dark rotting wood" (p. 1). Thus, Zimuto is the place that the Magudu family leaves behind. Zimuto is characterised by poverty as typified by the little possessions that the family has. The fact that the family migrates from Zimuto to their new farm testifies to the crossing over, 'invasion', (re)naming and (re)writing of spaces in postcolonial Zimbabwe. This crossing over, (re)naming and (re)writing of spaces is symbolised by Baba who has a metal board on which is scribbled: "Mr B. J. Magudu, Black Commercial Farmer, Farm 24" (p. 2). The metal board serves a dual purpose in the story. Firstly, the board is metaphoric of the land reform and its intended desire to empower previously marginalised black Zimbabweans in commercial agriculture. Secondly, the metal board is dialogic as it responds to and challenges the scribbling on the 'old scotch cart' which reads "J. J Magudu, Zimuto" (p1). The narrator informs us that 'J. J Magudu' was the narrator's grandfather:

The inscription must be as old as the wood on which it lies. I do not know who wrote it. Even baba does not know because one day I asked him and he said that only his father, who is dead, knew about it (p. 1).

However, the land reform programme transforms the Magudu family from being a marginal to a visible family. The new metal board proudly proclaims to the whole world "Mr B. J. Magudu, Black Commercial Farmer, Farm 24" (p. 2). The use of 'Mr' on the metal board underscores the new social status acquired by the family because of the land reform programme. The old 'J. J Magudu, Zimuto' only has the name of the family and their space/name of belonging that is Zimuto. Furthermore, the old 'J. J Magudu, Zimuto' has no profession that distinguishes the family. The new metal board, however, indicates a profession, as Mr Magudu announces to the world that he is a "Black Commercial Farmer" (p2). As a result, the new metal board dialogically (re)writes the history of the Magudu family who migrate from being a peasant family located in Zimuto to a 'proud' 'Black Commercial farming' family. Interestingly, Hoba depicts this attempt to (re)write and (re)name the space and history of commercial agriculture in postcolonial Zimbabwe in a deeply satirical way. Hoba depicts Baba as largely irresponsible. Baba engages in domestic violence and does not contribute in the cultivation of the fields. The young narrator observes that:

I know tomorrow we'll be busy, Chido and I will be discovering our new home, *mhama* will be exploring her fields. Baba- he will be gallivanting, searching for the farmer who might have brewed a few drums of thick, rich *masese* (Thick African beer) (p. 3).

Hoba seems to argue that the land reform programme resulted chiefly in the migration and allocation of land to people who were largely irresponsible. The A2 farm that the Magudu family is supposed to occupy is assumedly very productive:

The sun wearies on towards the hills, where it will soon disappear behind them. Vast expanses of sugar-cane, green and tall, appear on both sides of the road. We pass a farm gate, with 'R W Whyte, Farm 23' made beautifully out of metal on it. The teacher told me that 24 comes after 23, so I know the next farm will be our own (p. 3).

On that account, the new metal board is also a response to white Zimbabwean commercial farmers who were evicted from their farms. The new metal board testifies to the fact that the history of commercial agriculture in Zimbabwe is being re-written. However, this re-writing is hugely problematic given the grinding poverty affecting the Magudu family, as it lacks the financial capacity to sustain its agricultural productivity. The state of the family's farming implements typifies this inadequacy:

A plough sits at the far end of the scotch cart, still looking new. *Mhama* bought it last year with money from her groundnuts. Though *mhama* always works hard, I prefer to play with Chido and *baba* favours the calabash. Two hoes lie next to the plough, *mhama's* hoe is worn from use, *baba's* is still new and clean. The inscription 'Master Farmer' is still visible. The only use his hoe is put to is rubbing against the shoulders when he goes to the fields to inspect the work that has been done (p. 2).

Hoba also depicts the very act of (re)naming spaces as largely sexist in the story. The new metal board's "Mr B. J. Magudu, Black Commercial Farmer, Farm 24" (p2) marginalises the role and contribution of black women in commercial agriculture. The metal board does not read 'Mr and Mrs B. J. Magudu, Black Commercial Farmers, Farm 24.' Accordingly, the fact that 'Mrs' is invisible on the new metal board testifies to the black patriarchal nature of the land reform programme which sought to empower more black men. However, this irony does not escape the child narrator who observes that "I think *baba* should have written 'MRS' instead of Mr, he never works in the fields. The farm will be *mhama's* to run" (p. 3).

