The Postcolonial Condition of Names and Naming Practices in Southern Africa
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Edited by
Oliver Nyambi, Tendai Mangena and Charles Pfukwa

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The original idea of the book project was conceived by the Names Society of Southern Africa (NSSA) at its General Meeting on the sidelines of the society’s 17th Biennial International Conference in 2012 in Lesotho. The editors would like to thank the Society for inspiring onomastics in general, and the compilation of this volume in particular.

Thenjiwe Meyiwa and Thandokazi Maseti would like to acknowledge funding provided by the Department of Science & Technology and the National Research Foundation of South Africa for their research on the names of Izinyanga in Ethekwini Municipality, South Africa. They also recognise the insights of Menzi Mthethwa of the Human Sciences Research Council on herbalists’ names used for the study.

Charles Pfukwa and Zvinashe Mamvura’s chapter draws substantially from their Doctoral dissertations, ‘The Function and Significance of Guerrilla Nicknames in Zimbabwe’s Liberation war (1966–1979)’ by Pfukwa and ‘A Sociolinguistic Analysis of School Names in Selected Urban Centres During the Colonial Period in Zimbabwe (1890–1979)’ by Mamvura. Both dissertations were submitted to the University of South Africa, Pretoria in 2007 and 2014 respectively.
Onomastics is the scientific study of names and naming systems and the name of the discipline originates from the Greek word for a name, e.g. ‘onoma’. Onomastics is an interdisciplinary field of study par excellence and provides name scholars with a great variety of possible options when undertaking research. This book, with Oliver Nyambi, Tendai Mangena and Charles Pfukwa serving as editors, came into being after the possibility of publishing such a venture was discussed at an earlier meeting of the Names Society of Southern Africa (NSSA). It is an extremely welcome addition to the relatively scarce sources on Southern African onomastics. Earlier onomastic publications were mostly from South African scholars, and it is heartening to see how Zimbabwean scholars, as well as some from Zambia, Tanzania, and Angola, join a few South Africans in this publication.

A cursory look at the curriculum vitae of contributors to this book provides one with a remarkable and significant academic profile. Many have studied abroad and obtained qualifications from prominent institutions, and many now based in southern Africa have various links with more than one university. Their respective interests are varied and impressive. Besides ‘pure’ onomastics, linguistic and literary studies involving many languages, and including sociolinguistics, discourse analysis and sign language feature. Then there are media studies, education, gender studies, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, psychology, race and identity, second language learning and religion. The contributors are well equipped to make significant contributions to this volume from their own background and hence this publication gains an important position in southern African onomastics. The first introductory chapter by Oliver Nyambi and Tendai Mangena called The way we name now: Postcolonial perspectives from southern Africa is an important contribution, contextualising the background of the volume. The chapter title was inspired by the theme used at the 18th NSSA International Conference at Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe in September 2014. Their brief analysis of every contribution in the volume is also extremely helpful in providing an overview of individual contributions.
The focus on the postcolonial era in all these countries creates new opportunities for onomastic scholars to investigate and analyse the ways in which inhabitants of these countries interpret the existence of colonial names in present times and the various options to address the possible renaming of certain names. This is particularly applicable to toponyms. South Africa is the youngest democracy by far and this phenomenon is currently very prominent, so it might be valuable to learn about how this process regarding possible renaming took place in the neighbouring countries. The four subsections in this book are: anthroponymy, i.e. the study of personal names; literary onomastics, i.e. the study of names in literature; toponyms, i.e. place names; and lastly, brand names, i.e. names in the economy. These are prominent areas within onomastics and are an excellent start to promote onomastics in a wider context. It paves the way for future studies in various other categories.

The Names Society of Southern Africa (NSSA) is dependent on contributions from onomastic scholars for their refereed journal *Nomina Africana* which is accredited by the Department of Higher Education and Training, South Africa. This publication suggests that there is a huge number of scholars working in onomastics and they should be encouraged to submit contributions to *Nomina Africana*.

All the contributors to this volume, and especially the editors, should be congratulated in stimulating the coming together of this seminal book.

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INTRODUCTION

THE WAY WE NAME NOW:
POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES
FROM SOUTHERN AFRICA¹

OLIVER NYAMBI AND TENDAI MANGENA

Perhaps there is no better site to encounter colonial remnants of the postcolony than in the on-going debates on toponym (place name) changes across the whole of the southern African region. It was not unusual, therefore, that in 2012, the City of Cape Town announced a number of street name changes. Generally, as is the case with changes in odonyms (street names) and toponyms in South Africa and other formerly colonised societies, the name changes follow a typical trend in which colonial names are replaced with names of icons of the anti-colonialism struggle. For example, among the streets names that disappeared in Cape Town was Hendrik Verwoerd Drive. The street had been named in honour of the man who conceptualised and implemented Apartheid during his tenure as the Prime Minister of South Africa from 1961 to his assassination in 1966. In contrast, Verwoerd’s former nemesis and anti-apartheid hero Robert Sobukwe made it onto the list of new names chosen.

