STREET NAMING AS AUTHOR (IZ) ING THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF THE NATION: MASVINGO'S MUCHEKE SURBUB IN ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

Through a qualitative analysis of selected street names in Masvingo's Mucheke suburb (Zimbabwe), the paper undertakes an interdisciplinary engagement with urban studies, communication, cultural, historical, linguistic and nationalist discourses to show that the urban landscape has been exploited to promote an African worldview, create and celebrate hero(in)es, author(ize) history and narratives that commit to posterity, historical figures, places, episodes, ideals, values and ideologies. It is premised on the notion that nations are complex and contradictory entities whose very existence is largely in the imaginary domain and they depend on the ability of the ruling elite to elevate determinant memories to national prominence pursuant of fostering a shared national vision/interest. Onomastics is fore grounded to demonstrate the impact of ondonyms on the construction of post-colonial discourses about the nation, socio-political organization, negotiation of power relations, national identity, linguistic and cultural heritages. The act of naming is a signifier of authority and power over the discursive space and is therefore influenced by vested interests. Naming is an artistic exercise in communication and involves creative use of the language plus selective promotion of a collective memory geared at influencing residents' perception of themselves in the national project in relation to the landscape.

Key Words: Onomastics, Ondonyms, Collective memory, Nation, Author(iz)ing, Naming.

INTRODUCTION

Whilst the study of street names in Masvingo's Mucheke suburb is located within the onomastics discipline, it easily allows for and benefits from an interdisciplinary engagement with nationalism, post-colonialism, history, linguistics discourse, urban and cultural studies. To this end, selected ondonyms will be analyzed as they relate to Zimbabwe's history, its defining national experiences like the liberation war, national symbols, ideology, language, culture, indigenization and discourses about the nation. The street names are approached as texts that tell the story of the making of the

nation. Singularly and collectively the names give Mucheke an African complexion. Street names are an integral part of everyday communication since they are identity markers for the landscape. They are used daily by residents and visitors to give directions as homes and institutions are located in specific streets.

The naming of streets is deemed an act of speaking about and remembering shared experiences and values hence an analysis of individual ondonyms (street names) should yield an enriching understanding of a nation's cultural identities, its constitutive history, the degree of national consciousness and ideological persuasion. This branch of onomastics provides an ideal platform for formerly colonized subjects, who had hitherto been erased from history, to engage in counter-discourses that authorize their presence. The post independence urban landscape is an essential repository of memory that facilitates the authorship and authorization of the nation's conception of itself in relation to history as well as articulating the constitutive values of the nation. As a human construct, the cityscape, through its street names, reflects man's mindset as he strives to inscribe his-story on the environment. It is possible, through the naming of streets, to discourse the collective memory of the nation in ways that unravel the essences, complexities and contradictions of nationalism. This paper foregrounds the exclusivity of the nation as observed by Smith in Tamar Mayer (1999), that "members of the nation believe in their common origins and in the uniqueness of their common history, and their hope for a shared destiny" as well as the mental construct projected by Benedict Anderson (1991) "imagined community whose members conceive it to be united, exclusive and worthy of sacrifice". It is argued, therefore, that national consciousness influences our perception of, management and relationship to the environment - which includes the urban landscape. For Ellin Nan (1999), nationalists may utilize urban studies to bolster their cause as:

> *The new subfield of environmental psychology defined the concept of place identity as a substructure of self-identity that defines an individual's personal identity in relation to the physical world through memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings… relevant to the physical settings in his or her daily life*.

The urban environment, therefore, provides a platform for discoursing national identity through physical features such as buildings and roads which preserve historical details, ideas, values and beliefs related to the making of national identities.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Mucheke, a high density suburb in Masvingo (Zimbabwe) built during colonialism and expanded after independence to accommodate the black working class, has been chosen for this paper because it straddles two diametrically opposed milieus that denote the influence of shifting citadels of political power in the naming of streets. Whilst the naming of the streets in the suburb has 'ritually' been done by the residents in both eras, it is their subject position to the naming process which has influenced the scope of given names. In both eras, the ruling elites controlled the

process, in explicit and subtle ways, to promote their vested interests. Control of the cityscape determines whose subjectivity is represented in the naming process. Following Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 and as part of the decolonization process, Africans engaged in street naming deriving from proper names, toponyms (place names) and abstract ideas expressed in indigenous languages as an assertion of ownership of and control of the urban space.

Generally, naming offers a creative platform whereby power relations obtaining in a given milieu are symbolically played out. This is evident in the aftermath of British conquest and colonization of present day Zimbabwe, thereafter christened Rhodesia after their hero and chief financier, Cecil John Rhodes. Whilst paying homage to Rhodes, this act was an assertion of the conquest of the natives and an announcement of the emergence of a new authority capable of authoring and authorizing a new identity for the country. As observed by Manning (1988) "The colonial experience and decolonization brought changing identities for Africans at both individual and collective levels. This is reflected particularly in changing names of countries and colonies". This is evident in countries such as Belgian Congo (Zaire), Tanganyika (Tanzania) and Gold Coast (Ghana). Other notable changes include Nyasaland (Malawi) and Bechuanaland (Botswana) which attempt to retain a local identity by naming the colonies after the dominant tribal groups, albeit the corruption of the names resulting from attempts to Anglicize them. This (re)naming crusade, spearheaded by the settlers, later manifested itself in virtually every sphere of life and allowed them to discourse colonial hegemony, construct a collective settler memory and reference points that instilled a sense of group identity. It exposes a quest to carve a geographical connectedness of the settlers' philosophies, origins, histories, sensibilities and mission. This is illustrated in the subsequent renaming of Masvingo to Fort Victoria, which marks the symbolic presence of the British Queen who, being an embodiment of the British settler community's values, history and aspirations, becomes a unifying force and point of reference for the exiles. The 'Fort' itself symbolized an impregnable security bastion that reassured the settlers of security, protection and belonging to Her Majesty's Empire.

Colonial toponyms like Salisbury (*Harare*) and Hartley (*Chegutu*) tended to derive from western sources. Local names were bastardized to make them sound westernized, for example, Umtali (*Mutare*), Shabanie (*Zvishavane*), Gatooma (*Kadoma)*, thereby corrupting and rendering them meaningless. The use of European languages in the naming process resulted from the political, economic and cultural dominance of this group, thus transforming the naming process to a politico-economic-cultural battleground. Naming in indigenous languages after independence is an assertion of the Africans' political dominance and ownership of the newly liberated urban space. The prominence of *Karanga* (Shona dialect) names in Masvingo reflects the dominance of this ethnic group in the city's civic and political life. Language or dialect is instrumental in political struggles and negotiation of power relations hence a shift that emphasizes indigenous languages is a reflection of the shift in power relations.