## 4. CONCLUSION

I have attempted to highlight how place naming is a significant trope used by Bulawayo (2013) and Hoba (2009) to articulate various issues affecting Zimbabweans. Bulawayo (2013) uses place names such as Paradise, Budapest and Shanghai to satirise and mock postcolonial Zimbabwe. The place name 'Paradise' evokes the idea of a place where everyone is happy. However, the 'Paradise' we have in the text is inhabited by the poor and marginalised who are victims of Operation Murambatsvina. The place name 'Budapest' underscores how spaces are differentiated based on class, as it is the abode of the rich. The fact that Darling and her friends do not stay in Budapest underscores the 'foreignness' of this space to the locals. The place name 'Shanghai' underscores how China is slowly 'invading' and 'colonizing' Zimbabwe. It has also been pointed out that some places and place names are produced as a result of poverty, where men dominate and control, for example, Vodloza's Place and Fambeki.

Hoba's 'The First Trek - The Pioneers' articulates the legitimisation of (re) naming and (re) writing of spaces in Zimbabwe by the marginalised blacks during the land reform programme through the narrator's father, who names his newly acquired farm by scribbling the following on a metal board: 'Mr B. J. Magudu, Black Commercial Farmer. This is dialogic as it responds to and challenges the scribbling on the 'old scotch cart' associated with the old Magudu generation which has been transformed through becoming visible; having acquired a new social status as a result of the land reform programme.

## REFERENCES

- ALDERMAN DH. 2009. Virtual place naming, internet domains, and the politics of misdirection: The case of [www.martinlutherking.org](http://www.martinlutherking.org). In: LD Berg & J Vuolteenaho (eds). *Critical toponymies. The contested politics of place naming*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited. 267-284.
- BAYAT A. 2000. From 'dangerous classes' to 'quiet rebels': Politics of the urban Subaltern in the Global South. *International Sociology*, 15(3):533-557. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026858000015003005>
- BULAWAYO N. 2013. *We need new names*. London: Chatto and Windus.
- HELLELAND B. 2016. The great onomastic divide in Norway: The standardising problem of settlement (farm) names after 400 years of Danish influence. In: H Carol & D Izdebsca (eds). *Names and their environment: Proceedings of the 25<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Onomastic Sciences*. Glasgow, 25 – 29 August 2014. Volume, 4. *Theory and Methodology Socio – Onomastics*. University of Glasgow: Glasgow. 51-59.

- HELLELAND B. 2012. Place names and identities. In: B Helleland, CE Ore & S Wikstrom (eds). *Names and identities*. Oslo Studies in Language, 4(2):95-116.
- HOBA L. 2009. *The Trek and other stories*. Harare: Weaver Press.
- LEFEBVRE H. 1991. *The production of space*. Cambridge: Blackwell Ltd.
- MBEMBE A. 2001. *On the post colony*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- PFUKWA C. 2007. The Function and significance of war names in the Zimbabwean armed conflict (1966-1979). Thesis: University of South Africa, Pretoria.
- RAFTOPOLOUS B. 2009. The crisis in Zimbabwe, 1998-2008. In: B Raftopolous & A Mlambo (eds). *A History from the Pre-Colonial Period to 2008. Becoming Zimbabwe*. Weaver Press: Harare. 201-232.
- TIBAIJUKA AK. 2005. *Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe to assess the Scope and Impact of Operation Murambatsvina by the UN Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe*. New York: United Nations.
- VALY B. 2008. Zimbabwe 'Look East' policy is starting to bear fruit. Southern African Research and Documentation Centre. SANF No 08 No 16. [Retrieved 5 September 2017] <https://www.sardc.net/en/southern-african-news-features/zimbabwe-look-east-policy-is-starting-to-bear-fruit/>
- VAMBE B. 2008. Murambatsvina's assault on women's legal and economic rights. In: M Vambe (ed). *The hidden dimensions of Operation Murambatsvina in Zimbabwe*. Harare: Weaver Press. 75-86

