Political Dialoguing Through the Naming Process: The Case of Colonial Zimbabwe (1890-1980)

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Abstract

The colonisation of Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), like that of several other colonial African nations at the time, was characterised by tension and antagonism between the settlers and the indigenous people. This paper argues that in Southern Rhodesia, one of the ways antagonism was reflected was through the naming process, which started immediately after the occupation of the country by the British South African Company (BSAC) and continued until national liberation in 1980. Hence, the settlers used the naming process to assert their claim and authority over the newly acquired space, while the indigenous people, where possible, employed it to communicate their displeasure with all that the new political dispensation represented.

Introduction

Southern Rhodesia was occupied by the British South African Company (BSAC) on behalf of the British government in 1890. Thereafter, the political and socio-economic relations that developed between the white settlers and the African people in the new colony were characterised by tension. In addition to enacting legislation calculated to force the African to accept settler authority, they also used indirect methods to constantly remind the people that they were now a subjugated people.

One such indirect method employed by the settlers was 'language and cultural imperialism' through the naming process as reflected in the typo and anthroponyms used by the antagonistic groups in the colony. Names bestowed on places, rivers and infrastructure such as buildings, schools, hospitals and roads by the settlers were meant to convey specific political messages, hence, an expression of their political victory and "an important part of the act of claiming and confirming possession over space" (Jarman, 1996, cited in Makondo, 2009:30). About the same time, where it permitted, the different groups of indigenous people also talked back through names of mines and farms including those of children, to express their resentment towards the establishment of colonial rule, an event that was characterised by extensive plundering of local resources and exploitation of the African people.

This paper seeks to demonstrate that the settlers and the indigenous people both used the naming process as an informal political dialogue to express their antagonistic relationship that characterised the interaction. Thus, we will demonstrate that initially, the bestowing of names was a political monologue by the settlers, but later, it became a dialogue as the Africans became conscious of the significance of names in expressing resentment to white rule.

The Functions of Names

The basic function of names has been that of providing a useful label to things so that they can be differentiated. However, it is now widely accepted that there is more to the naming process than that basic function as these have social and psychological functions (Finnegan, 1970; Hudson, 1980; and Turner, 1992). The social function is reflected in the varied reasons for choice of names which include sentimental, literary, religious and cultural reasons. In the cultural realm, names are significant in providing cultural identities, preserving a people's history and transmitting from generation to generation that which makes them distinct, thus making them an extension of the structure of society. For example, as noted by Neething (1995), name giving among the African cultures reflect the socio-cultural circumstances of the group. In this way, names are part of their oral literature, and in colonial times, were an expression of the political interaction between the colonisers and the colonised.

The psychological functions of names include providing assurance to an individual, expressing the self-image of the bearer, expressing tension, discontent and censure, and working out stress situations by minimising discontent and providing indirectly, a means of redress (Finnegan, 1970 and Turner, 1992). Hence, all of these reasons will also be found to be central to the naming process in colonial Rhodesia via a political process.

Pattern of Naming by the Settlers

Initially, during the process of the occupation of Southern Rhodesia, the settlers used names to convey the message about their intention to occupy the country, and that they were not coming in peace. Hence the settlements established by the Pioneer Column on its way into the interior were a prefixed fort, a term with a military connotation. Such places included Fort Tuli, Fort Victoria, Fort Charter and Fort Salisbury. After hoisting the Union Jack at the kopje in Salisbury on 12 September 1890, the settlers wasted no time in moving out in all directions in search of the 'Second Rand'. And as observed by Mpofu et al (2009), once it had been established that the 'Second Rand' was a fallacy, the settlers, in addition to establishing a few mining ventures, went on to establish farms, towns and other settlements throughout the country. Some of these settlements had names either similar to places found in the United Kingdom (UK) or those of renowned British personalities. Such names included Mount Hampden, Oxford, and Essexvale, Sussex, Chatsworth, New Jersey and Somerset, Victoria, Salisbury, Selous and Hartley.

