

Road and School Naming: A Basin of History and Culture in Lupane District of Matabeleland North Province (Zimbabwe)

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Abstract

Naming in most African communities is a very crucial concept being celebrated: As names is a repository of cultural and historical information. Significant events and historical figures are remembered through naming. The focus of this paper is to unfold the perception that names attached to roads and schools (primary and secondary alike) in Lupane district of Matabeleland North Province in Zimbabwe, shed light on the preservation of history of the Ndebele people. The paper develops the argument that it is the past which gives identity to an individual or ethnic group. The landmark names in Lupane district extend the community's commemoration of notable heroes and their achievements. Historical evidence has fostered the indelible mark of the names in Matabeleland, thereby serving as forms of linguistic as well as, historical records for posterity. In the same vein, the study attempts to reveal that significant events and people in Lupane district have been remembered through place naming evident in the schools and roads, among other observable landmarks consciously tagged by the community and the responsible local authority. Signposting such as road names and schools naming expresses the worldview of the Ndebele people in Lupane thereby asserting ownership of their space and authority to contribute to the construction of national narratives. As such, this onomastic practice in Lupane district is driven and manipulated by the Ndebele people's historical milieu. A thorough exploration of the origin and meanings of place names in this regard will enable the study to establish their symbolic significance. Qualitative research methodology will be employed to study the place names and interviews will be carried out with resource persons from the community and local authority who have substantive knowledge about the subject under study.

Keywords: Road naming • School naming • History • Culture • Lupane district

Introduction

Names and naming system in most African societies play a very significant role. There is no name for the sake of a name; instead names are symbolic and they are a historical, social and cultural signal of important events in a particular area and time. This implies that onomastic process has got its own ideologies. The impetus of this study is to shed light on the idea that names given to roads and schools in Lupane district have a telling effect on the history and cultural background of the Ndebele people in the Provincial Capital and the entire nation. As well, these names also give identity to the residents of the place [1].

Some road names in Lupane are rather informative and commemorative. They inform people about the history of the Ndebele people and the events which took place in those particular areas such that thus some roads are named after some particular events.

Particular attention is paid on the following roads: Fighting, Mazankila and Gomoza. These are the most significant roads in the district which symbolically reflect history of the Ndebele people of Lupane. On the same vein, schools in the district are not named for the sake of naming, instead they have symbolic names. As such this triggered the researchers to critically analyse the following names given to the following Secondary Schools in the district: Mabhikwa, Kanyandavu, Kwesemvubu, Gomoza, Zwangendaba, Menyezwa, Somgolo, Lupanda and Isipopoma. This largely highlights that school names in this Lupane are greatly influenced by power structures in the Ndebele society. They also reflect on the world view of the Ndebele people [2].

Case Presentation

The study utilized the qualitative research paradigm. Interviews and document analysis of Ndebele narrative texts were used for data

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gathering. It was envisaged that critical and very particular historical information relating to roads and schools naming would be revealed better if the respective community in this case, Lupane district of Matabeleland North Province had an opportunity to tell its own story. In this regard, the explorative study used the descriptive survey research design. The descriptive survey design was used because it is one of the most appropriate and effective modes in collecting information, describing it and explicating perceptions, values and viewpoints. Meanings would then be constructed from the responses triangulated with document analysis derived from the selected Ndebele texts such as whose setting is derived from the geographical setting of the research. A purposive sampling of ten respondents constituted the interviewees. These were derived from the elderly people who have personal practical and historical information about the district and events leading to the specific names. Informants from the local authority at Kusile Rural District Council were interviewed as they are the responsible authority safeguarding such monumental places and their naming [3].

Background to the understanding of Lupane District

Lupane district is situated in the Lupane Provincial Capital in Matabeleland North Province in Zimbabwe. It is located along Bulawayo-Victoria Falls road and it is 171 km away from Bulawayo. Lupane is a borrowed name from Tonga lexical item "Lupale" which means a dry land. Hence, one can argue that this critically reflects that the Tonga people were the original inhabitants of the place since the place was initially named by them. It becomes evident that the Ndebele people came in and the Tonga people moved themselves to Binga district after the invasion of the Ndebele people under King Mzilikazi into their territory. In an interview, respondents highlighted that the major reason why they moved themselves to the Northern part of the country is that they did not want the influence of these people who had their own culture and hence, spoke a different language. Therefore, the Ndebele people became the dwellers of the place and thus they named it "Lupane", a borrowed name from "Lupale" Tonga name.