Whilst naming after the establishment of colonialism signified that the colonizers wielded power, as part of the decolonization process, the post-independence era witnessed a subversion of the process thereby giving credence to the view that, after independence, the creative aspect of naming is a constitutive component of revisionist nation building nationalist narratives that interrogate and commit to memory people's lives, histories, values, power relations and ideologies. Tadhg O'Keeffe (2007) contends that "the landscape is implicated in relations of power through its ownership, control and manipulation by social elites". Street naming is, therefore, part of the post-colonial politics of erasing the colonialist discourse in the search for a distinct national identity. As Hulme, cited by Stuart Hall (1996), notes, "If 'post-colonial' is a useful word, then it refers to a process of disengagement from the whole colonial syndrome which takes many forms and is probably inescapable for all those whose worlds have been marked by that set of phenomena". The name changes emphasize difference from the colonial era and depict the new nation as a distinct entity.

The dismantling of the colonialist mantra and changes in power relations is further symbolized in the renaming of the country after the Great Zimbabwe monuments, situated 35 km south-east of Masvingo. Both Zimbabwe and Masvingo mean "House of Stone" and it is symbolic that both the city of Masvingo and the country should derive their names from a monument that is central to the enactment of a national identity as it is a site of memory that resonates with African achievements, traditions, histories and civilization. This also obtains in post-apartheid South Africa whereby cities like Pretoria and Petersburg, for instance, were renamed *Tshwane* and *Polokwane* respectively. This further illustrates the prevalent tendency of reverting to names that the general areas were known by prior to colonialism, thus marking a reclamation of the space. Independence, born out of struggles, enables Africans to wield the power of (re)naming. It is within this decolonization context that the process of naming streets in Mucheke suburb is best understood. It illuminates our understanding of the dynamics of nationalist discourses that are played out on the urban landscape.

The post-independence urban space provides an opportunity to use the geographical space to discourse the nation, since, unlike the rural areas; there are buildings, institutions and an elaborate road network which may be named to espouse an African philosophy and historical consciousness. Political independence opens up the discursive space for Africans. Pieterse (2008) contends that "democracy is a necessary precondition for a vibrant political space that allows for regulated contestation of perspectives that are invariably imbued with particular interests". The naming patterns after independence show an Afro-centric disposition which seeks to deconstruct the colonialist discourse. (Re) naming in both contexts typifies the contestation of ideas and power through these (re)branding exercises.

Masvingo City Council's Street Naming Guidelines

The Masvingo City Council does not have any policy framework to guide the street naming process. This was confirmed in an interview by Mr. Murimoga, the Deputy Director of Housing and Community Services. According to Livingstone Musasa, a retired Mucheke Housing and

Community Services Officer, the accepted practice is that whilst Council is the ultimate authority in conferring street names, initially, residents make submissions on their preferred street names especially with regards to newly constructed or expanded suburbs like Mucheke. This is a result of Zimbabwean independence that transformed the previously discriminatory political landscape, resulting in the dominance of the black majority following the introduction of universal suffrage. This political empowerment enables residents' participation in civic nationalism since the representative type of local government leadership, with its imbedded principles of participatory democracy, compel the authorities to continuously involve the electorate in decision making processes that extend to the (re)naming of streets and creation of neighborhoods that promote ownership and acceptance by the residents . Most contributions tend to come from elderly property owners whose experiences make them repositories of critical oral traditions. Theoretically, a healthy diversity of views would be captured as residents make submissions from varied political, religious, economic, social and ethnic backgrounds; however, the major blight to the process is that it is the local authority that has the final say on the choice of names.

The Liberation War as a Point of Reference

A number of street names are directly related to Zimbabwe's liberation war. Whether referring to national heroes, guerrilla camps, war collaborators or other place names, they use the war as a point of reference in the formation of an independent Zimbabwe. This obtains because one constitutive element of the nation is the existence of a shared experience wherein the majority has participated directly or indirectly and can readily identify with it. The protracted liberation struggle is such a shared historical experience that promoted national consciousness. A broad section of society could identify with the war because its multi-sectarian participatory approach emphasized collective, courageous and selfless commitment to the nationalist cause. It is not surprising that it has come to dominate the post-independence discursive space. As observed by Karsholm (1991), "After 1980, the war has continued to provide a prominent part of the imagery used for the propagation of the new culture and the articulation of the new moral needs of independence." Gaining independence through war tends to give birth to a radical quest to make a total break with the colonial legacy and this has been evident in naming practices. With the criteria for inclusion in street names under the Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front), (ZANU (PF)), dominated councils emphasizing the deceased's track record in the struggle, the war has been variously documented in all cities through street names that recognize individual contributions.

National Heroes Born of the Revolution

Names associated with the second Chimurenga include those of political gurus such as *Josiah Chinamano,* a ZAPU political activist who popularized the struggle and recruited combatants for the struggle, *Herbert Chitepo* who, as Chairman of ZANU, mobilized resources for the war machinery, and politico-military figures like *Josiah Tongogara* the ZANLA Commander-in-Chief who spearheaded the war effort. They represent the different critical roles that individuals could play in the prosecution of the national effort. The significance of street names that are derived from

these proper names is not in their meanings but from association of the name bearers with particular deeds, values and beliefs. In the context of heroes born out of the anti-colonialist struggle, the individuals are prototypes whose active participation is credited with the successful prosecution of the liberation war hence their representation as heroes of the struggle and embodiments of people's hopes and aspirations in an independent Zimbabwe. As national figures, they occupy a prestigious position in national narratives because their deeds are widely known and respected in the country and as such they can be deployed as role models to designate the obligations of the individual to the nation. Recognition of their contributions has been further buttressed by having their remains interred at the National Heroes Acre, which, as a site of memory, is critical to the making of a modern nation.

The struggle gave birth to a new breed of African heroes and this implied a revision of the colonialist canon that projected Rhodesian heroes like Linder Starr Jameson, Allan Wilson and Cecil John Rhodes. The African experiences and achievements being narrativized subordinate the individual to the national interest. This is evident from the qualities to be emulated such as patriotism, bravery, resistance and a quest for self determination, which are integral to the perpetuation of the nation. The war has found further expression, celebration, evaluation and interpretation through music, literature, and history textbooks. These creative efforts strive to record and commit the war to a shared and transferable memory. The euphoric post independence moment was further captured through children's names like *Nkululeko* (Freedom), *Batanai* (Unite), *Hondo (*War*), Comrade, Tagarika* (We are prospering) that served as reminders of the war, its heroes and ideals. Through this naming process parents are participating in the creation of a sense of nationhood. Some names denigrate the ills of colonialism as it denied Africans political, economic and social space. This explains the prevalence of names such as *Tafirenyika* (We died for the land) and *Sibangilizwe* (We are quarrelling over the land question).

Establishing a Struggle Continuum

Construction of national memories involves the weaving of national narratives that strike a continuum between the past, the present and the future through appeals to and the creation of national legends and common ancestry. Karen Rustad (2004) has contended that "The nation, like the individual is a culmination of a long past of endeavors, sacrifice, and devotion... Of all cults, that of ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are". This is evident in Zimbabwe's national anthem that chronicles the painful and bloody birth of the forefathers' land. This thinking is personified in two legendary figures, *Kaguv*i and *Nehanda*, both spirit mediums who rose to national prominence in Zimbabwean history on the back of playing leading roles in rallying and mobilizing support for the First Chimurenga from 1896-7, an example of early African nationalism that cements the view that colonialism was never accepted by Africans. The resistance they led was galvanized by a quest to defend the land, a question which was at the heart of the second Chimurenga. Following their capture by colonialist forces and death by hanging, they acquired martyr status and became symbols of resistance to colonial domination.