This same pattern emerged in the bestowal of names on infrastructure in the settlements. Such suburbs as Avondale, Greystone Park Cotswold, Malborough and Hatfield (all in Salisbury), Killarney, Hyde Park and Kensington (Bulawayo), Yeovil (Umtali) and Ascot, Windsor Park (both in Gwelo) were named after places in the United Kingdom. This also applied to farms which assumed such names as Little England, Lancashire Estates, Kintyre Estates and Aberfoyle plantations, among others. Roads too got such names as King George, Selbourne, Blackburn, Churchill, Plymouth, Bristol, Liverpool, London and Birmingham. Blocks of offices and residential flats acquired such names as Grey's building, Chester House, Dochester House, Grosvenor Place and York House. Schools were bestowed with such names as Churchill, Prince Edward, Milton, Queen Elizabeth, Alan Wilson and Louis Mount Batten. And even schools established by missionaries for African children were not spared, but given English names as well as names of Christian saints, for example, Sandringham, St Albans, Usher, Howard, Cyrene, St Augustine's and St Albert's.

Some settlements and rivers retained their local names; however they were bastardized and thus, lost their original local flair. Such settlements included Mutare (Umtali), Gweru (Gwelo), Shurugwi (Selukwe) Kadoma (Gatooma), Marondera (Marandellas), Kwe Kwe (Que Que), Mvuma (Umvuma), Chinhoyi (Sinioa) and Musvewedede (Musonedi) in Mazoe area. Even names of rivers were corrupted to reflect the new political dispensation. For example, Runde (Lundi), Mupfuri (Umfuli) and Munyati (Umnyati) were altered, and in their new form, they lost their local flair, and sounded English.

While in Mashonaland the settlers had gone all out in renaming the local places, in Matabeleland it would seem they were rather cautious in imposing new English names and many places retained their local names, save for a few places, for example, Plumtree, Essexvale, Fort Rixon, West Nicholson and a few others. Such places as Bulawayo, Binga, Dete, Gwanda and Filabusi retained their original names. In Bulawayo, a number of white suburbs were bestowed with Ndebele names, for instance, Matshemuhlope, Malindela and Khumalo. It would seem the settlers did not want to antagonise the Ndebele unnecessarily, whom they viewed as 'a warlike people'. In addition to the element of fear, the bestowal of local names in that region could be attributed to the fact that the Ndebele had quickly moved into Bulawayo during the early 20th century because rural Matabeleland was not suitable for agriculture. Consequently, there was a significant presence of locals, and the Ndebele pre-colonial traditions and voice was very strong in Bulawayo urban politics from the early years of colonialism. This probably explains why the settlers could not Europeanise Bulawayo with impunity like they did in Salisbury and other settlements in Mashonaland (Raftopoulos and Yoshokini, 1999).

In Salisbury, it was the other way round, some African townships acquiring such names as Highfield, Glen Norah, Western Triangle, Canaan, National and Engineering. The explanation for this strong settler influence in early urban Salisbury can be found in the delayed migration by indigenous people into Salisbury. The Shona people did not quickly move into Salisbury, and other employment centres for survival because of the region was agro-ecologically favourable as well as the relative abundance of land in comparison to what the situation was in Matabeleland. Hence, the participation of the Shona in urban politics of which the naming process was part, and parcel, was not as significant as that of the people in Matebeleland.

The sacred places were to some extent also touched by the name changing process. Matobo hills were corrupted to Matopos, but the religious shrine of Njelele, retained its name. Chirorodziva became Sinoia Caves, and Domboramwari was renamed Epworth.

The Pattern of African Naming

The indigenous people reacted to settler attempts to impose their authority and dominance in the country. It should be noted that the Africans had a limited mandate to bestow names on places under the new political dispensation. However, where possible, they used names and nicknames to indirectly convey messages to the settlers about African displeasure with the oppressive and exploitative administration.

The African response varied from group to group, from class to class, and from time to time. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008:68) correctly notes that African responses to colonisation from the earliest days whereas an admixture of complicity, resistance and other reactions that do not easily fit into paradigms. The responses were influenced by the ambiguities and contradictions of colonial policies which evoked similarly ambiguous and contradictory African responses. Hence, at one stage names would reflect what could be considered to be fierce opposition to colonial rule and yet at another, suggest complicity. The names bestowed on farms and mines by African were meant to communicate the oppressive and repressive nature of colonial rule as experienced at their workplaces. The workers who were objects of exploitation used nicknames to warn their colleagues of potentially cruel and ruthless white employers. Such nicknames as 'Chayamatako' (one who beats the buttocks), 'Mbaramatonya' (whip or sjambok), Mukandabutsu (one who kicks), Madubure (trigger happy) and 'Bhunzu' (literally meaning that many people died at the farm) were used to warn others to shy away from certain farms and mines where working conditions were deplorable and workers were brutalised. Included in this category of names were Native Commissioners and other representatives of settler administration at various levels. Those names were a way of conveying a message, as confirmed by Majubane, cited by Makondo (1996) who researched names given to Native Commissioners who served in Southern Rhodesia and found that the names showed what African people thought about the Commissioner. For example, Munyarari. (meaning one who keeps her/his silence), and the Shona referred to the Native Commissioners as mudzviti, a derogatory term used in referring to the Ndebele who would occasionally raid their grain or who didn't pay tribute during the pre-colonial times.