Experts assert that "Lupane District, also known as Kusile is one of the seven rural districts of Matabeleland Province of Zimbabwe". The place is not appropriate for crop production as it is characterised by sandy infertile soils. This confirms that the place is a dry land as it is largely known of critical water shortages and hence, annual droughts. Most of the people in this district undertake small scale farming for sustenance. FAO (2015: 2) state that "agriculture is the major economic activity for people in this area". However, people in this area do not succeed in crop farming due to rainfall shortages [4].

In an interview, it came forth that according to 2012 census; Lupane district had a population of 98,864 among 28 Wards. It is postulated that "Lupane district is rich in natural resources such as timber, coal, methane gas and wild life, of which most of these resources have not been explored, except for timber and wildlife. On the western side of the district is the Zikungwa Wild Life Park and thus almost every season wild animals are seen in the place going to and from the nearby Lupane dam in search of water.

Lupane State University is a higher and tertiary learning institution located in Matabeleland North Provincial Capital being the only rural

university. It has been established under the Act of Parliament in 2004 to close the educational gap between the rural and urban communities. The presence of a University in the district has brought drastic development to the place and this has contributed to the growth of the provincial capital and the entire nation since most people from various places come in for business purposes [5].

A critical analyses of selected roads in Lupane district

It is of paramount importance to note that names attached to roads in Lupane District are descriptive, commemorative and at the same time they preserve the history of the Ndebele people in the district and nation as a whole. Road naming in this district is an interpretation of historical events that took place in those significant areas. Chabata (2012: 54) holds that "quite a number of features in Zimbabwe have their names driven from the important historical events". This highlights that names carry within themselves historical and cultural events. Hence, the focal point of this section is to analyse the symbolic onomastic practice attached to 'Fighting', 'Mazankila' and 'Gomoza' roads. These are the three major symbolic roads in the district with their historical interpretations which have been summed up in the names for historical archiving. Significantly, the names, in their self-informative enigma, silently enlighten people a lot about what took place in those particular places. (2014: 74) asserts that "a name is an important form of identity of a particular place and at times it can tell a story". As such, these road names provide information about historical incidents attached to those places [6].

Fighting road is one of the roads in Lupane which has been named by white colonists during the liberation struggle for independence and even today the road still bears a foreign name and the name has not been localized into Ndebele language. The road was constructed just after the Police Camp in the district to the east direction and it stretches up to Nkayi Growth Point. When someone talks of fighting road; the next thing that comes in his or her mind is the war atmosphere which had catastrophic effects to the people in the district and the nation at large.

Fighting road is a memorial name that gives an honor and catastrophic is given in honor of the war which took place in Lupane District at round 1970s between the white colonists who were led by Ian Smith and Ndebele people. The road was strategically established during to the time when black people were prohibited by colonists to enter some places. Experts touched on the major reasons for the establishment of this road, hence they say;

"The second group that was paid was a chaser with red eyes that we were treating

It's a killer, he was given the job of scouting on the street Fighting road. They intended to see the entry of the enemy from this road"

(The second group which was led by a man with red eyes we used to call him Bulalibhunu was tasked to go and search for enemy in fighting road. The major purpose for the erection of this road was to help the colonialists see clearly the invasion of enemy into their territory and as well as, to set bombers.)

Discussion

In support of Ndlovu's argument, participants in an interview highlighted that the road was erected in wide stretch so as to control and monitor the movement of the Ndebele people from one place to another. Furthermore, they confirmed that colonists set binocular guns also known as sniper guns along the road and those who would cross over were killed [7].