Their legacy was used extensively in mobilizing support for the second Chimurenga, which culminated in Zimbabwe's independence. In *Re-living the Second Chimurenga,* Fay Chung (2007) notes that:

> *The freedom fighters claimed to have the support of the ancestral spirits, in particular the powerful spirits of Nehanda and Kaguvi, in a just war. The liberation struggle saw a revitalization of traditional religion. With the liberation struggle, traditional religion, still very powerful among the peasantry, became the main ideology in ZANU's struggle.*

Whilst this thinking is open to criticism, the preponderance of the peasant element within the guerrilla ranks and the general population meant that any appeal to African Traditional Religion would most likely strike a chord with the population. An appeal to people's traditions and religions suggests that national liberation entails the liberation of national culture. In the case of the two, they were seen as being close to the ancestral world such that, upon their deaths, *Kaguvi* and *Nehanda* were elevated to the status of national ancestral spirits which thus linked African traditional religion to the struggle. It is significant that streets be named after these figures of national prominence as they provide the vital link between the two phases of resistance to colonialism, the first and second Chimurenga, thereby establishing a continuum in the struggle. They have been portrayed extensively in history and literature to the extent of becoming part and parcel of the Zimbabwean heritage. Their embellished status is captured in the use of the respectful titles, *Sekuru* (Grandfather), *Kaguvi* and *Ambuya* (Grandmother), *Nehanda*. Grandparents are respected in Zimbabwe as they provide an essential link between generations. *Nehanda's* prophetic words 'my bones shall rise' easily lent themselves to the nationalist cause as they could be interpreted as a call to future generations to take up arms and drive out the imperialists. Secondly, the words suggest a common identity for the oppressed Africans who are to view themselves as descendants of *Nehanda* and thus have an obligation to fulfill her prophecy. Functionally, this thinking could unite combatants and mobilize support for the struggle through appealing to the *Nehanda* cult. Thirdly, victory is assured hence the need for future generations not to despair from the setback symbolized in the hanging of *Nehanda* and *Kaguvi*, but to carry on the struggle in their time. Whilst it is obvious that the two figures' roles and influences in the two Chimurengas could easily be exaggerated in nationalist discourse, it still remains critical to appreciate that they have been extensively exploited to promote nationalism. Whilst the two did not do the actual fighting, they provided the leadership needed for the coordination of the resistance against colonialism, in addition to demonstrating that both men and women participated equally in the resistance movement. As spirit mediums, *Kaguvi* and *Nehanda* brought in a spiritual dimension to the struggle and have been accorded the status of guiding national spirits in post-independence Zimbabwe.

War Collaborators

The liberation struggle narratives tend to emphasize the combatants' role whilst overlooking civilians' contributions. Nowhere is this narrow view of the struggle aptly reflected than in the

proclamation by Zimbabwe's service chiefs on the eve of the 2002 and 2008 Presidential elections that they would not salute anyone who did not possess war credentials, an apparent reference to Morgan Tsvangirai the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) candidate. This thinking has influenced the positions occupied by the two groups in the political arena after independence. For instance, the top brass of the Zimbabwe Republic Police, Zimbabwe Prisons Services, Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation, Grain Marketing Board and a number of Ministerial Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Parastatals and Statutory bodies are war veterans. This has the effect of downplaying the roles of non-combatants in a collective struggle. The fact that the struggle was a collective effort, requiring participation in diverse capacities, is captured through dedicating streets to the unsung heroes and heroines in the collaborators' cluster of *Mujibha,(male collaborator) Chimbwido* (female collaborator) and *Povo* (Portuguese for masses). It certainly reverses the marginalization of non-combat participants. As observed by Raftopoulos and Mlambo (2009):

> *The cooperation between guerrillas and peasants was important in ensuring the success of the armed struggle… it is important to avoid a narrow definition of 'fighting' the struggle, which can privilege particular groups to the exclusion of the majority… who did not 'cross the border' to 'take up arms' but made significant sacrifices for the liberation of the country.*

Collaborators were highly politicized civilian supporters of the war whose ancillary services and collaboration were critical to the successful prosecution of the liberation war. The *Mujibhas* and *Chimbwidos* served as the local vigilante force, provided courier services, carried out reconnaissance missions and constituted communication links for different fighter units and between civilians and fighters. This service was vital since guerrillas did not have sophisticated communication equipment. Due to the patriarchal structure of Zimbabwean societies, the roles of *Chimbwidos* were prominent on domestic chores such as cooking, washing clothes, feeding and caring for injured or ill freedom fighters. They were also exposed to abuse as, in some instances; they were used to gratify the sexual urges of the guerrillas. The *Povo* provided the necessary logistical support to the struggle as they were responsible for the upkeep and protection of the combatants as well as the coordination of the war effort in their areas. Carrying out these duties always made civilians easy targets of enemy reprisals. They could be punished severely by the fighters for committing errors or even mere suspicion.

The groups represented by the *Povo, Mujibha and Chimbwido* together stand for the collective effort that resulted in the liberation of Zimbabwe and debunk the myth that only armed combatants liberated the country. Whilst it may not be possible to acknowledge individual contributions, it is difficult to be silent on the invaluable contributions of specific groups. At the national heroes' acre there is a tomb dedicated to the Unknown Soldier, a symbolic recognition of the contributions of the unsung fallen heroes whose story cannot be told. In the same vein, *Magamba* (Heroes) is an umbrella term that also caters for the unsung heroes born out of the struggle for independence that may, or may not have been combatants. It compliments and blends well with those names that

identify individual heroes as well as the cluster that refers to non-combatants. Whilst it is agreed that it is not possible, or even desirable, to represent each and every hero(ine), one may view this practice as pointing out the inequalities that obtain as observable in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* whereby in as much as all animals are equal, some are more equal than others. Singling out specific individuals may be a misleading indicator that their contributions are supreme. This is exposed in a 1983 Parliamentary question and answer session in which in response to a question, then Prime Minister Robert Mugabe said, " Heroes are of different kinds: some are more heroes than others", Krieger (1995). This view sums the government's position on hero status which we also find reflected in the street names.

Social Arena Achievers

The liberation struggle has dominated the discursive space close to outmuscling any other contributions. However, with the advent of independence, we witness an expansion in the scope of excellence to address the new needs and values of the new nation. This has opened avenues for contributors in the social arena like indigenous philanthropist *Jairos Jiri* to be recognized as the moral conscience of society. In devoting his time, energy and fortune to the establishment of a national institution committed to the improvement of the lot of people living with disabilities, *Jiri* exhibited a caring and selfless spirit which is noteworthy mainly because then blacks were colonized and, thus, least expected to be charitable. Even after independence, charity in Zimbabwe has continued to be associated with whites. This reflects the economic disparities and dependence syndrome resulting from decades of colonialism. This ground breaking achievement has put *Jiri* in the same league with internationally acclaimed philanthropists Florence Nightingale, Oprah Winfrey and Axillia Chimusoro who have had institutions named after them in recognition of their humanitarian efforts. In addition to a number of institutions for the disabled being named after *Jairos Jiri*, roads have also been named after him in a number of cities, including Masvingo's Mucheke suburb. The late popular musician and leader of the Jairos Jiri Band, Paul Matavire, composed a song of honour "*Pamberi naVaJiri*" (Forward with Jiri) a further testimony of the impact of the man's works.