# APPENDIX 1

<p>Session duration: 30 minutes – 20 minutes for presentation, 10 minutes for Q&amp;A. Please upload your presentation during the breaks.</p>		
<b>ISPN 2017 programme: Monday, 18 September</b>		
08:30-09:30	VENUE 1 Helpdesk & Sign-up	
09:30-10:30	VENUE 1 Welcoming: Prof Herman Beyer (UNAM host) Message from the Joint IGU/ICA Commission on Toponymy: Prof Peter Jordan (on behalf of the Commission) Opening: PROF KENNETH KAMWI MATENGU (Pro-Vice Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Development - UNAM)	
<b>10:30-11:00</b>	<b>TEA BREAK - Library foyer</b>	
11:00-12:00	VENUE 1 KEYNOTE ADDRESS PROF MATTHIAS BRENZINGER Place naming practices among the Khwe and other hunter-gatherers in southern Africa Chair: Prof Herman Beyer	
	<b>Venue 1 (Library, Building 26)</b>	<b>Venue 2 (Business School, Building 20, Room E057)</b>
12:00-12:30	<i>Place names and cultural heritage Prof Theodorus du Plessis</i>	<i>Place names and political history Prof Peter Jordan</i>
	AYODI, NANCY The Etymology Of Some Kenyan Town And Locality Names Across The Country's Regions	MANGENA, TENDAI From Rhodes Memorial Preparatory School To Matopos Primary School: Memory, History And Symbolic Resistance In Zimbabwe
<b>12:30-13:30</b>	<b>LUNCH - Staff cafeteria</b>	
13:30-14:00	MÖLLER, LUCIE Herero Place Names	NDLOVU, SAMBULO Politically Symbolic Nuances Of The Toponym Bulawayo In History
14:00-14:30	DUBE, SIKHOLIWE & SIBANDA, NHLANHLA Road And School Naming: A Basin Of History In The Lupane District Of Matabeleland North Province (Zimbabwe)	JENJEKWA, VINCENT Resuscitation And Erasure In The Conundrum Of History: Zimbabwe's Third Chimurenga Toponyms
14:30-15:00	DE LANGE, JANI The Role Of Toponymy In Identifying Cultural Heritage: A Case Study Of Place Names In The Bushmanland, Northern Cape	
<b>15:00-15:30</b>	<b>TEA BREAK - Library foyer</b>	

<b>ISPN 2017 programme: Monday, 18 September</b>		
	<b>Venue 1 (Library, Building 26)</b>	<b>Venue 2 (Business School, Building 20, Room E057)</b>
	<i>Place names and identity</i> <i>Prof Bertie Neethling</i>	<i>Place names and religion</i> <i>Dr Tendai Mangena</i>
15:30-16:00	HUDSON, KATHRYN Naming A Place, Placing The Self: Toponymy And Identity In Two Central American Republics	MAZURU, MIKE Memory And Nostalgia: The Historical And Commemorative Dimensions Of Institutional Names In The Methodist Church In Zimbabwe
16:00-16:30	LOTH, CHRISMI-RINDA Place Names, Place And Place-Related Identities In The Linguistic Landscape Of Rural South Africa	GELDENHUYS, CORNELIA The Influence Of Missionary Societies On Place Name Giving In South Africa
18:30	ICUTE meeting	

Session duration: 30 minutes – 20 minutes for presentation, 10 minutes for Q&A.  
Please upload your presentation during the breaks.

<b>ISPN 2017 programme: Tuesday, 19 September</b>		
	<b>Venue 1 (Library, Building 26)</b>	<b>Venue 2 (Business School, Building 20, Room E057)</b>
08:30-09:00	Helpdesk (Venue 1)	
	<i>Place names and commercialisation</i> <i>Dr Matjaž Geršič</i>	<i>Etymology of place names</i> <i>Prof Bertie Neethling</i>
09:00-09:30	DUBE, LIKETSO The Dialectics Of The Politics Of Football As Revealed In The Names And Nicknames Of Three Selected Zimbabwe Stadiums	LANTERN, BEATRICE & MOYO, THAMSANQA Mzilikazi, A Celebrated King Amongst The Ndebele: A Maslow Hierarchy Of Needs Perspective
09:30-10:00	SAIDI, UMALI Economising The African Village: Pursuing Names Of Lodges And Restaurants In Zimbabwe	MAKAUDZE, GODWIN Unravelling The Etymology Of Selected Toponyms In Zimbabwe
10:00-10:30	LOTH, CHRISMI-RINDA et al. Using Technology To Raise Awareness About Place Names As Cultural Heritage	MBEREMA, FELICITAS et al. The Meaning Of The Click-Sounding Places' Names In The Kavango East And West Region, Namibia
<b>10:30-11:00</b>	<b>TEA BREAK - Library foyer</b>	
11:00-12:00	VENUE 1 <b>KEYNOTE ADDRESS</b> PROF PETER E RAPER Bushman cognates of place-name components recorded at the Cape 1595-1799 Chair: Prof Theodorus du Plessis	
	<i>Place names and commercialisation</i> <i>Dr Tendai Mangena</i>	<i>Politics of place names</i> <i>Dr Umali Saidi</i>
12:00-12:30	JORDAN, PETER Three Types Of Commercial Place-Name Use – With Examples From Austria	SCHUPPENER, GEORG Plurality Of Names As A Problem Of Historical Sciences
<b>12:30-13:30</b>	<b>LUNCH - Staff cafeteria</b>	