Earlier, in Namibia, a fascinating debate between a local community and the owner of a hotel was recorded in the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names Working Paper (2007). The community representative (Dischoe) had raised issues with the name Omashare:

¹ ‘The way we name now’ was the theme of the 18th Names Society of Southern Africa (NSSA) International Conference held at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe in 2014. The theme was coined by the conference co-conveners who are also the editors of this book.
The name of the lodge is offensive to the people of Rundu and Kavango. In the Kavango language we do not have the letter ‘o’ before a word and we believe that for our history to be recorded correctly, we demand to be respected as a people. The name should be Mashare not Omashara. Businessmen and women who want to live in peace with us need to treat us with respect as we wish to treat them. I plan to hold meetings in Rundu in the near future to mobilise the entire Kavango region to descend on the premises in protest should Rosa fail to acquiesce to the demands. I shall lead the marches to your hotel so that you can hear us once and for all. It is also my intention to mobilise a prolonged boycott of your facility until you hear us.

[Rosa, the hotel owner replied:] I never thought of changing the name because to me it does not make a difference what a business is called, for as long as it is operating legally under the laws [for creating] job opportunities.

More recently, in Zimbabwe, a resolution by the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) at its 2013 Annual Conference to change the name of the country’s prime resort Victoria Falls into Mosi-oa-Tunya was met with an outcry over ‘business’ and potential losses to the number of tourists visiting the landmark. The same debacle rocked the tourist town of Lüderitz in Namibia in 2015; protesting residents argued that history had given the colonial name Lüderitz a better tourist appeal than the reinstated precolonial one, Namibnus.

These few examples of toponym and brand-name changes are reflective of overt and subtle manifestations of a uniquely southern African postcolonial naming culture shaped by the new nations’ ambivalence in an independent present tangled in colonial politico-cultural legacies. Name changes in these examples are fundamentally connected to post-independence transformation projects in the societies. The politics behind the urge to change a name and also, in some cases, the resistance to such changes can be gleaned from the examples above. The initial stimuli leading to a decision to change (or resist) a toponym and the subsequent choice of a replacement name reflects deep-seated cultural and socio-political pressures in the respective societies’ struggles to reconcile the past with the ideals of independence.

This book’s discourse with these overt and covert onomastic changes of the colonial remnants in southern Africa speaks to some of the defining socio-cultural, political and economic forces shaping the present. The major objective of the book is to understand the postcolonial condition of
the southern African region from an onomastic perspective. Onomastic research in the region has been particularly vibrant in South Africa where researchers such as Adrian Koopman, Bertie Neethling, Elwyn Jenkins and Peter Raper are some of the eminent scholars. Lately, Zimbabwe has followed suit; not only has the country produced recognised onomasticians such as Charles Pfukwa and Livingstone Makondo, but it has also established onomastics as part of a cultural studies curriculum at universities such as the Great Zimbabwe University. The journal of the Names Society of Southern Africa (NSSA), *Nomina Africana*, is the only publication dedicated to onomastics in the region. The journal has been instrumental in promoting onomastics as a serious lens to ‘read’ the vicissitudes of changing southern African societies. This book is intended to add to the growing interest in onomastics in the region as it brings together cultural researchers from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Angola, Zambia and Tanzania who grapple with names and naming patterns in their societies.

The specifics of the book (including chapter synopses) will be explored later. At this point, the book’s scholarly intervention can be justified by detailing its contextual, theoretical and methodological framings. The aim here is to go beyond the typical ‘general introduction’, providing instead early demonstrations of the kind of analytical frameworks used in the book. It is hoped that this brief analysis sufficiently justifies this defence of the epistemological potentialities of names and naming in the discourse of exigent pressures affecting the postcolonial nation. As hinted above, the thrust of the postcolonial naming practice is informed by the palpable colonial vestiges in almost every aspect of our social, political and economic lives. In a keynote address in 2014 at the 18th International Conference of the Names Society of Southern Africa (NSSA) at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, Kizito Muchemwa engaged with what he called the ‘colonial remains’ underlying postcolonial modes of imagining the nation as manifested in some of the onomastic practices of southern African societies. The crux of Muchemwa’s presentation was an argument much akin to the widely discoursed critique of the postcolony in Fanon’s chapter ‘Pitfalls of National Consciousness’ (Fanon, 1963). Fanon ‘predicted’ that independence would not necessarily begin with black leadership, a new flag and national anthem and neither was it going to vanish with the removal of white faces in government. For Fanon, colonialism is a complex system that is sustained in part by cultivating in its victims a dependency complex which inhibits or distorts the development of their political subjectivity. Fanon’s famous construction of the colonised native as envious of the coloniser informs his argument that colonial subjects
become subconscious apprentices of colonial methods of statecraft. The post-independence stagnation which is often a syndrome experienced by most African countries owes much to the failure of the national bourgeoisie to think beyond anti-colonial mantras and slogans and the deep-seated and often strategically concealed fear of being their own masters of their futures. This fear is easy to fathom. There are dire consequences in attempting wholesale changes to the system, functions and methods of the colonial economy in the post-independence period.