Jiri is regarded as a symbol of self reliance and empowerment for the disabled and is a national figure because his works have been appreciated across the land for improving the lives of many disadvantaged people in different ways. It is acceptable and common to hear disabled people identifying with *Jiri* by referring to themselves as, *"Zvirema zvaJairos Jiri," (*Jiri's people living with disabilities). This highlights a shared understanding of the role played by this citizen whose name has become synonymous with disadvantaged people living with disabilities, and acts as a reminder of the need to constantly advance them material and moral support. Streets named after *Jiri* celebrate his life and work, highlight the plight of those living with disabilities as well as redefining the concept of a hero. In most cases where streets are named after individuals they would have made names for themselves mainly in the political arena such as *Simon Mazorodze* who has had a street and medical facility befittingly named after him. He was a medical

practitioner-cum-political activist, and first minister of health in independent Zimbabwe. As a technocrat, he represents the medical fraternity which is vital to the well-being of the population. Though he was active during the struggle, his activities were mainly concentrated on the medical front. Medics were commonly referred to as Comrade *Utano* (Health) during the war. There are also indigenous farmers like G*arikai Magadzire* whose remains are interred at the National Heroes' Acre. Names in this cluster are a reminder of the achievements of individual members of our society and may spur individuals to excel in their areas of specialization for the benefit of the nation. However, the war has exerted more influence in the generation of street names and this shows its centrality to the formation of the Zimbabwean nation.

Toponyms Cluster

Toponyms (place names) are a common feature in Mucheke. They have the effect of compressing the urban space to make it relate to and reflect broader sensibilities that transcend the local. The liberation war once again serves as a point of reference in this cluster. Places outside Zimbabwe like *Mboroma, Chimoio, Nyadzonya, Mgagao, Tembwe* and *Morogoro* have been deployed as sites of memory for serving as guerrilla training camps during the war and their meanings are contextual and transcend the semantic as they are associated with particular phases of the struggle. Since the names are located in the same neighborhood they are, singularly and collectively, effective in evoking memories and rendering solid narratives of the war. If read out of context, the names may cease to convey the envisaged meaning and message to the residents or visitors to the city, thereby necessitating a measure of historical literacy for an effective comprehension of the meanings as well as the origins of the names. Street names encompass an authorship of history as they commit particular portions of history and heritage to memory, ensuring that it is preserved and passed from generation to generation and facilitating a psychological reconnection with the war and, in the process, history.

Certain guerrilla camps are remembered in Zimbabwean history for landmark events that occurred there during the struggle and have remained imprinted in the minds of the participants and the generality of the citizens. This is episodic memory as it relates to specific incidents in the history of the struggle. *Nyadzonya* and *Chimoio* were guerilla camps situated in Mozambique where thousands were massacred by the Rhodesian forces following the treacherous behavior of erstwhile comrades like Nyathi whose selfishness enabled the colonialists to strike deadly blows on the liberation movement. The names are a powerful reminder of the painful birth of Zimbabwe due to the brutalities and violence of the war as, in addition to armed fighters, defenseless women and children perished in the attacks. Fay Chung (2007) argues that these attacks, which were largely concentrated on refugee camps, were a way of deterring the Frontline States from giving further assistance to the liberation movements. Attacks carried out on Mozambique and Zambian (*Mukushi* Camp) soils were indeed an attack on those countries' sovereignty and a declaration of war by the Rhodesians as they endangered the local population. Whilst celebrating the hospitality and support

extended by neighbouring countries, such naming salutes them for risking the colonial regime's attacks on their sovereignty.

They also mirror the operations of hegemony by showing the determination of the regime to stall the revolution at any costs, in spite of the evident winds of change then sweeping across the continent. (Chung, 2007) further notes that "The Rhodesian attacks on ZANLA camps in Mozambique at Nyadzonya in 1976 and Chimoio in 1977… were perhaps the worst examples of the state's no-holds-barred warfare". *Nyadzonya* and *Chimoio* are names that pay tribute to those who lost limbs, souls and loved ones on the fateful days. Commemorative shrines erected on the two camps have turned them into sites of bitter memories which are crucial because:

> *they serve as points of reference not only for those who survived traumatic events, but also for those born long after them. The word memory becomes a metaphor for the fashioning of narratives about the past when those with direct experience of events die off. Sites of memory inevitably become sites of second order memory.*

Since memory and history intersect, sites of memory are deemed crucial in nationalist discourse. *Mgagao,* a guerrilla base in Tanzania is famous for the 'Mgagao Declaration' whereby the combatants, hard pressed by the Frontline states to give in to the demands of Detante in 1975, committed themselves to the struggle by declaring, as reproduced by (Chung, 2007), that "We, the freedom fighters, will do the fighting and nobody under heaven has the power to deny us the right to die for our country…If we cannot live as free men, we rather choose to die as FREE MEN". Mgagao is a watershed period in the struggle. It exposes the various struggles within the struggle that threatened to derail the war effort. The guerrillas' stance shows their patriotism, ideological clarity and determination to stay focused on the struggle until total independence could be guaranteed thus thwarting moves that would have brought a premature and false settlement. It is also clear that these combatants had developed a high degree of critical consciousness that enabled them to understand the implications of a pseudo revolution that came to a premature conclusion.

Naming public roads, and buildings after places found in countries where Zimbabweans got support to wage an armed struggle represents an appreciation of the assistance and solidarity shown by neighbouring African countries that had already attained independence. The names that are associated with the guerrilla camps are a reminder of Zimbabwe's indebtedness to her neighbours as it would have been impossible for her to attain independence solely through her own efforts. It is noted by Brian Raftopoulos and Mlambo (2009), that "With regards to the nationalists' efforts, Tanzania and Zambia, among others, provided the nationalist forces with support and links to the African, Third World and European based anti-colonial movements of the day". The naming of a street like *Mboroma*, after a guerilla camp in Zambia pays tribute to the Zambians for giving sanctuary to the freedom fighters to facilitate military training in preparation for an armed struggle. At the same time it is a reminder of the treacherous massacres of ZANLA forces at the hands of the Zambian forces during the détente era as the Frontline states tried to force the unification of

ZIPRA, FROLIZI and ZANLA forces. Wilfred Mhanda (2011), a guerilla commander, bitterly reports that nine unarmed combatants were killed on the spot whilst scores were injured during an altercation at *Mboroma* camp.   This tribute also manifests itself in major cities like Harare where former Presidents like *Julius Nyerere, Samora Machel* or *Kenneth Kaunda* have streets named after them. During their Presidential tenures they availed moral, financial, material and logistical support to many African Liberation movements including the Zimbabwe African Liberation Army (ZANLA) and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), notwithstanding attacks from the colonialist regime that sought to dissuade them from abating the struggle for independence.