13:30-14:00	PALAGIANO, COSIMO Place Names Which Make Known A Product	NTULI, SIBUSISO Tracking The Developments Made In Place Name Change And Standardisation In Three South African Provinces
14:00-14:30	GERŠIČ, MATJAŽ et al. The Challenges Of Using Choronyms In Brand Names	DU PLESSIS, THEODORUS Geographic Standardisation Of Names In South Africa – A Name-Planning Perspective On Work, 2007-2016
14:30-15:00	HUNGWE, ELDA Naming, Space And Power In Lawrence Hoba's The Trek And Other Stories (2009) And Noviolet Bula-wayo's We Need New Names (2013)	NEETHLING, BERTIE Political Aspiration: The Possible Renaming Of Western Cape Towns
<b>15:00-15:30</b>	<b>TEA BREAK - Library foyer</b>	

Session duration: 30 minutes – 20 minutes for presentation, 10 minutes for Q&A.  
Please upload your presentation during the breaks.

### ISPN 2017 programme: Tuesday, 19 September

	Venue 1 (Library, Building 26)	Venue 2 (Business School, Building 20, Room E057)
	Chairperson: Dr Sibusiso Ntuli KAHARI, GEORGE	Chairperson: Dr Umali Saidi MADLOME, STEYN KHESANI
15:30-16:00	A Critical Study Of Zimbabwe's Toponymy Of Place Names In Historical, Political And Commercial Landscapes: Meaning, Significance And Symbolism	Naming as a tool for cultural domination: A Case of toponyms in South Eastern Zimbabwe
16:00-16:30	VENUE 1 <b>Vote of thanks &amp; announcements:</b> Prof Theodorus du Plessis (UFS host)	
18:30	Gala dinner & Book launch The Stellenbosch Wine Bar and Bistro 320 Sam Nujoma Drive	

### ISPN 2017 programme: Wednesday, 20 September

09:00-17:00	Cultural tour (NOT included in registration fee)
19:30	Lecture at Namibia Scientific Society (Dr Lucie Möller) - OPEN INVITATION 110 Robert Mugabe Ave (corner of Mugabe & John Meinert St - opposite National Theatre)

#### VENUES

Venue 1: Library	Building 26, Ground Floor, Multimedia Room
Venue 2: Business School	Building 20, Room E057
Tea breaks: Library foyer	Building 26, Multimedia Room
Lunch: Staff cafeteria	Building 7

*Critical Toponymy: Place names in political, historical and commercial landscapes* contains a selection of double-blind peer-reviewed papers from the 4<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Place Names that took place 18-20 September 2017 in Windhoek, Namibia. These papers present current thinking on how the critical turn in social sciences is manifested in toponymic research, not only locally but also internationally. As such it includes research on place names from South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Austria, Slovenia, Central America and even the former Czechoslovakia.

The contributions show that the etymology of place names are never purely linguistic – social, political, commercial and other factors influence the giving, use and adaptations of these linguistic and cultural artefacts. Furthermore, given their high symbolic content, place names also serve as political and commercial currency. Place names are therefore important symbolic markers in preserving or changing cultural identities, and in marking or facilitating socio-political changes and relations.

*Critical Toponymy* showcases the many ways in which the representational potential of place names can be deployed in different contexts. Scholars as well as practitioners in toponymy and sociolinguistics will find this an illuminating read.



Department of South African  
Sign Language and  
Deaf Studies

**sb** **SUNBONANI  
CONFERENCE**

ISBN 978-1-928424-25-3



9 781928 424253

**Conference  
Proceedings**