Those Africans who were opposed to the colonial administration wanted people to be constantly reminded of the need to maintain and perpetuate their identity and consequently, they used place and people names to achieve this. Place names were in that case intended to show resentment to colonial rule through glorification of their heroes. Hence the bestowal of names of renowned dynasties, local chiefs and other celebrated people in African townships and other infrastructure such as Mutapa and Mambo (in Gwelo), Harare, Mufakose, Seke (in Salisbury) Chipadze (Bindura), Gaza (Chipinge), Vengere (Rusape), and Tshovani (Chiredzi).

African townships and infrastructure in Bulawayo were named after Ndebele royalty, army commanders (indunas) and places in Zululand where the Ndebeles had originated from. Hence townships included such names as Mzilikazi (the Ndebele founding leader), his sons, Lobengula and Nkulumane, Magwegwe, Gwabalanda as place names in Zulululand were used, hence, Pelandaba and Pumula and others. Schools bearing names such as Lotshe, Mbizo and Mazwi were also named in honour of renowned Ndebele leaders. Streets and other infrastructure also had Ndebele names, for example, Lobengula Street, a commonplace in Bulawayo. While this reflected a recognition and preservation of Ndebele heritage it could also was necessitated by the need to pacify the Ndebele who had demonstrated their military prowess at the Shangani battle where a battalion of the settler army was wiped out (Mpofu, et al, 2009).

As stated above, in the townships African people had a limited mandate to give names to buildings, roads and other infrastructure. According to Mutami (1983) the African interests in municipal administrations was represented through 'African Advisory Boards' whose main function was to advise municipalities on the African needs for additional accommodation, and recreational facilities. The Boards were sometimes given the responsibility to give names to additional infrastructure in their areas of influence. Hence, the Advisory Boards' authority to give names to places and other facilities was in tandem with the terms of the Land Apportionment Act (1931) which advocated for separate development in white and African areas respectively. In areas specifically meant for African settlement, the Advisory Boards had some limited mandate to develop their own social institutions, and that is how the Africans were able to come up with names pregnant with political meanings, as mentioned above.

In the early days of colonialism in Southern Rhodesia, the settlers despised indigenous names as they associated them with the African culture which according to Chitando (1996:106), they regarded as pagan and backward. They realised that the success of their imperialistic ventures rested squarely on the erosion of the indigenous social and cultural systems. Children generally came to acquire foreign names, and those who were not given foreign names, adopted some on conversion to Christianity. For example, children raised at St. John's by the Dominican sisters were easily identifiable as they were invariably given names of Catholic saints such as Francis Xavier or Martin (Chung, 1996:34). In addition, it is telling that during the colonial period, official documents carried a column that read 'Christian name' in place of first name. This forced the indigenous people to adopt English names in order to obtain official documents like birth certificates and form one enrolment forms, among other things. As a result, such names as John, James, Peter, Samson, Paul, Peter, Ruth, Norah, Clara, Miriam and others became popular. And many Africans came to have on their identity cards indigenous and foreign names and the fact that Africans accepted foreign names suggested that they had accepted settler authority, and it was only those in bolder opposition to white dominance who maintained their African names (Dillard in Makondo, 2009).

It was not every African however who was coerced into accepting foreign names, as some regarded these as being prestigious. The educated African elite, for example often adored European values. The mission schools set up by different religious organisations that were part and parcel of the colonial setup exposed Africans to Western culture and values and once they had tasted its 'sweetness' or had been colonised mentally, they came to consider indigenous names as a source of shame. Hence they easily renounced their culture bound African names in favour of European names (Chitando, 1996:113). More often, this class gave their children names of prominent English characters such as Shakespeare, Caesar, George, Wilson, Charles, Edward, Godfrey, Elizabeth, Margaret, Florence and Victoria. This can be viewed as total acceptance of white settler authority, as the African tried to conform to every aspect of English life. .