Pan-Africanist Spirit

Place names identified above further give the city a Pan-Africanist complexion and, in the process, help celebrate and promote the Pan-Africanist spirit that prevailed during the struggle which saw Africans aiding each other to eradicate colonialism. Pan-Africanism is an anti-imperialist ideology that sought to rally African forces to confront imperialism as a block and propagate a common African identity. It is still relevant in today's world order as it gives Africa room to cooperate on issues of mutual interest and speak with one voice. Similarly the European nations' Pan European spirit has been expressed through the creation of a European Union which allows them to advance and protect their interests as a group. It becomes a challenge for Zimbabwe to play a role in the realization of the dream of a totally independent Africa. It is feasible, through street names, to foster broader identities that transcend local languages and ethnicity, embracing and expressing a Pan-Africanist spirit. They further reveal the underlying forces that have influenced the growth of Pan-Africanism. Post independence street naming is thus an integral aspect of the rebranding and reinvention of the cityscape within a broader nationalist discourse that encompasses a Pan-Africanist agenda.

English / European Influences

Post-colonialist discourses foreground the erasure of colonialist legacies and this has manifested itself in the choice of languages employed in constructing national narratives. From a linguistic perspective, names like *Geneva*, *Lancaster, Assembly Point* and *Ceasefire,* appear to be neutralizing nationalist discourses by perpetuating colonial legacies since, linguistically and contextually, they have European backgrounds. However, an analysis of individual names shows that this is not a mere obsession with western sounding names but landmarks in Zimbabwean history. For instance, *Geneva,* a city in Switzerland, is associated with the liberation struggle for hosting the '1976 Geneva Conference' that sought to resolve the Rhodesian war, marking it as one of numerous international peace initiatives whose failure to end the war is a reminder of the protracted nature of the struggle for independence. Furthermore, the Geneva Conference is a marker of the betrayals, self-seeking agendas, and underhand dealings by both the colonialist regime and the nationalists. *Lancaster,* a cluster of buildings in London, was the venue for the 'Lancaster House Conference' that resulted in the negotiated settlement of December 1979, should

be viewed in the same light as *Geneva* since both names are related to peace talks that are significant reminders of landmark processes in the history of the liberation struggle. This cluster of names is important as it adds a diplomatic dimension to the struggle, recognition of the efficacy of dialogue in conflict resolution as well as providing a blueprint for post independence conflict management. It must, however, be borne in mind that it was only after the intensification of the war effort that the colonialist regime agreed to dialogue with the Africans. The colonialist regime had to be pressured into engaging in the talks by force of arms.

Ceasefire Close is a typical street name drawn directly from the experiences and lingua of the liberation war; this is a military command that calls confrontation to a halt. One related name which is associated with battlefield lingua and is found in the adjacent Target Kopje medium density suburb is *Take Cover. Ceasefire* is associated with the successful conclusion of the Lancaster House negotiations that brought an end to fighting in preparation for the plebiscite that ushered in majority rule. Its effective association value is enhanced by its proximity to *Assembly Point* as both names recreate the last days of the struggle. Whilst this period was met with mixed reactions by a war weary nation, it was generally a period of jubilation for those who had survived the war and were relishing prospects of reuniting with loved ones. On the other hand, the period turned into a season of mourning following the controversial death of the ZANLA Commander, *Josiah Tongogara,* whilst supervising the implementation of the ceasefire accord.

 Assembly Point is also borne directly from the developments that preceded Zimbabwe's attainment of independence. It refers to the controlled camps, dotted strategically across the country, where freedom fighters had to surrender their arms as part of the implementation of the ceasefire pact. From a logistics point of view, this exercise would enable the authorities to carry out a census of the demobilized forces that would require rehabilitation into civilian life or blending into a regular army to guarantee the successful implementation of a ceasefire pact that would ensure the holding of free and fair elections. The irony of the Zimbabwean scenario is that these institutions were controlled by the British and the defeated Rhodesian forces. The playing field was not even as the former Rhodesian forces were not disarmed. The atmosphere was charged with ever hanging dangers, tensions, threats, fears and suspicions of possible treacherous attacks. Generally this arrangement raised suspicions within the guerrilla ranks as this was viewed as another gimmick aimed at sabotaging the revolution by way of disarming the combatants and striking when they were least able to defend themselves. A counter measure was thus taken resulting in a sizeable number of armed guerrillas remaining behind disguised as peasants in anticipation of hostilities and this implied that the holding of free and fair elections was in a way compromised. The presence of these forces and arms caches that were revealed after the romping to victory of ZANU PF confirms the deep seated suspicions that obtained. Notwithstanding these contradictions, assembly points were a clear signal of the beginning of the end of military confrontation and as such, the naming of a street after this institution is clearly related to a specific phase of the struggle that cannot be

forgotten and is one of those episodes that make the struggle come alive, hence the need to commit it to posterity.

Production Brigade and *Building Brigade* are drawn from the Maoan concept that the revolution must be prosecuted by a highly politicized and disciplined population that understands the rigors of the demanding post-revolution period. The notion that this is a country just emerging from war is emphasized by the prefix *'Brigade'* which gives a military flavor in addressing the challenges of post independence urban development. It suggests that a collective, highly organized and well coordinated effort would be required if tangible results are to be realized in the post-war reconstruction phase. *Building Brigade* is an aptly named street as it is located in the vicinity of the City Council's brick manufacturing plant, a key institution in the building and expansion of the city. Both *'Building'* and *'Production'* inculcate an industrious culture, thereby promoting a work ethic within the ranks of the residents. Whilst English names may alienate a section of the population, it must be appreciated that literacy levels in the city are generally higher than what obtains in the rural areas and everyday usage facilitates arriving at a shared meaning. The two names are important as they point to the key for the development of the city- work and discipline.

Street Naming and Power Politics

Based upon the foregoing analysis, it may be argued that street naming is not all about individual experience or aspiration but subordinates them in pursuit of a supposedly national interest. In essence, the individual is not free to name or be named but is unwittingly conscripted as a pawn in the power politics. Collective memory may involve the personal but it cannot be divorced from the power politics as it is manipulated to appear to be the sum total of people's shared experiences. It is a controlled phenomenon that involves a deliberate selection and emphasis on the significance of some actors and episodes whose meanings are constantly revised to reflect prevailing thinking. Tedhg O'Keeffe (2007) sees collective memory as being:

> *historical (or narratological) and is always a product of some programme of being reminded…at whatever scale a collective is constituted, we have no collective capacity to share memories that are not in some way externally programmed for us.*

This view presupposes the existence of powerful forces that set the agenda for the collective and it is amply illustrated in the ondonyms arena where political correctness as a desired quality turns the whole naming process into a prescriptive affair that fosters a worldview that is sympathetic to the interests of the politically dominant. In the context of Mucheke, the political dominance of ZANU (PF) in local government meant that they controlled the urban discursive space at the time the suburb was expanded hence the prevalence of names associated with the party. These include well known and celebrated figures like *Josiah Tongogara, Hebert Chitepo, Leopold Takawira* and *Jongwe* (Cock). *Jongwe*, a symbol of virility, was an emblem of ZANU (PF) prior to the signing of the unity accord with PF ZAPU and was used in reference to the party. This may also explain the omission of other struggle icons like *Ndabaningi Sithole, Lookout Masuku, James Chikerema* and

others who did not belong to, or broke away from ZANU (PF). In the remembrance of the war, for instance, it's the ZANLA story that gets coverage at the expense of ZIPRA. The political power dynamics that influence discourse mean that it is not possible to get the complete story as the narrative is clouded by the duels for supremacy within the national discursive arena.