Let it also be said that there is a degree to which some post-independence leaders become victims. They are almost always faced with the dilemma of balancing the need to pander to white capital to sustain economic production along the lines of the colonial system with the masses’ restlessness to realise the promise of broad-based economic empowerment (arguably a euphemism for side-lining whites and integrating blacks into the mainstream economy). Perhaps there is nowhere else where the costs of jettisoning white/colonial capital produced catastrophic economic repercussions than in Zimbabwe post-2000. As onomastic researchers, this book’s interest would be on names and naming patterns that emerged alongside this period of crisis and how the discourse reflected some of the underlying dimensions of the national dilemma. The 2013 debate on the renaming of the prime tourist attraction Victoria Falls is a good case in point. At its 2013 Annual Conference, the ruling ZANU-PF government resolved to rename all of the country’s major institutions and landmarks that still had colonial names, particularly Victoria Falls. It was then that Walter Mzembi, the Tourism Minister, sensed the possible boomerang effect of the political resolution, especially with regard to the renaming of Victoria Falls as Mosi-oa-Tunya, meaning ‘the smoke which thunders’. Practically though, this was not so much a proposal to rename per se. It was, in fact, an attempt to reclaim and restore the original name; that is, to re-indigenise the landmark in line with the government’s multisectoral indigenisation drive.

It seems that the evident capital flight following the implementation of indigenisation programmes in other sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture might have scared Mzembi and informed his objections to the name change of Victoria Falls. Yet for all intents and purposes, Mosi-oa-Tunya makes cultural sense because it not only reflects the native Tonga people’s art of naming but, perhaps more importantly, adds nuance to our understanding of how they make sense of their geographical phenomena since the falls (as Mosi-oa-Tunya) are intricately linked to Tonga identity and culture. In this light, then, beyond its ‘cultural sense’, Mosi-oa-Tunya
should make ‘economic/tourism sense’. This is because the significance of the ‘heritage’ of the falls as a World Heritage Site is bound up with its original identity and, by implication, its indigenous name. The Tonga people are a part of the falls’ natural land- and socio-scenes. Touring the falls thus transcends the mere experience of its physical spectacle; it also involves encountering the falls’ situation in a socio-cultural and even religious Tonga cosmology. If the essence of tourism is encountering new places and experiencing the cultures of the toured places, then visiting Victoria Falls is fundamentally a less enriching tour than a visit of Mosi-oa-Tunya. This is because Victoria Falls essentially alienates the Tonga people from the falls, consequently eliding a crucial aspect of the falls, its original namers. A cultural restoration of the falls’ original identity is thus impeded by economic considerations.

However, some colonial toponyms are disappearing. The reason behind their change puts into perspective the affinity of place names in the post-independence identity project. The case of places named in honour of Cecil John Rhodes is fascinating. As former governor of the Cape Colony and champion of the British Empire in Africa, Rhodes is arguably synonymous with a history of Africans’ debasement and the abrupt disconnection of native systems of culture, philosophy and politics. Yet names (past and present) in his honour ascribed to some of the most significant places and institutions of political, cultural and economic significance not only suggest his pleasant and benevolent side, but also betray a congenial connection to his memory in those societies attached to his legacy in one way or another. Rhodes’s profound influence in colonialism’s heyday and even in the post-independence period can be found inscribed in such former names as Rhodesia and Zimbabwe-Rhodesia (the country that is now Zimbabwe), the former Rhodes-Inyanga and Rhodes-Matopos National Parks in Zimbabwe, the present Rhodes University and the Mandela-Rhodes Hotel in South Africa as well as the prestigious Mandela-Rhodes Scholarships. An interesting feature in most of these names cited above is that the name Rhodes exists in combination with an indigenous one. To many, it is a tension-filled coexistence which reflects a desperate attempt to integrate two worlds that hitherto conflicted on the fundamental question of black people’s humanity. The hyphenated names indicate a transition and the nations’ ambivalence caused in part by the different sets of histories with which each community identifies. The combinations of Zimbabwe and Rhodes, Rhodes and Matobo, Rhodes and Inyanga or Mandela and Rhodes attempt to create the impression that the former coloniser and the formerly colonised now co-own and co-identify with the place. The racial undertones in the binary existence of ‘Rhodes’
and local names are clouded by the onomastic ‘peace agreement’ which allows Rhodes to ‘sit’ side by side with Mandela. Similarly, the national parks Rhodes-Matopos and Rhodes-Inyanga simultaneously archive and even honour the memory of Rhodes and that of the natives of Matobo and Inyanga. It is perhaps a superficial attempt to create a sense of reconciliation among the people who identify with either of the names and the symbolic past they bring to bear in their forging of the present.