Mazankila is also a road in the district whose name has been derived from a historical war incident. The road is located in Jibajiba Village in Lupane district where most of the white colonists were killed by the Ndebele people during the liberation war in that particular road. Initially, the road had no name and road was named by the opponents as "Man is a killer" in commemoration of the aftermath of the war, in remembrance of the colonists' blood which was shed in that significant road during the Zimbabwe war of liberation. The man who was being referred in this name was a black person who conquered and killed the enemy that is the colonist. This onomastic practice by the white people was a means to preserve history that would be functional for the younger generation. History is important because it determines the future and present. Of paramount importance is that history invites us to go back to our past and fetch the lessons of the past. However, the Ndebele people could not pronounce this alien name and as such, they corrupted the name and localized it as Mazankila. It is vital to note that the localized names became meaningless. Mazankila is, therefore, an Ndebele name without the overt meaning since it is more of a phonetic derivative. This literary distorted the actual meaning of the name since every name gives information about something.

Gomoza road is also one of the significant roads in Lupane district. Gomoza is an Ndebele name which was derived from Somoza Tonga name. It is vital to note that, as earlier stated in the discussion, most of the place names in Lupane are borrowed from Tonga language because the Tonga people were the initial settlers of the place before the Ndebele people who were led by King Mzilikazi came in. Respondents in an interview highlighted that in the 1950's the Tonga people then migrated themselves to the Northern parts of Zimbabwe like Binga and Zambezi because they did not want the influence of the immigrants (Ndebele people) into their territory. Hence, the Ndebele people after gaining the territory localized almost all the place names to suit their language.

It also came forth in an interview that Somoza (ubande) in Ndebele is a type of tree with medicinal properties for headache; and the tree was so popular and helpful in the community as people would burn its roots to cure headache. Even in this present day, the tree is still significant to the community as Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) is part and parcel of the Ndebele culture. The tree is more important in the community given the escalating costs of modern medicines and most people in rural areas could not afford to purchase these remedies. This highlights the relevance of traditional medicine in a global village. Hence, one argues that ethno veterinary medicine has a space in this global era. This actually reminds the Ndebele people to go back to their traditions and adopt the life style of utilizing traditional herbs because they are free and cheap to obtain [8].

These trees (ubande) made the place so popular such that the Kusile Rural District Council of Lupane and the community named the road after these significant trees because they were of much help to

the community which could not afford to buy expensive medication for headache. As such, the road stretches from Lupane Police Camp to Gomoza Village shopping centre. The place has become so popular in the district because people in the community value very much their indigenous knowledge which is distinctive to their culture. The overall impression is that this onomastic practice in Lupane is culture bound as IKS cannot be secluded from the Ndebele culture. IKS and Ndebele culture are mentioned along each other. As such, the naming of this road captures the culture of the Ndebele people in the community and the nation at large.

Analysis of selected schools in the district

School naming is an ideologically bound practice in Lupane district. It is also a symbolic act that shed light on some important historical and cultural events. Schools are learning institutions that are also a reservoir of culture and history in the district. In schools, learners are being taught their indigenous languages which are a carrier of their culture and history and in this way they get to know of these two important aspects which shape their future. Culture and history are two interwoven terms which allow for affirmative changes within the society. Culture is given impetus by particular historical events. Culture is defined by Matsumoto (1996: 16) as "...the set of attitudes, values, beliefs and behavior shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next". This means culture is a habitable and celebrated philosophy of life in the society. Philosophy of life refers to thoughts, behavior and attitudes that comes from a society's thinking patterns. Hence, culture in a society becomes a guiding force in terms of thinking patterns. It also signposts the direction in which things should be done. On the other hand, history refers to the account of human events which occurred in the past. History is a very significant facet of the human world. It is the constant discourse between present and past. It is much more important especially to the younger generations because it enhances an individual's self-understanding. For instance, in a school set up, each and every individual has got his or her heritage which is unique to each other. Hence, in such a scenario learners need to attain more information on historical events so that they identify or get to know themselves. History teaches appreciation of one's values, norms and culture. Of paramount importance, history inculcates some feelings of oneness amongst people in the community. Hence, the focal point of this section is to analyse names attached to schools in Lupane district which are a basin of culture and history of the Ndebele people in the district [9].