Ideological Influences

In Mucheke, ZANU (PF) has used its dominance to espouse its ideology through the act of street naming. Of importance to the nationalist discourse are names that reflect the ideological inclinations of the newly independent state as well as the ideals that united Africans in their fight against colonialism. Karen Rustad (2004) observes that:

> *In the context of the nation, ideology attempts to give all citizens something to hold in common- an ideal, a past, or a dream for the future. The ideology of the nation is useful in building solidarity among individuals with a common background. However, this solidarity necessarily comes at the cost of excluding those who do not fit this privileged identity…national ideology thus derives its utility in motivating citizens to act for the good of the whole, instead of their personal interests. The nation is ideologically defined as the history held in common between many individuals.*

This view is illustrated by an analysis of the cluster with ideologically revealing names such as *Gutsaruzhinji,* (Socialism), *Mushandirapamwe* (Cooperative), *Batanai* (Unite), *Rusununguko* (Freedom), *Tagona* (We have achieved), *Masimba Avanhu* (People's Power), *Zvataida* (our aspirations), *Takazvivakira* (We built on our own) and *Zviitire* (do-it-yourself). These names symbolize the fruition of people's aspirations. They are an expression of their pride in being able to own homes (*Takazvivakira*) as well as calling the shots in the running of the city business (*Zvataida*), a feat that was difficult if not impossible to attain in the olden days of colonialism. This is best understood if we consider the colonialist regime's compartmentalization of physical and psychological spaces whereby the city was a designated European area and Blacks had no business being there except as servants. For Frederiksen (1991), "The cities are meant to be foreign territories for Africans, who are brought in to work only and to carry passes and work permits". Even blacks themselves referred to the cities as '*masango'* (forests) thereby giving the impression that these were alien and dangerous places. The new dispensation has altered this state of affairs, hence the proclamation of these joys in the names. The Socialist ideology informed the liberation struggle, and was effectively used to mobilize grass root support as it promised to reverse the ills of capitalism which had hitherto subjected Africans to exploitation and is herein represented by *Gutsaruzhinji* (Socialism) Street. Andre Astrow (1983) observes that:

> *During the war the 'struggle for socialism' and the 'fight against imperialism' came to be increasingly emphasized by the petit bourgeois leadership. Such rhetoric about fundamental transformations and socialism were essential for retaining credibility among the more radicalized African population.*

The poverty that characterized African lives under the capitalist colonial system was a result of non-ownership of the means of production which were concentrated in the hands of the minority whites. *Gutsaruzhinji* highlights the desire to change the whole superstructure that promoted relations of inequality and exploitation by replacing it with a system that allowed workers to fully benefit from their labour through control of the means of production. On the other hand, socialism was not alien as it closely resembled the communalism practiced in African societies prior to the imposition of a capitalist mode of production. It also suggests that the war was not a racial one but a fight directed specifically at a system deemed to be unjust, discriminatory and exploitative. However, socialism has remained an ideal at best and a dream at worst, as Zimbabwe is now a fully fledged capitalist economy characterized by extreme inequalities. Socialism has failed as reflected in the collapse of the Soviet Union and the capitalists have succeeded in subordinating the world economies to their philosophies. *Gutsaruzhinji* remains a reminder of the people's aspirations though no one today would seriously consider its implementation. The influences of the socialist ideology are evident in the naming of streets like *Production Brigade* and *Building Brigade* which emphasize the work ethic as well as *Mushandirapamwe* (Cooperative) which promotes non-exploitative modes of production.

Within this ideological context we could assess *Mushandirapamwe* (Cooperative), which is closely related to the communal cooperation practiced by Africans under the banner '*nhimbe*' to promote good neighborliness. Cooperatives were very popular, especially with the rural folk after the war, as communities were encouraged to form or join them to access sponsorship to undertake self-help projects and they should be appreciated within the context of economic empowerment. From a developmental perspective, it is desirable to promote cooperative ventures in low income groups as it facilitates mobilization, distribution and access to essential resources. Collective ownership of the project may ensure its security, longevity and sustainability. Within this context we could include a street like *Zviitire* (Do-it-yourself) which emphasizes self-reliance and entrepreneurship which are both essential for any successful drive to economic empowerment. It also captures the thought system of Africans which promoted industry. The development of any nation is best measured by the quality of the life of its citizenry. Black economic empowerment as a guiding concept is also replicated in the Harare industrial area where we have apt names like *Empowerment Drive*. Such names serve as reminders of people's aspirations and the effective routes of realizing them. Black economic empowerment has been pursued in Zimbabwe under the guises of the Affirmative Action Group. Similarly, in South Africa it has found expression through the controversial BEE (Black Economic Empowerment). However, cooperatives have tended to focus on petty business ventures in the labour intensive agricultural sector and nowhere near the factories and capital intensive industries.

Indigenous Names as Decolonization

The ideologies that are espoused through the above names are easily adaptable to the Zimbabwean scenario due to the capacity of the Shona language to express them effectively. Language is an

ideological weapon which can be used for the conceptualization and expression of a nationalist narrative. The prevalence of names with an indigenous flavor is best understood within the broad field of the ongoing indigenization agenda that has characterized the Zimbabwean post-independence discourse and has also manifested itself in the educational curriculum and economic fields. In the sphere of geopolitics, herein represented by street names, it entails giving the urban environment a local complexion that enhances people's understanding of themselves in relation to their locality. Self understanding entails the reclamation of African culture through use of indigenous languages that can express an African worldview, philosophies and ideologies. The capacity to communicate effectively with a wide section of the population and influence a particular worldview depends largely on the accessibility of the language employed. Language as a means of communication and a dominant carrier of a people's culture enables them to give expression to their way of life. Language activist Isaac Mumpande (2006), argues that, "language encompasses not only communication but also heritage, culture and experiences… in some quarters; language is also a form of power". It is precisely through language that memories are concretized, interrogated and given new meaning. Shona names are valuable mainly for their meaning, ideological clarity and ability to communicate complex ideas. According to A.J.C. Pongweni (1983):

> Shona names, like those of other cultures (particularly African) are essentially expressions of some experience or attitude, both family and national. In analysing them, therefore, one is essentially engaged in linguistic investigation, with social and political considerations predominating at various points.

