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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Personal names among Africans serve as a communication tool and storehouse for the culture and history of the society. However, many Vhavenḁa, the focus group of this study, are today unaware of the meaning and structure of their personal names. This research investigates Tshivendḁa personal naming patterns. Every personal name given to a person at any given stage in his/her life has meaning and a morphological structure. This meaning has a descriptive background which draws on certain conventions in Vhavenḁa society. Identifying the motivational force behind personal names deepens one's understanding of the socio-cultural characteristics of this community.

African societies use personal names as a means of conveying the cultural values and traditions of their daily experiences. Before people could read and write, personal names were used as a means of documenting important events, and they were part of the oral tradition, making them an integral part of every cultural system. Personal names are constructed from various word categories, and have differing syntax. Tshivendḁa personal names, for example, are constructed from word categories such as verbs, nouns, pronouns, a verb plus a pronoun and a noun plus an adjective. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

The history of Africa has been marked by colonisation. When the Europeans first arrived in Africa, they brought with them their cultural values. These colonisers tried

to make the indigenous people of this continent abandon their cultural systems and follow the cultural systems of their new masters, even if this was against the indigenous people wishes. Some people, however, did follow these foreign elements as a sign of prestige. Vhavenda, one of the nations on this continent, did not escape this domination. This affected everything to do with the cultural systems of the indigenous people. One of the systems most severely affected was the way in which personal names were selected and bestowed.

## **1.2 AIM OF THE RESEARCH**

This research study aims to investigate the selection, meaning and morphological composition of Tshivenda personal names. Research into Tshivenda personal names has, up to now, not received much attention from Vhavenda linguists. Those who have touched on this subject were historians, anthropologists and archaeologists. However, no one has paid much attention to naming practices among the Vhavenda, and there is little literature available on these practices. This research will also cover contemporary naming practices and will attempt to compare these with research by other scholars.

The research aims to explore the reason(s) for choosing a personal name for a person or a child at different life stages. It will also investigate the reasons for preferring certain people as name-givers over others.

This research will also cover the ways in which certain personal names are used as a sign of respect of the elderly or senior people in the family or the society. This is reflected in situations where a child's personal name is used instead of the parents' or grandparents' names.

South Africa is a country composed of many cultures. These cultures share many resources in their daily existence. Therefore, these cultures influence each other whenever they meet. According to Madiba (1994), the Vhavenda's contact with these languages and cultures has occurred in several ways, for instance, through geographical proximity. In the light of this, this study will also explore the extent to which the Tshivenda cultural system of personal naming has been affected by contact with other cultures.

An attempt will be made to investigate the system which the Vhavenda follow in naming their children at present, since the dawn of democracy in South Africa, and since most indigenous languages of South Africa, including Tshivenda, have been accorded the same national status in the constitution, something which was previously enjoyed only by English and Afrikaans.

### **1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The study of personal names has attracted a number of scholars over the years. There are many views regarding the way in which personal names are bestowed. This section aims to provide an overview of what previous scholars have found as far as personal naming is concerned. Scholars such as Koopman (1986; 1989), Thipa (1983; 1987), Herbert (1990; 1995), Saarelma-Maunumaa (1996; 1999), Stayt (1931), Mönnig (1967), Mbiti (1969), Moyo (1996), Kimeyi (1989), Dickens (1985) and Bosch and De Klerk (1995) have based their discussions on some of the personal naming patterns. As far as African traditional culture is concerned, the selection of personal names is influenced by many factors. Most of these factors are diverse among cultures; nevertheless, there are some areas where they overlap.

In his article entitled “The aetiology of Zulu personal names”, Koopman (1989) concentrates on the meaning and the circumstances that lead to the choice of personal names, an approach which is followed in this study on Tshivenda names.

Dickens (1985), in her dissertation entitled “Western Influences on the Zulu system of personal naming”, paid considerable attention to the influences the West has had on Zulu naming systems. Her work is based on European influence on the Zulu between 1849 and 1982, when the Zulu first became aware of their traditional values and reverted to their traditional naming system. She is one of the scholars who have investigated the linguistic features of Zulu personal names. She found that the Zulus use the infix *No-* when they form a new female name from a male name, as in Vela (appear), male, which becomes uNomvela (appear) female. Dickens (ibid.) has also indicated that African personal names differentiate between the sexes, as in the example given above. Nevertheless, we must not forget that in traditional conventions there are certain personal names that are not gender specific.

Yanga (1978:241), in his article entitled “Language planning and onomastics in Zaire”, found that in Zaire, personal names do not merely distinguish people from each other, they also operate as “linguistic indicators” of socialisation, in that they are usually representative of various social relationships within a family. Yanga (1978) determined that African personal names play an indexical role reflecting the socio-cultural changes or events in the community. He reported that the Zairean onomastic system reflects the history, culture and socio-political events which have marked the national scene.

Jayaraman (2005: 176) provides the following explanation of the Hindu tradition of personal naming practices: a name not only reveals a person’s self-identity, but also

his or her cultural, sectarian, *varna*, and caste identities. Further, it is believed to signal one's spiritual worth not only in this world, but also in the next. In everyday life, Hindus give great significance to a personal name.