From the late 1950s, names played a crucial role in mobilising people to support the nationalist movement, and participate in the war of liberation. And in addition to the names, there were new terms that were coined which generally reflected the intensification of the ongoing political dialogue. Indeed the ideological battlefield to win the support of the people became the people's minds. "Mwanawevhu" (child of the soil) was the term used to refer to all African people. It was used to constantly act as a reminder to all African people, combatants and non- combatants, that the soil was theirs, and that there was need to get it back from the settlers, even if it meant through blood and iron. Terms like 'vadzvanyiriri' (oppressors), 'vapambepfumi' and 'vapambeivhu', which literally meant that the whites had forcibly grabbed the indigenous people's wealth, and above all, the African woman was used by the indigenous people to magnify the effects of racial discrimination under colonial rule. Among other things, colonialism had meant that the settlers had grabbed the best land, and the African was relegated into 'reserves' which were barren and inaccessible. Chung (1996:111) succinctly supports this by stating that:

... the white commercial farms comprised beautiful agricultural land with better soil and better rainfall than the 'reserves'. A few thousand white farmers owned these farms, many of them having received their land as a reward for their participation in the Second World War. Black soldiers who had also fought on the side of the British in the Second World War were rewarded with army overalls and no land.

As African nationalism gained momentum during the 1960s, names like Freedom and Liberty became very popular and common. The names that became popular generally reiterated the indigenous people's consciousness of the oppressive nature of the settler administration. In Matebeleland, such names as Butholezwe (soldier of the nation), Khululani (free us) and Lizwe (our country) became commonplace. And Shona names like Tafirenyika (we are dying for the country) and Nhamo Dzenyika (troubles of the country) became a common occurrence.

Names thus became a clear form of political expression during the liberation struggle. The nom de guere names assumed by the fighters were meant to reflect specific political objectives which according to Pongweni (1983) were, among other things, to:

- mobilise people to join the armed struggle
- encourage the fighters to be courageous
- motivate the fighters and the masses to unite
- acknowledge the assistance the fighters were getting from friendly socialist countries
- prepare the people for a new political order

Such names included Kuda Hondo (love for war]), Toragidi Uzvitonge (take up arms and liberate yourself), Teurai Ropa (spill the whiteman's blood), Mabhunu Muchapera (white men you will perish), Takazvida Zvehondo (we are committed to war), Dubula (shoot), Bhidhliza (destroy), Tendai Kubatana (lets unite), Sekai Varungu (laugh at the white men), Castro, Tito, Hugo and Marxism What is of significance about these names is that they were neutral, and concealed the ethnic origins of their bearers.

The Significance of the Names

From the foregoing discussion it is apparent that the process of naming places and infrastructure in Southern Rhodesia was a purposeful exercise, and it was some form of political debate. And indeed, it was part and parcel of the interaction between the settlers and the indigenous Shona and Ndebele people.

For the settlers, the names were a very effective way of entrenching and perpetuating white hegemony in the country. The process began as the Pioneer Column moved into the country, and gave the various forts established along the route into the interior British names. This could have been an indication that they were occupying the country on behalf of Britain, and it set the pattern of conquest. After the military defeat of the indigenous people in 1896, the naming process intensified with the proliferation of white settlements and infrastructure such as schools, roads, government offices and hotels. It should be noted here that initially, the bestowal of names was a political monologue – a one-sided conversation from which the settlers meant to inform the locals about the new political order and thus the country and local places had acquired foreign names as an indication that they were now under foreign rule, and was no longer under the control of the original inhabitants. Images of a far away country were brought into a foreign territory with a completely different environment in Rhodesia. This was a clear message that as a defeated people, the locals had lost all freedoms, including the freedom to an identity that the local names represented.

The choice of names by the settlers was deliberate, they were names of either British personalities who the settlers viewed as heroes or names of places in Britain, places which individual settlers originated from and therefore remembered with affection, despite the circumstances that could have led to their migration. The bearers of the names featured in the new colony were from a wide spectrum of backgrounds: British royalty (an important institution in that country); distinguished politicians; and others who had contributed in one way or the other to the settler cause either as part of the Pioneer Column or as architects of British imperialism whose fruits they were then enjoying. For example, Queen Victoria had been instrumental in the establishment of the British Empire and Cecil John Rhodes had bankrolled the colonisation of the country. Many settlers were nonentities back home in Britain and would never have dreamt of owning land there because of their low social backgrounds. The names of the places in the new colony, therefore, was a celebration of the men and women who had been instrumental in changing their lot by enabling them to climb up the social ladder and become landowners- a distinguished class back home.