For instance, *Rusununguko* (Freedom) is a celebration of independence resultant from a protracted and brutal struggle. This has given the term *Rusununguko* new meaning and impetus if viewed against the colonial background which had given birth to the suppression, oppression as well as denial of political and human rights of Africans. Consequently, one of the ideals that rallied African support for the liberation war was the promise of freedom. This view is further buttressed by a name like *Masimba Avanhu* (People's Power), a phrase that also salutes the ushering in of majority rule. '*Vanhu*', may be translated to 'people', but in a Shona context it actually distinguishes Blacks from Whites hence the 'people' referred to, herein, are blacks. This is an assertion of the humanity of the Black race, long denied by the colonialists. It is also plausible to relate this name to the 'Black Power' and 'Black Consciousness' movements that advocated self-determination for blacks and opposed their subordination to Whites. The name *Masimba Avanhu*, like *Rusununguko* affirms the end of minority rule, the triumph of Blacks over Whites and the dawning of a new era of self-determination. It also facilitates the interrogation of the importance of power in determining human relations. Independence has thus empowered blacks. *Zvataida* (Our aspirations) is compressed and loaded with meaning and highlights the culmination of African hopes and aspirations. These could include the right to own property, living in the city as well as being involved in the naming of streets in indigenous 'own' languages. Carrying this theme further is *Takazvivakira* (We built on our own), which suggests a satisfied, settled and secure community;

acknowledging the initiatives and efforts of individual residents in planning, designing and building their own houses using their own resources. This is a departure from the colonialist practice whereby blacks had to first satisfy specific requirements like the production of marriage certificates and proof of employment before they could be allocated pre-built houses, after the design of the colonizer.

The naming process is an artistic enterprise that involves creativity in language use, manipulation, originality, adaptability and, at times, imitation. A single word like *Tangenhamo (*poverty precedes prosperity*)* is loaded with a multiplicity of meanings and captures the Shona philosophies of prosperity. Prosperity requires time, patience, endurance, determination and hard work. As argued by Frederiksen, (1991), "The naming is a condensed, symbolic utterance sending out signals to the local community ... capacity to create local meaning by naming". Names can be read as literary texts which are comparable and open to a multiplicity of interpretations, meanings and, or, (mis)readings. As previously noted, street names are in themselves a mode of communication which means they convey meaning at different levels depending on context and time. Some names mirror the new thinking that was borne out of collective participation in the liberation struggle and the attendant desire to create a united and prosperous nation after independence. For instance, streets like *(Ta)kazvivakira*, *(Ta)gona* and *Zva(ta)ida* contain the prefix 'Ta' which means 'We', and refers to plurality and the collective thereby giving the impression that class barriers have been dismantled and residents see themselves as partners with a shared vision for the development of the city. The projection of a unitary entity is further anticipated in *Zva(ta)ida* (What 'We' Wanted), which captures the boast of achievers whose shared aspirations have been realized.

Most street names in Mucheke are in the Shona or English language and this does not reflect the city's diverse linguistic heritage represented by the Ndebele, Changana, Venda, Chewa and other residents. For instance, there is only one Ndebele name, *A. Mgijima*, after a Magistrate Court official who served for a long time in Masvingo. One possible explanation to this omission could be the dominance of the Karangas in the civic life of the capital city of a predominantly Karanga province. The omission is thus a part of the hegemonic contests in the city. This pattern, however, obtains in virtually all other Zimbabwean cities, especially in the residential areas where particular ethnic groups dominate. On the other hand the Midlands Provincial capital, Gweru, seems better placed to 'carry the burden of the nation' in the sense that both Ndebele and Shona names, the politically dominant linguistic groups, are fairly spread across all facets of life. It is common to have a Ndebele name like *Insukamini* (a Ndebele military regiment of the Mzilikazi era), which means the daring who embark on a military expedition in broad daylight, alongside a Shona one like *Pfumo* (Spear). The locations therefore act as trajectories of tribal power. In Mucheke, for instance, the location acts as a trajectory of ethnic (Karanga) power. Shona, however, is the politically and socially dominant language used by the majority of residents in Masvingo and thus facilitates broader communication.

In as much as language gives one an identity, it also associates cities with particular linguistic groups as is the case with Masvingo and Mucheke suburb in particular. Naming streets after prominent figures from particular tribal or ethnic groups to the exclusion of others could be a source of potential tribal division, conflict and political strife. Ethnocentrism fractures nationalism whilst also highlighting its contradictions and shows that the nation is made up of conflicting and competing interests that may be difficult to reconcile. Connor in McCrone (1998) views the nation as "a glorified ethnic group whose members are often attached to a specific territory". This is a limited understanding of the concept of the nation and what constitutes the national interest but it highlights the extent to which it may be a contested terrain owing to the multiethnic character of Zimbabwe. In most instances there has been an attempt at compromise to make it possible to speak of a Zimbabwean nation in-spite of its tribal, ethnic, racial and religious differences. In Mucheke suburb the trend is that where streets are named after individuals they tend to have a predominantly Karanga flavor, focusing on local figures such as *Charumbira, Zimuto,* (both local chiefs within the vicinity of Masvingo who represent traditional leadership), *Madzore* (a contractor involved in the second phase of the expansion of Mucheke) and *Majange* (a business man from Chivi who was butchered by the Rhodesians for supporting the struggle, materially) thus reflecting the degree of tribal/ ethnic influences. The attempt to relate the city to provincial politics is articulated through place names such as *Chivi* and *Zaka*. These are districts found within the province and named after their chieftaincies. Whilst raising awareness of the traditional leadership in the province, this practice further gives credence to the view that street names may be used to promote ethnic politics.

 This shortcoming is best understood in the context of Zimbabwe's failure, since independence, to adopt a language policy, although she has unofficially conferred official status to English, Ndebele and Shona ahead of other marginalized languages like Tonga, Tshivenda, XiChangana, Kalanga, and Nambya. This is in sharp contrast to neighbours South Africa who have twelve official languages. However, both scenarios are marked departures from the days of colonialism and apartheid wherein only the languages of the politically and economically dominant groups, English and Afrikaans, were accorded official status. This intrusive nature of colonialism as already highlighted manifested itself in both tangible and intangible forms. The elevation of indigenous languages to official status is essential to the liberation and assertion of indigenous people's culture as noted by Fanuel Cumanzala in Mumpande (2006: xiii), that "language equals culture and culture equals identity for man and woman". Whilst technology aligned aspects of western culture easily represented the tangible aspects of this foreign culture, the act of naming cities and streets is an expression, promotion and preservation of the intangible aspects of the same culture. An analysis of the names shows that this is a means of collating, imprinting, preserving and publicizing specific value systems of the powerful group that controls the politico-economic spheres. Historically, social hierarchies have been established or determined by dominant individuals, groups or communities. Accordingly, the languages and cultures of the dominant group have been promoted at the expense of vanquished people.