However, for black people, the past and its ineffaceable and haunting marks of dehumanisation are not something with which they can easily reconcile. Thus, more often than not, names that remind them of this past and refresh their memory of its appalling infringements on their humanity may actually cause them to drift further away from the former coloniser’s progeny. This is perhaps why in present-day Zimbabwe such hyphenated names as cited above have been changed by completely obliterating Rhodes. However, it is often too easy for post-independence African governments to mistake or deliberately project the total erasure of names with colonial baggage as ‘the’ evidence of transformation. In the Zimbabwean case, the dropping of Rhodes is not that simple. The initial urge to expunge him from the national imagination suggests a conscious attempt to rediscover a national identity in the terms set by the indigenes as the agents of history. It is no wonder, then, that in contemporary Zimbabwe, the annihilation of Rhodes from the national imagination has been accompanied by actual attempts to jettison whites from a contrived national identity shaped by the post-2000 resuscitation of a racialised nationalism. In spite of Robert Mugabe’s earlier reconciliatory assurance that post-independence would be a time to ‘beat swords into plough shares’, the economic superstructure undergirded by an inherited pro-white economic system was in fact inimical to economic reconciliation with blacks. In light of this continuance of white privilege, the name Rhodes came to symbolise the white community and its advantages inherited from Rhodes’ bestowments; the very privileges (especially land) which stood between the reconciliation of blacks with economic agency denied them by the colonial system. This is the fundamental gridlock that the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front awakened to and sadly attempted to unlock with an exaggerated emotional strand of nationalism in the post-2000 period.

In Cape Town, South Africa (the place of yet another double-barrelled name, the Mandela-Rhodes Place), the Rhodes Must Fall campaign was started in 2015 by a majority of black students at the University of Cape Town who were infuriated by the slow progress of transformation at the
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University. The movement’s ‘about’ section on its Facebook page describes it as ‘[a] collective student, staff and worker movement mobilising for direct action against the institutional racism of UCT’. One of the major casualties of the movement’s modus operandi was the imposing statue of Rhodes at the University campus. In its heyday, the statue depicted a relaxed and contemplative Rhodes hoisted above facing the entrance to the University grounds and looking north into Africa, as if pondering the efficacy of his Cape to Cairo dreams. Here, the concern is not so much with the political significance of the statue and what eventually became a raging debate on the colonial statues and monuments in South Africa. Instead, the interest is particularly in its onomastic underpinnings; that is, the ways in which the movement triggered discourses on name changes that speak to the ways we think about names and their political, cultural and even economic undertones.

The semantic possibilities created by an onomastic perspective of the Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) movement are immense. This approach can unveil some of the subterranean details of the campaign. The name of the RMF movement is a good site to theorise the interface of names, naming and the problems of ‘transformation’ at the University of Cape Town and indeed in every other socio-economic, political and cultural institution of national significance in South Africa. Clearly, two important components of the name come into perspective; that is the noun ‘Rhodes’ and the imperative phrase ‘must fall’ which comprises the two verbs ‘must’ and ‘fall’. Rhodes is essentially more than a name and a historical person. He is used as a symbol that signifies the colonial debris stifling transformation at the institution of higher learning.

The use of Rhodes as a symbol is strategic. The name of the man who is almost solely responsible for the operation of the British Empire project in Africa, Rhodes acquires symbolic significance as a cache of all the inequities of colonialism. He becomes inherently reprehensible and, arguably, so does every institution, policy or behaviour associated with him in one way or another. The repugnancy informs the emotion in the imperative-cum-declarative phrase ‘must fall’. The demand for Rhodes to fall suggests that he is still standing, over a century after his physical death. A ‘standing’ (the sculpture was in a sitting position) Rhodes, then, symbolises the perpetuation of the legacy of racial prejudice to some and tacitly indicates resistance to present-day transformation. The evocation of Rhodes as undying creates a vivid imagery of him as disinclined to give up. To the feisty student demonstrators, he is a sign that the colonial remnants are holding up – the very sign that justifies the RMF movement’s
rallying call to fell him, again. In this instance, onomastic lenses magnify nuances of the political and cultural economy of the RMF movement.

Looking back into Rhodes’ timeline, we can infer the foundations of the tenacious white superiority complex that infuriated the black university students in present-day South Africa more than a century after his biological death. In an apparent show of entrenched *amour propre* and craving to etch his memory in the history of the lands he conquered, Rhodes left a will in which he indicated his wish to have his name engraved on the granite rocks of Matobo that are at the site of his grave, in what was then Southern Rhodesia. Rhodes’ will reveals fascinating onomastic features. Here is a snippet:

> I admire the grandeur and the loneliness of the Matoppos in Rhodesia and therefore I desire to be buried in the Matoppos on the hill which I used to visit and which I called ‘View of the World’, in a square to be cut in the rock on the top of the hill covered with a plain brass plate with these words: ‘Here lie the remains of Cecil John Rhodes.’ (Cited in Magubane, 1996, p. 97)

The extract reflects aspects of the colonial naming system which have been widely discoursed in studies on toponyms in this and other onomastic research in southern Africa. There are several talking points vis-à-vis the interface of imperial power and the authority to name. In this will, Rhodes is practically renaming the place he wants to be interred. In one of the earliest books on Matobo entitled *Guide to Matopos*, Nobbs (1924) asserts that the hill on which Rhodes wished to be buried was initially called *Malindidzimu* ‘dwelling place of benevolent spirits’ by the Kalanga people who lived there before the area was conquered by Mzilikazi in the early nineteenth century. Mzilikazi later renamed the area Matobo. The colonial administration changed the name to Matopos. After independence, however, the Rhodes Matopos National Park in which Rhodes’ grave is found was renamed Matobo National Park.