The names in the new colony also represented British heritage, one in which, in the jingoistic character of the 'scramble for Africa', they wanted to spread to the colonised lands. It was easy to tell from the number of times a name recurred in different settlements, the significance of the bearer to the settlers. The following examples illustrate this point:

- **Cecil John Rhodes:** Southern Rhodesia (country)
  Rhodes Street (Salisbury)
  Rhodes Hotel (Nyanga)
  Rhodesville suburb (Salisbury)
  Rhodes primary schools (Matopos and Gweru)
  Rhodesdale (district in the Midlands)
  Rhodene suburb (Masvingo)

- **Victoria (Queen)** Fort Victoria (town)
  Victoria Falls (town and falls)
  Victoria Hotels (Victoria Falls and Masvingo)
  Victoria Junior and High schools (Masvingo)
  Victoria Street (Harare)
  Victoria bakery (Masvingo)
  Victoria brand of foods

  Queen Victoria Library (Harare)
- **Salisbury** Town (now Harare)
  Street (Harare)
  Country club (Harare)

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- **Jameson**
  Salisbury Callies (Football team)
  Hotel (Harare)
  School (Kadoma)
  Street (Bulawayo)

- **Churchill**
  School (Harare)
  Avenue (Harare)
  Hotel (Bulawayo)

- **Queen Elizabeth**
  Hotel (Harare)
  School (Harare)

- **King George**
  Hotel (Harare)
  School (Bulawayo)
  Army Headquarters (Harare)

- **Selous**
  Service centre
  Street (Harare)
  Hotel (Harare)
  Selous Scouts (an elite Rhodesian army unit)

- **Wilson**
  school (Harare)
  Street (Bulawayo)

- **Grey**
  Street (Bulawayo)
  Inn (Bulawayo)

- **Stanley**
  Government offices (Harare)
  Hall/ square [Bulawayo]
  Street (Harare)

Names of such colonial administrators as Chancellor, Robert Tredgold and Charles Chaplin may not have been featured repeatedly in settlements, but their bearers were all the same commemorated.

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The indigenous people therefore had a new set of heroes imposed on them, while their own heroes were relegated to obscurity, and even vilified. While this was part of cultural chauvinism which could have been premised on the claims of the likes of Trevor Roper who argued that Africa had no past and the colonialists had brought history to the continent, it could also have been a deliberate ploy to 'break' the locals politically by debasing their symbols of unity and identity. The latter idea is alluded to by Pongweni (1983) when he says that "the conquering 'king' will give the new subjects or encourage them to have names which have linguistic expressiveness for him; this way the conquered become more manageable."

That the settlers retained indigenous names of some places although corrupted (which could also be attributed to the white man's inability to pronounce African names), hence, a true reflection of cultural chauvinism. Pongweni (1983:87) observes that:

> ... the instinctive reaction of settlers to Shona names when the two cultures first confronted each other ...revealed their linguistic prejudices and cultural chauvinism.

It was also a demonstration of colonial arrogance for, implied in this act, was a declaration that although they were visitors, the settlers could do what they wanted in the host country, something that was unexpected of visitors in the African cultural etiquette. The retention of the local names in some instances could have been a subtle way by settlers of seeking acceptance from the locals, a gesture that was to be repeated throughout settler rule. For example, there was a Rhodesian air force squadron known as Mahlabezulu, and also a five star hotel named Monomutapa (Munhumutapa), this being a name given to a pre-colonial Zimbabwe ruling dynasty.

Besides bringing images of home into a foreign country and making the settlers 'feel at home away from home', the schools and other infrastructure such as hotels, which were named after certain British heroes became cultural and ideological islands for perpetuating and reinforcing English culture and tradition. White students who attended these institutions were expected to adopt certain norms, values and attitudes that mirrored western civilisation. According to Chipunza K.T (Interview, 16/03/2010) students groomed in these schools were moulded and modelled in a way that reflected the personality of the individuals the schools were named after. For instance, pupils from Alan Wilson were expected to show a lot of courage and gallantry as the school motto was 'men of men'. They were always reminded of the heroic exploits of the bearer of the name of their school. Pupils from Prince Edward were to uphold the virtues of aristocracy and demonstrate behaviour of the gentry. On the whole, these schools were used to groom pupils who cherished the superiority of the British over African people, thus, they were prepared to defend and protect the gains and privileges achieved by their heroes.