Cultural Symbols

In addition to using language to give expression to national cultures, the post-independence city has also adorned itself with cultural symbols which further the anti-neo-colonialist struggle. This is evident in *Ngundu* Street which is a reminder of how cultural identities galvanized African nationalism hence our subscription to Fanon's view that the liberation of national cultures is a precondition to national liberation. *Ngundu* is a traditional leopard skin headgear that was prominent during the heyday of nationalism in the1960's and became a sterling symbol of resistance to colonialism. As a cultural symbol, the *Ngundu* is best understood within the context of the anti-colonialist struggle. It is also significant that it is also found in the archives of the liberation struggle. Political activists like Joshua Nkomo adorned it at public meetings and due to the fact that they were firebrand activists, it soon became associated with anti-colonialist resistance. It was viewed as a symbol of asserting a common African identity as it was worn across the tribal / ethnic divide with the result that it united people in their struggle against colonialism. In an attempt to thwart all forms of African representation and expression of the self, the colonialist regime criminalized and banned the public adorning of the head gear. Similarly, this ban extended to the performance of African dances such as *Mbende, Mbakumba, Mbaqanga* and *Muchongoyo* since these were cultural expressions that militated against the colonialist agenda of suppressing African nationalism. However, this persecution bolstered the symbolism of the *Ngundu* as it immediately assumed powerful political significance beyond the imaginations of the settlers. This suppressive measure was an attack on African culture as well as an attempt to stifle African nationalism. Such an act strengthens the view that cultural symbols play a crucial role in the resistance against colonialism by providing a basis for the enacting of common identities realized through shared practices. The *Ngundu* represents tangible cultural heritage.

Totems and Praise Names

In similar light, street names that fall within the cluster of totems and praise names aid the project of reclaiming the African cultural heritage by exploiting the beauty of the Shona language to control the geopolitics of the urban space. Totems are part of the intangible cultural heritage of the Shona and Ndebele as they facilitate the construction of a complex web of relationships across tribes and ethnicities. Since most totems are symbolized by wild animals, it may be argued that totemic street names promote environmental awareness and conservation practices as people show an intimate relationship with the animals that symbolize their totems such that eating them is taboo. Wildlife is an integral part of the Zimbabwe national heritage and these related names help grow knowledge of the same. Common names are: *Dindingwe* (Cheetah), *Mharapara*, *Hwiramiti* (Monkey) and *Nungu*, *Samaita* (praise name for the Zebra), *Moyondizvo, Nyakuvengwa, Chirandu, MaMoyo* (praise names for the heart totem), *Mhofu (*Eland*), Yomukono (*praise name for the Eland*), Shumba* (Lion) *MaSibanda* (female praise name for the lion), *Samanyanga* (praise name for the Elephant), *Chitova* and *Chuma.* The animal that symbolizes a clan is held in high esteem by the members and is sacred to all. They tend to proudly identify with the qualities that are ascribed to each animal, whether in folklore or in real life. Praise names like *Chitova* suggest sexual prowess

and members of this clan would always boast of their legendary gifts, real or imagined. The *Shumba* (Lion) always want to emphasize the immense strength and ruthlessness of the king of the jungle. Use of totems and praise names as ondonyms has the potential of promoting ownership and acceptance of the names by the residents as the concepts represented therein are commonly understood and easily identified with.

Whilst totems reflect a Shona worldview, values and systems of kinships, and thus give the suburb a distinctively Shona complexion, they tend to emphasize patriarchal philosophies at the expense of the women. Most of the street names cited above are totems and praise names that refer specifically to males thereby betraying the patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean society. Praise names beginning with '*Ma'* (mother) such as *MaSibanda* and *MaMoyo* refer to females but, in terms of numbers and impact, there are too few roads so named. This practice of sidelining women manifests itself in instances even where people's names are used as these tend to be dominated by males. This reduces the visibility of women thereby condemning her story to oblivion. Feminists argue against the omission of women in national discourse because, according to Ellin (1999) *"*personal is political" and further demand a "comprehensive and accurate interpretation of history and society by reincorporating her-story into his-tory… seek the source and trajectory of women's historical role in society"*.* Even at national level one finds that, serve for *Ambuya Nehanda*, most roads are named after men. This demonstrates the dominance of men in virtually every sphere of life and suggests that power politics after independence are eschewed in favour of men.

This omission gives the impression that very few women have made significant contributions to the making of the nation or else they have totally failed to distinguish themselves in ways that merit recognition. This underrepresentation of women is reflective of political trends in the early days of the making of an independent Zimbabwean nation and, in some instances, even in the present and this scenario, according to Mayer (1999), proves that:

> *Despite the rhetoric of equality for all who partake in the 'national project', globally, nation remains the property of men…Calls into question assumptions about nationalism as monolithic, much less gender neutral. Control over access to benefits of belonging to the nation is invariably gendered. Nationalism frequently becomes the language through which sexual control and repression are justified and through which masculine prowess is expressed and strategically exercised.*

Whilst women constitute fifty one percent of the Zimbabwean population, this is not reflected in the essential power structures. Lobbies by women activists and interest groups for adoption of affirmative action to facilitate representation in government, parliament and key decision making institutions demonstrate ongoing efforts to negotiate space and accommodation for women. It is worth noting that the Zimbabwe government has been making inroads in its attempts to address this area through the enactment of legislation, policies and Ministries (Ministry of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development), that seek to improve the lot of women. The central

business district of Masvingo shows that this practice is a residue from the colonial era whereby women's representation in the naming of roads was restricted as mostly white males had their names used. Street names in the suburbs could obviously help boost women's visibility especially if the rule of proportional representation is applied. The colonial city space was a designated European area and the exclusion of women was prominent. Africans who visited this space were, in the main, male workers. Women needed special authority to visit the city thereby giving the impression that this was no woman's land. It is naturally to be expected that after independence this apparent marginalization and exclusion of women would be reversed in various forms including through emphasizing the representation of women's presence in the city by way of deliberately naming streets after them; otherwise the Zimbabwean story is incomplete.

CONCLUSION

The Mucheke scenario reveals that the process of street naming is largely influenced by the nationalists' pre-occupation with using the geographical space to make a visible and psychic break with colonialism in search of a distinct national identity. This manifests itself in the concern with key themes that constitute nationalist narratives such as a common and shared national history, reference to national heroes, cultural heritage, ideological values, and use of Shona in a naming process that seeks to claim the urban space and give it an indigenous complexion that reminds the residents of their identity. As a nationalist project, street naming dwells on contested terrain and exposes the serious flaws and contradictions that characterize the nation. These include power struggles, gender inequalities, tribal marginalization, and manipulation of ordinary citizens by the ruling elite who safeguard their interests through expropriating the discursive space which results in a partisan interpretation of history. These are the key forces that have influenced the naming process after independence, not only in Mucheke but in most urban centres in Zimbabwe and the region. Streets are landmark features of the urbanscape that residents interact with on a daily basis and as such, the names communicate with and shape the way people relate to the city and the national project at large. Isolating a high density suburb like Mucheke has the advantage that the extent of the geographical space covered is such that residents are familiar with most street names and they get a holistic picture of their neighbourhood which is essential if any narrative is to be woven and understood. If the process of street naming is democratized, it has the capacity to empower residents in influencing urban culture.

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