In history, the place of Rhodes’s burial has always been a site for the onomastic inscription of power. Rhodes’s variant of ‘Matopos’ is not merely a distorted version of Mzilikazi’s ‘Matobo’, as the different naming systems reflect the underlying power dynamics in Mzilikazi’s naming and Rhodes’ re-naming of the place. Matobo means ‘bald head’ in the isiNdebele language – a name derived from the round-shaped boulders on the granite hill koppies scattered around the area. As a fugitive Zulu general fleeing the Mfecane in the area that is now called KwaZulu-Natal, Mzilikazi’s renaming was both an act of claiming it and identifying with
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it, particularly at the expense of the Kalanga people. The Ndebele name, therefore, gave the place a Ndebele identity; it became a part of their cultural landscape. Matobo does not only identify the new inhabitants or political dispensation; it also distinguishes the place from other places and, by implication, other people. In this case, the Ndebele toponymic system involves a delicate conceptualisation of the named landmark in terms of its physical appearance and its imagined human equivalent. The land and people are intricately linked and it can thus be inferred from the names ascribed to landmarks, for instance, how the Ndebele Kingdom was carved out and also how the new inhabitants made sense of their immediate environs. The same cannot be said about Rhodes’ renaming of Matobo as Matopos. Semantically, Matopos is meaningless; it is rather a product of an attempt to westernise both the name Matobo and the land it describes and defines. Though not entirely annihilated, Matobo is practically decimated by the colonist’s linguistic violence, itself a symbolic manifestation of colonialism’s culture of violence. Matopos, then, not only gives the place a palatable (to the colonist) Western character but also covertly illuminates the identity of the succeeding colonial authority and its overarching political modus operandi – violence. Renaming becomes a mode of demarcating territory and identifying the conquered territories with the dominant race and its ethno-political creed.

This book has so far mainly concentrated on place names because they most clearly reflect the ease with which white superiority inscribed colonial names on landmarks or institutions. These names can (just like those landmarks) survive time and haunt new nations decades after independence. The section that focuses on ‘Toponyms’ is the 3rd section made up of four chapters. The chapters generally explore the place-name theory in: street names in Lusaka (Zambia); suburban names in postcolonial Mutare (Zimbabwe); and phoneme-grapheme disparities in some Ndebele Bulawayo (Zimbabwe) place names. Pfukwa and Mamvura’s chapter ‘Names in Space: Some Theoretical Perspectives on the Place Names of the Southern African Urban Landscape’ functions as an introduction to the section and provides theoretical grounding to the rest of the chapters. In partial response to Nicolaisen’s (1987) call for a theory on onomastics, Pfukwa and Mamvura’s chapter surveys leading scholarship in toponym studies in southern Africa and establishes research that can underpin theories on the place name. The paper traces different disciplines’ contributions to the development of place-name theory. Specific reference is made to how theoretical linguistics, literature, cultural studies, postcolonial theories, the linguistic landscape and geosemiotics contribute to the toponymic landscape.
The next chapter in this section is a survey on street names and street-naming processes in Lusaka, Zambia. In this chapter, Wakumelo, Mwanza and Mkandawire demonstrate that street names are not just ‘signposts’, but also ‘reflect the social, political and cultural ideologies maintained by the name givers’. Their research represents the ‘first study on street names in Lusaka’, which ends with an outline of the problems relating to the process of street naming in the city.

Following this chapter is a study on urbanyms (urban names), this time with reference to odonyms and other place names in the city of Mutare, Zimbabwe. In the chapter entitled ‘Suburban blight: Perpetuating Colonial Memory through naming in Mutare, Zimbabwe’ Mapara and Nyota demonstrate how the ambivalent colonial past can be read in names of suburbs and streets in present-day Mutare. They view suburban names such as Fairbridge Park, Greenside, Hospital Hill, Westlea and Yeovil as not only a ‘sad reminder of colonialism and its related vices of oppression and segregation’, but also as a sign of the persistence of colonial mental ‘slavery’ in post-independence Zimbabwe. In concluding their discussion, Mapara and Nyota perceive a long-delayed need to initiate the process of name changing to ‘free’ the place from colonial names. Mapara and Nyota’s discussion demonstrates how place names remain a contested terrain in postcolonial Zimbabwe.

The last chapter in this section is written by Ndlovu and focuses on ‘phoneme-grapheme disparities’. The chapter is an attempt to understand and explain the disparities between the spoken sound and the written form in some toponyms in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Ndlovu identifies three possible causes of these disparities. In some cases, the disparities are a result of the errors created by missionaries who worked on the first Ndebele orthography which was used to write the toponyms. Other cases of disparities are a result of especially English transphonologies of Ndebele phonology. Lastly, Ndlovu argues that Ndebele orthography is, like most orthographies, not perfect, and such imperfections create disparities and ambiguities in some of Bulawayo’s Ndebele toponyms.

Besides toponyms, the book also focuses on other important types of names that reveal, in fascinating ways, the postcolonial dynamics of various socio-cultural, political, philosophical and economic experiences of southern African societies. The first and largest section of the book deals with anthroponyms or personal names. In the first chapter in this section entitled ‘Prescriptions and Attributions in the Names of Izinyanga’ in the Ethekwini Municipality, South Africa, Meyiwa and Maseti engage
with the naming practices of traditional healers, focusing on how names adopted by the healers and those ascribed to them reflect on the nature of their work and relationship with their clientele. Meyiwa and Maseti are particularly interested in the gender dimensions to the naming of izinyanga. They perceive a general proclivity for names that target women who form a major part of the clientele. For Meyiwa and Maseti, such names often reflect conscious and unconscious gender profiling steeped in the dogged patriarchal culture of the Zulu people.