Unsurprisingly, the use of names was meant to unite the settlers as they were constantly reminded of their political heroes as they roamed the streets, patronised hotels, entered schools, hospitals, government buildings, and even when they visited tourist attractions like the Victoria Falls. Hence the political dialoguing through names, though largely meant to communicate with the indigenous people, was also a way of expressing settler ideals to fellow whites who might have had different ideals. Their obsession with English names could also have been a gesture of self-assurance that they still had a claim to an identity as Britons, although they were thousands of kilometres away from home.

For the African these new names represented a dismantling of their traditions and identity. Initially, it was difficult for the indigenous people to talk back to the settlers, because they did not have the platform through which to express their views. And their desire to participate in the political debate that had been initiated by the settlers could be discerned from the unofficial names that they bestowed on work places [farms and mines], where working conditions were particularly deplorable and locals were ill-treated. Hence, because the political setup did not allow the African to communicate their grievances to the settlers openly, they had to conduct what Pongweni (1983) calls 'an argument by proxy'. Such names were not only meant to warn other locals of the prevailing conditions (dialoguing amongst themselves about settler brutality and exploitation), but could also have been a protest about the brutality experienced as a result of colonial rule (dialoguing with the settlers), though the protest was localised. In actual fact, the grievances noted through the names became the rallying points of the first African protest movements formed in Southern Rhodesia in the 1930s. In addition, the names reflected the African perception of the settlers' attitude towards them, that is, that they were wild and needed to be tamed in the 'wild west style'

Interestingly, the names bestowed on African children reflected mixed reactions from the indigenous people, perhaps this being part of a process of trying to make sense of their position as a colonised people. Initially, with the missionaries bearing their influence, having a foreign name became trendy. The ease with which the locals adopted Western names seems to suggest that they had accepted the settler message that their own culture was pagan and inferior, and that they had lost their pride in it. It reflected the erosion of the social fabric of an oppressed people and an unconscious celebration of colonial rule. However, as the African became politicised and recognised the settler strategy to subject anything indigenous to a total siege, they reverted back to giving their children culture bound African names. And as mentioned above, in the days of mass nationalism, the subject of names used by the freedom fighters became more significant as it was realised that neutral names which did not give clues about one's origins could be used to promote the nationalist cause, unity among the freedom fighters, and thus suppress ethnic conflict.

While the African seem to have accepted the renaming of places and adoption of Western first names, the change of names for the sacred places as mentioned above, did not take easily. They continued to call some of these places by their original names, for example, such places as Njelele/Matojeni and Domboramwari retained these names. Perhaps this was because of the importance attached to the places by the locals via their status as rainmaking and fertility shrines, and above all, symbols of unity, and of great importance to the indigenous people. Renaming them would have represented some desecration of the places, and by retaining the original names of these places, the African made it clear that there were certain aspects of their heritage that they valued so much that they would not allow the colonial master to temper with them.

Where the indigenous people were allowed to participate in the naming process, they too glorified their local heroes who were an important part of their heritage. Hence names of local chiefs, for example in Mashonaland were featured, as alluded to earlier amongst the names given to African townships. The extent to which the African populous cherished their heroes was particularly demonstrated in Matabeleland, and in Bulawayo where the names bestowed on African townships and infrastructure such as schools reflected an awareness of the cultural heritage of the Ndebele people, hence:

- Mzilikazi   suburb, school and Art centre
- Lobengula   suburb, street and school
- Njube   school and suburb
- Magwegwe   suburb and school

By naming these places as they did, African people demonstrated that they were aware of the significance of names in an ongoing political debate/dialogue though which their participation could have been limited. And in this dynamic, ironically, the places that bore local names were of limited political significance, while those that had British names were significant in the colony, hence demonstrating who was really in charge.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we see that both settlers and indigenous people used names to convey specific political messages to each other and amongst themselves. The settlers used names for subordinating and assimilating the indigenous people, by undermining the use of their culture bound African names and thereby eroding the African value system, identity and self esteem. In turn, the indigenous people used names and nicknames to express their resentment to settler brutality, oppression, repression and exploitation, as well as to express that they were a distinct people with a heritage they took pride in. As African nationalism intensified from the 1950s onwards, a genre of names that reflected a need for mobilisation, unity of purpose and oneness among the indigenous people in order to overthrow the colonialism came into use. Some names reflected the need for violent engagement by African people against the settlers in order to liberate themselves, while other names were meant to prepare the people for a new political dispensation which seemed inevitable in the formation of the nation of Zimbabwe in 1980.

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