As this study on Tshivenda names will reveal, the naming ceremony of a child is an important event. It is also traditionally one of the major life circle rituals for a Hindu. In Southern India, it is usually performed on the twelfth day of a child's life. Customarily, some Hindus, who believe that even days are lucky for girls and uneven ones lucky for boys, hold that a boy should be named on the eleventh day and a girl on the twelfth.

When the ceremony is to occur, and mainly in the case of the first child, both the father's and the mother's relatives visit the house where the mother gave birth (usually her natal home). Here, the guests are entertained with traditional sweets specially prepared for the occasion.

There are various considerations in the choice of a name. However, one essential element in the selection of a name in all parts of India is the birth star of a person. Most Hindus consult an astrologer to decide the appropriate name.

In the south, as in other parts of India, names may tell of the joy and expectations of parents of newborn children. For example, if a child is born to a couple many years after marriage, he may be endearingly named after some precious metal or gem, such as *Ratnam* (diamond), *Sona* (gold), *Banghru* (gold) or *Muthu* (pearl). Naming may also be related to other family experiences. For example, in Tamilnadu, if a family has experienced high child mortality, a surviving child may be named *Pichi* (gift of god) if male, or *Pichiamma* if female.

Elements of idiosyncrasy and creativity are also apparent in Indian naming customs. For example, an eminent professor of Telugu in Andhra Pradesh gave his daughter one of the longest names encountered: Sri Arunachala Kadambavana Sundari Prasunnamba Kanyaka (the blessed virgin who is beautiful and carries with her the radiance of sunshine, the fragrance of garden flowers, and the presence of God).

Bean (1980:309), in his research on the bestowal of children's names, found that it is often the duty of the parents, but may also be the duty of a senior kinsman or of a ritual specialist, and the participation of members of a larger community is also required ( e.g. *Ga* names are bestowed by the senior patriarchal relatives). Bean's (1980) view that the role of the ritual forms part of a child's acceptance into his family group, is in a way similar to views given by other scholars such as Mbiti (1967), Mönnig (1967), Koopman (1989) and Stayt (1931) on the role of the rituals that accompany name-giving ceremonies.

Previous literature on personal naming also indicates that missionaries played an important role in bringing civilization to the African continent (Mbiti, 1967; Yanga, 1978). It must be noted that even though the Europeans brought civilisation, there was great exploitation of African cultural activities by these foreigners that cannot be ignored. These Europeans subjected most, if not all, African people to oppression. The good that they brought went hand in hand with much suffering. The missionaries brought a culture that was imposed on the African people; they were forced to follow the culture of their masters, which was regarded as superior. This influence affected the choice of personal names. Yanga (1978:233) emphasizes this when he says:

Unfortunately, the authentic African names were symbols of paganism for the earlier missionaries.

Ladzani (1997) made an extensive study of the structure of Tshivenda personal names. In her study she indicated how personal or proper names are derived from verbs, and in this regard she concentrated on the morphology of proper or personal names. This study is related to my own research in the sense that I will analyze the morphology of personal names; Ladzani's work will therefore provide me with additional data.

In her research Ladzani (1997), like her predecessors, did not pay much attention to some issues concerning the Tshivenda personal naming process. Aspects she did not touch on include the procedures that are followed when names are given, the name-giver and the different stages at which names are given. These will be discussed in detail in the present study.

Guma (2001), like other scholars who have researched personal names, found that among the Basotho of Southern Africa the naming process is a socio-cultural interpretation of historical events. He concentrated on the cultural meaning of personal names, teknonymys and the use of names acquired from initiation schools. He further argued that Basotho personal names are not just words but a socio-cultural interpretation of historical events embodying individual life experiences, social norms and values, status roles and authority, as well as personality and individual attributes.

He further quotes Mohome (1972) when he says that naming in Sesotho is both a cultural and a linguistic phenomenon. The meaning attached to personal names by the Basotho plays a significant role in the definition of "personhood" because it is believed that a given name not only serves as an identity but also determines the

type of person that individual will become. Names are believed to have an influence on the character of their bearers.

Like Dickens (1985), Guma also touched on the influence that the missionaries had on Basotho naming practices. He says that English names became identified with one's being a Christian, being civilized, as well as a mark of alteration in status.

Adler (1978) also found that most people believe that a name is more than a word. He says:

A name does several things. First it identifies, denotes and signifies something, comes to be descriptive of it, and thus takes it out of the realm of the unknown or the amorphous.

He goes on to say that names endow their bearers with certain characteristics, they can exert their magic on others, and they can become dangerous when known by an enemy. He argues that one cannot divide the name from the person.

Willis (1994) concurs with Guma and others on the importance of personal names in society. He believes that personal names are not simply labels for an individual. They situate the named socially, locating them in terms of one or more social constructs through which their rights and obligations are defined, through which they can make claims, and claims may be made upon them. He adds that personal names offer a valuable window on the process through which constructs of social identity were and are made.