Like Meyiwa and Maseti, Madoda in the chapter ‘Xhosa Cultural Values and Beliefs in Names of Ingecibi’ also grapples with the naming practices of traditional healers. Madoda’s chapter focuses on the names given to the traditional surgeons that are associated with the ukusoka (cutting of the foreskin) procedure performed during male circumcision among IsiXhosa-speaking people in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Traditional male circumcision is a crucial rite of passage among the Xhosa people. The ritual has survived colonial modernity and religion but remains an important identity marker among the Xhosa people. Yet recently, the ritual has come under criticism following reports of botched circumcisions that have claimed a number of young men’s lives. The traditional surgeon or ‘ingcibi’ is at the centre of the controversy. In this context, Madoda examines the relationship between the names of the ingcibi and the quintessential attributes of a typical ingcibi. Madoda’s empirical study reveals that ingcibi names are often derived from various sources such as wild animals, weather conditions and events in history. The names rely on the positive aspects of their source domains to construct the ingcibi as a man of standing both in his practice and status in the community.

Still on naming practices among the Xhosa-speaking people, Nomfuzo Rozani’s chapter entitled ‘Hlonipha: The Naming of Newly Married Women among the abaThembu People of the Eastern Cape’ explores, like Madoda, aspects of indigenous knowledge systems faced with the challenge of modernity with its typical Western tastes. Rozani’s chapter examines the role of the names of newly married women or omakoti in the initiation rite of passage that transforms girls into ‘respectable’ wives and daughters-in-law according to amasiko nezithethe (‘traditional customs and beliefs’). Rozani argues that the ukuhota/akuhotiswa ritual or ‘initiation into the new family’ involves multifaceted processes and performances that create a platform for a name. For Rozani, the names created and used during the initiation illuminate the cultural, aesthetic and philosophical aspects of the abaThembu people.
Mushangwe’s chapter ‘On the Brink of a New Naming Practice: Chinese Influences in Zimbabwean Naming Systems’ enters the longstanding discourse on the Chinese presence in Africa. Avoiding the usual economic enquiries on the increasing Chinese deals with African countries, Mushangwe instead offers a refreshing perspective on the often ignored cultural dimensions of the Chinese-Africa connection. Mushangwe’s analysis is based on evidence showing that many Zimbabwean students both living and studying in China and those studying the Chinese language and culture in Zimbabwe, tend to adopt Chinese names either as a kind of fashion or as a compulsory requirement of their academic courses. The chapter explores how the teaching of the Chinese language and culture to Zimbabweans seems to influence name changes and the creation of a new trend in the naming system.

Mushangwe also teams up with Chipara in the chapter ‘A cross-cultural comparative study of Shona-Portuguese and Shona-Chinese names’. Here, like Mushangwe’s earlier study alluded to above, this chapter engages with the encroachment of foreign naming practices on the Zimbabwean naming system by their contention that there are Portuguese and Chinese traces in Zimbabwean names. With particular reference to name structure, meaning and social function, the authors critically examine the significance of the foreign naming systems on Zimbabwean naming patterns, traditions and culture.

Maposa and Humbe continue the discourse on the Shona naming practices with their chapter entitled ‘Spirituality in the Shona Christian Naming System’. The chapter focuses on naming practices among the Shona, who are indigenous African Christians, positing that Christian names informed by African theology indicate attempts to indigenise Christianity by Shona-speaking communities in Zimbabwe. Maposa and Humbe argue that the Shona people redefine their Christian faith through naming. The gist of the chapter’s argument is that to appreciate the essence of African Christianity it is vital to decode phenomenologically the human spirituality embedded in the indigeno-Christocentric names that are popularly used in contemporary Shona Christian society.

In the last chapter of this section entitled ‘Pseudonymity as Self-naming: The pseudonym and the Performer in Zimbabwean Socio-technical spaces’, Landa provides a fascinating view of naming practices in the virtual community in contemporary Zimbabwe. The chapter explores the pseudonyms that members of virtual communities use to either create an identity or hide it when they participate in online discourses on news
articles in the comments section of online newspapers. For Landa, the adopted names reflect, among other things, the philosophical, political and ideological ‘baggage’ that members bring to the virtual forum. Thus, responses, emotions and attitudes to stories shown by such self-named members can be traced back to their adopted names and pseudonyms.

As Chilala posits in one of the chapters in the next section on ‘Literature in Names’, the author possesses the ‘Adamic licence’; that is, the authority to create and assign properties and functions to named characters, places, objects and so on in a literary text. Chapters in this second section engage with the art and semantics of names in literary texts. Unique to chapters in this study is the diversity of both the focus of analysis and the range of texts analysed. The chapters mainly focus on character names, fictional and fictionalised place names, book titles and nicknames. The chapters examine the semantic properties of names and how they not only fit into the text’s overarching style scheme but also inform certain kinds of themes, ideas and perspectives, and invite certain kinds of reading.