In commemorating some important events or iconic leaders in the district, the Ndebele people have named some schools after the historical events and significant people. Most names given to schools in Lupane provide deep understanding of the history of that particular person whose name is given to a school. Experts in Alderman (2000) assert that "the naming of schools after historical figures is a subtle yet powerful way of communicating the accomplishments of previous generations". This highlights that this naming process is important because it reminds people of their past and this becomes a way for people to identify themselves with the place.

Mabhikwa High School is the significant school in the district which bears the Chief's name, Mabhikwa Khumalo. The school is named after him because he is a very important figure who could lead the community, bear people's problems and preside over social issues.

He is also a custodian of culture, values, beliefs and norms and ensured equal land distribution. This name, Mabhikwa High School, on its own, tells a story about the chief, his clan and territory. As such, naming this school after the chief became a significant way the chief gains communal appreciation of his historical and cultural successes. This onomastic practice becomes a platform to remember the chief and his good deeds for the community. It is also an important event which shed light on the good relationship between the community and chief. Chief Mabhikwa is a famous figure who is responsible for the growth and development of his people. He fosters peace and unity in his territory. He promoted the spirit of Ubuntu in the community, which is an important aspect being celebrated by the Ndebele people in the community. This naming practice is a way of preserving the chief's clan name and also preserving the district's history under Chief Mabhikwa. Furthermore, this became a platform to motivate learners historically so that they look back into their history and attain life affirming values, and history becomes a guiding post that leads to positive transformation.

In one of the interviews, it came forth that some years ago in the Rhodesian government there was a very big pool in Lenkalisi Village in Lupane District where a white woman who was named Lake Alice used to fish in this pool. She lived near the pool. With passage of time the first school which was established in the place was named after her. However, this Ndebele community could not pronounce this foreign name; they then phonetically corrupted and localized it to Lenkalisi Secondary School. This incident captures the history of the Ndebele people of that particular area in Lupane. Hence, naming this village and school after this significant white woman is also a way of preserving the history of this famous woman in the village [10]. Her history has been kept through this onomastic practice so that it will be handed over from one generation to the next. This naming practice attached to the school and place also commemorates this prominent and symbolic woman. Her fishing hobby is still being celebrated in the village because there are very few women, especially in the district, who have interest in fishing. This is a hobby mostly attached to men (Table 1).

Name of school	Significant event
Somgolo (Tonga name)	Named after rain making ritual ceremony
Isipopoma (Ndebele name)	Named after water rock falls
Kwesemvubu (Ndebele name)	Named after a pool where Hippopotamus used to stay after drinking water in the pool.
Kanyandavu (Tonga name)	Named after a pool where lions used to drink water.
Zwangendaba (Ndebele name)	Named after the Ndebele Chief Zwangendaba.
Gomoza (Ndebele name borrowed from Tonga name Somoza a medicinal tree)	Named after popular medicinal tree (ubande in Ndebele) in the area which treats headache.
Menyezwa (Ndebele name)	Named after chief Menyezwa

Table 1. A list of some other secondary schools in the district which were named after significant events.

This shed light on that school naming in Lupane district is not just a mere practice, instead it is a symbolic practice.

Conclusion

The intricate historical interplay between the roads and schools' names vis-à-vis historical archiving in Lupane is unmistakable. The names tell a story about the various ethnic groups whose historical footprints have remained etched in Lupane district. Notably from the discussion, it emerges that the history of struggles towards liberation of the province and assertion of Ndebele and Tonga ethnic groups' identities has remained a priority. These struggles stem from the liberation struggle for independence from the colonial stranglehold to the post-independence period characterised by the need to assert a people's cultural identity. Cultural preservation through indigenous knowledge systems of the Ndebele ethnic group has been reinforced through naming, as observed through trees such as ubande with significant medicinal properties that have been revered in Lupane and surrounding areas to-date. Culture and history have emerged as the key domains of focus in the onomastic practice within Lupane district, and this has been in spite of the fact that part of that history is documenting and commemorating the lives of former colonists, an issue which reflects lack of acrimony against the former adversaries of the Ndebele people. A great sense of attachment is created when one names a place, road or school, as social amenities, thereby fostering a sense of responsibility in taking care of such landmarks without compulsion.

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