The chapter by Nyambi entitled ‘Doing Things with Titles: Zimbabwean Literary Titles’ (pre- and early post-independence) provides an experimental analysis of literary titles in what he calls ‘cover narratives’. Nyambi’s chapter focuses on literary texts published by black Zimbabwean writers before and immediately after independence. For Nyambi, literary titles are not mere extra-textual pawns used to foreshadow the main story inside the book. As ‘cover narratives’, Nyambi argues, titles can be read as essentially fully fledged narratives in their own right and deserve to be treated independently, although not always exclusively, as separate texts. Nyambi argues that titles of Zimbabwean literature grappling with the liberation struggle and the early independence period covertly reflect on the major forces underlying the various pressures and pains of transition.

Chilala’s chapter entitled ‘The Adamic Licence in Ellen Banda-Aaku’s Patchwork’ (2011) analyses the deployment of names as elements of style that help the narrative to achieve a certain textuality and affective appeal. Chilala mainly focuses on Banda-Aaku’s Adamic licence in the creation of fictional toponyms (place names) and anthroponyms (character names) in a way that can potentially stir certain emotions and enhance readers’ appreciation of the fictional life-world. Chilala argues that names carry connotations and implications that add nuance to themes – aesthetical and ideological perspectives along the novel’s backward gaze into the role played by Zambia in the liberation of southern African countries such as Zimbabwe.
Wakota’s chapter ‘Metaphors of Resistance: Nicknames in Tanzanian Fiction’ also deals with African responses to colonialism. However, the chapter is unique in the way that it invokes nicknaming cases in focal texts to examine the relationship between the colonised subject and the colonisers. Wakota views the nicknames ascribed to colonisers in literary works on colonialism as sites for encountering the tension inhabiting black and white race relations.

Mangena’s chapter ‘Symbolic Geographies: Place Names in Selected Zimbabwean Fiction’ shows how the use of fictional toponyms as part of narrative strategy can situate the story in a recognisable or imaginary make-believe world that allows the reader a second handle on the world. For Mangena, fiction that explores the state of black people’s existence in the colonial and post-independence eras often uses place names with symbolic meanings to evocatively and affectively portray the spatio-temporal timeline of the narrative. The ‘symbolic geographies’ give the action, and the characters inhabiting these areas, a certain appeal and personality depending on the nature of the toponym used. Yet besides propping up and explaining the action and characters in a story, the place name in fiction can also be a site from which to scan the physical manifestations of a particular era. Here, description, imagery and metaphors play an important part in the creation of vivid representations of place that can tell the story of that place. It is no wonder then, that one of Mangena’s focal place names is Manyene – that archetypal site of colonial inscriptions of physical and psychological violence in Charles Mungoshi’s novel *Waiting for the Rain* (1975).

Yvonne Vera is one of Zimbabwe’s foremost black female writers whose texts reveal a creative naming pattern with semantic potentialities. Her onomastic flair is perhaps best shown in the novel *Nehanda* where she recreates the name and person of a legendary Shona spirit medium who fearlessly challenged white supremacy during colonialism’s early days. In the chapter ‘Semantic Blending and Foregrounding of Nouns: Vera’s Naming System in Under the Tongue’, Zhou explains how in addition to proper nouns, Vera in *Under the Tongue* (1996) utilises common nouns to signify character anonymity and presence. As a result, the onomastic framework exploited is itself unique to Africa and it produces a distinctly African perspective. What would otherwise be perceived as simply deictic is presented as having critical semantic and pragmatic power that informs the construction and significance of characters and consequently the text as a whole. The chapter posits that the blending of proper and common noun referents broadens the meaning potential and semantic possibilities
of texts for onomastic effect. Consequently, the analysis of the effect of semantic blending in Zimbabwean literary texts illustrates the foundation of what can be referred to as a distinctive ‘African’ onomastic paradigm.

Ncube extends the discourse on Zimbabwean literary onomastics by zooming in on what defines Zimbabwe’s crisis literature. Framing his analysis around Nicolaisen’s onomastic theory, Ncube’s chapter entitled ‘Mapping the Poetics of Names in the Novels of John Eppel, Petina Gappah and NoViolet Bulawayo’ interrogates the literary onomastic practices of Zimbabwe’s contemporary writers. Particularly focusing on character names, Ncube contends that there is an inalienable relationship between the naming of characters and the ideological underpinnings of the texts. For Ncube, the character names used by these writers reflect on the crisis time-space they inhabit, making them symbolic archives of the historiography of the post-2000 political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe.

Completing the literary onomastics line-up is Mushati’s chapter ‘The Onoma of the Angolan Revolution: A Literary Onomastic Reading of Mayombe’. In this chapter, Mushati explores the relationship between textual anthroponyms (particularly the nom de guerre) and toponyms and the revolutionary aesthetics of Pepetela’s Angolan liberation war novel Mayombe (1983). Although focused on literary names, the chapter manages to transcend the fictional representations to offer an insightful account of the importance of names and naming in the liberation of Angola. The names examined by Mushati critically reflect on the revolutionaries’ sense of personal and national identity and their revolutionary consciousness that is informed by colonial exploitation and Marxist indoctrination. Yet the names also betray inherent fault lines in the forging of a nationalist response to colonialism. In history, as in the fictional life-world of Mayombe, one of the major pitfalls to the prosecution of the Angolan revolution and imagining of the nation is its ethnic rivalry. For Mushati, anthroponyms in Mayombe vividly evoke this scourge by magnifying the personality traits of native combatants. Mushati argues that characters’ names in the novel not only identify their ethnic group but also carry historical burdens of ethnic rivalry that are easily reignited to the detriment of the decolonising struggle.

The fourth and last section is the shortest in this volume with three papers focusing on brand names. The three papers engage with (1) branding in music/band names in Zimbabwe; (2) names of aphrodisiacs in selected southern African countries; and (3) the naming of public buses and taxis in South Africa. In the opening chapter of this section, Musiyiwa attempts to
fill in a notable scholarship gap on the onomastics of popular music in postcolonial Zimbabwe. The chapter introduces a new branch of onomastics which Musiyiwa calls ‘musiconymy’ – a term used in the chapter to describe the ‘nomenclature within the confines of music and musical practice such as names of songs, albums, bands, musical instruments, musical artists, names of musical performances, festivals’. Musiyiwa’s study is limited to the multiple factors that influence musical band name choice which include,

- the band leader’s personal experiences prior to band formation; dominant ideas in society; the place from which the band or band leader comes from; the institution that owns the musical group or to which the group is affiliated; the musical ambitions of the group leader and/or the entire group; gender; ethnicity; the size of a group; the group leader’s clan or family name; the artist(s)’s religious and/or cultural beliefs; the place the band is based and its ideological orientations as well as the foreign influences.

In the penultimate chapter entitled ‘Enhanced Masculinities: Names of Male Aphrodisiacs in Selected Southern African Countries’, Mambwe and da Costa break new ground in onomastic studies in southern Africa and open up the world of African aphrodisiacs through the perspectives of their names. The chapter focuses on names given to sexually enhancing herbs, particularly attempting to understand how the names reflect aspects of African sexuality in the southern African region. Mambwe and da Costa’s discussion is structured along three thematic lines: Aphrodisiac names that (1) relate to animal attributes; (2) suggest male sexual ‘alertness’; and (3) reflect on dominant gender stereotypes about women as sexual objects and men as superior beings in terms of sex and power relations. What is emphasised in the names of the aphrodisiacs that relate to animal attributes is the place of the animal in the interpretation of human behaviour, in this case in relation to sexuality – an interpretation which is otherwise aimed at unlocking human animality. The chapter can best be described as a ‘journey’ into the African masculine ‘world’ where names given to aphrodisiacs are (according to Mambwe and da Costa) a ‘reflection of dominant beliefs and values about masculinity, sex and sexuality in African cultures’.

The last chapter ‘Naming a Ride: Names of Minibus Taxis and Family-Owned Buses in Contemporary South Africa’ provides a thoroughly enlightening analysis of the business, cultural, familial and personal motivations in naming public buses and taxis in South Africa. For Madoda and Meyiwa, taxis and buses ‘bear names that reflect community tensions;
business conflicts; sports and music stars; special talents and family pride; clan names and surnames; owners’ nicknames; their colours; and religious significance’. The chapter reveals that business considerations often take precedence over all other inspirations. Cekiso and Meyiwa argue that naming in South Africa’s fiercely contested public transport business is fundamentally a form of marketing. The names are, therefore, primarily business names and (as with all other business names in the open market) are often designed to create a competitive advantage for the owner. In addition, in the context of constant news about fatal taxi violence involving competing taxi crews, the need to name in order to market one’s taxi or bus becomes imperative.

References


SECTION 1:

ANTHROPONYMS
CHAPTER ONE

PRESCRIPTIONS AND ATTRIBUTIONS
IN THE NAMES OF IZINYANGA IN ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY, SOUTH AFRICA

THENJIWE MEYIWA
AND THANDOKAZI MASITI

Introduction

Names carry special significance among most African societies, especially in comparison to other societies (Suzman, 1994; De Klerk & Bosch, 1995). While it has been observed that the names (and their meanings) shift with temporal and circumstantial forces (Ngubane & Thabethe, 2013), the significance of names can be located in their importance in defining identity. In most African contexts, names communicate what is hoped for, and they have cultural and psychological implications in their meanings; for example, the boy’s name, Vusithemba, meaning ‘raise hope’, indicates anticipation and faith for a positive outcome, while the girl’s name, Nokuthula or ‘mother of peace’ suggests the name-giver’s wishes. Koopman (2002) confirms that names are often given after much thought and with a purpose, especially among isiZulu-speaking people; usually reflecting a personal or cultural element. Nguni-language speakers (and the Zulu people in particular) are generally good at constructing and structuring names. Most names are significant in some respect, but those of the izinyanga\(^1\) are significantly unique.

The major objective of this chapter is to examine some of the naming practices of the izinyanga and related contexts assumed to impact on the

\(^1\) *Inyanga* (plural: *izinyanga*) is an *isiZulu* name for a traditional herbalist and/spiritual healer. The practice of *inyanga* is known as *ubunyanga*.