Mönnig (1967) in his research among the Bapedi, found that various incidents that occur before or even during the birth of the child are taken into consideration when a

name is chosen. For instance, if it is raining when the child is born, it will be called *Mapula*, meaning rain. He also found that the child's physical features are also taken into consideration, i.e. if the child is born with big ears, he might be given the name *Ratsebe*. A similar situation is discussed by Herbert and Bogatsu (1991) in their article entitled "Changes in Northern Sotho and Tswana personal naming patterns".

Most African societies give their children ancestral names. It is interesting to note the circumstances that lead to the choice of such personal names. Herbert (1995), in his article entitled "The sociolinguistics of personal names: two South African case studies", reports that ancestors' names are given to children when they are ill, after the diviner has been consulted about the cause of the illness. He will also identify the ancestor that is causing the illness. Among the Vhavenḁa, an ancestor's name could be given to the child even before that child shows any sign of illness. The explanation the researcher was given was that they are trying to please the ancestor before he or she thinks to come back and cause trouble for the family.

It is African custom that every important event that happens in one's life should be reported to the ancestors through the performance of certain rituals. The birth of a child and the bestowal of a personal name on this child is one of these important events and are accompanied by the performance of these rituals. There are many important elements to the ceremonies of name-giving. Among the Vhavenḁa, Stayt (1931) reports that this ceremony is performed when the child is taken out of the hut - *u thusa n'wana* - as a symbol of the child's future activities.

Koopman (1986), Stayt (1931), Mönnig (1967) and Mbiti (1969), to mention only a few, all agree that African people are superstitious; they believe that a witch can

bewitch you by the mere mention of your name. Their studies into their respective cultures have established this.

In their article entitled “Naming in two cultures: English and Xhosa practices”, De Klerk and Bosch (1995) compare personal naming in Xhosa and English culture. Their aim was to show that the differences that exist between African cultures, Xhosa in particular, and English culture are reflected in how personal names are bestowed. They found that among the AmaXhosa the meaning of the personal name plays an important role, whereas English parents more readily choose names on the basis of an aesthetic appeal or personal whim.

The researchers cited above highlight aspects covered in this study. While these studies paid attention to meaning and factors that influence the choice of names, the present study will be based on the meaning and choice of names, the influence of the missionaries, names given to people when they reach certain stages in their lives and the morphological structure of the personal name.

An aspect that distinguishes my research from existing studies is the inclusion of the names given to traditional leaders when they ascend the throne. It seems this is an activity that differentiates the Tshivenda culture from others. Another difference in this study is that it will describe contemporary trends in personal naming practices since the 1994 democratic dispensation. Now people talk of the African Renaissance and the effect of this concept on personal naming will be briefly investigated in Chapter Four. With acculturation and social changes taking place so fast, the study will also investigate the role played by the grandparents in the naming of children after 1994.

## 1.4 RESEARCH METHODS

Every research study is conducted within the scope of a particular method or methods. In order for the study to be completed successfully, a plan or method is required. Leedy (1993:137) defines method as:

A way of accomplishing an end result. It is how one operates, a way to get the job done.

According to Leedy (1993), if the data is verbal, the methodology is qualitative. He says further that the qualitative method is concerned with human beings: interpersonal relationships, personal values, meanings, beliefs, thoughts and feelings.

Therefore, in this research study the researcher has used a qualitative approach, namely personal interviews, which form part of a survey method. Different people from various areas have been contacted and they have supplied me with relevant information concerning personal naming practices in their respective communities. Interviews were arranged with the Vhavenda cultural experts and traditional doctors who perform rituals that accompany personal naming. Interviews were also conducted with isiXhosa speakers regarding marriage names in their culture.

Different hospitals were visited in order to investigate the current situation concerning name-giving practices for children. Most children these days are born in hospital where, immediately after their birth, they are given personal names so that their mothers can identify them before they are discharged.

Certain preschools were identified and visited. The purpose of this was to investigate the present situation concerning children's Christian names. The investigation was conducted to determine whether this system, the system of giving children European names as Christian names, is still being used, and if so, which names are now regarded as Christian names.

An investigation was also conducted at churches around Venda to determine whether Vhavanḁa priests still encourage the use of European or Biblical (Christian) personal names as Tshivenḁa second names when congregants' children are baptised.

Various literatures have been reviewed to reveal how previous scholars have investigated this topic. This literature has provided the researcher with the necessary theories underlying this topic, as outlined in Chapter Two.

In this research, primary and secondary data have been used. According to Bless and Higson-Smith (1995), primary data constitutes the data collected by the researcher himself and the secondary data refers to that collected by other researchers. Kothari (1985: 134) echoes Bless and Higson-Smith:

The primary data are those which are collected afresh and for the first time, and thus happen to be the original in character. The secondary data, on the other hand, are those which have already been collected by someone else and which have already been passed through the statistical process.

The researcher will rely only on both the primary and the secondary data in this study.

This research was based primarily on information provided by senior citizens, in this case, parents and grandparents. This was done in order to gather accurate information. These sources are people who practise the bestowal of personal names on children and any other individuals who receive new personal names in this society. They are a reliable source because this is a practice they follow every day; it has been transferred to them by previous generations. When we compare what these informants say to what other scholars have recorded, we come to a better understanding of the process of personal name-giving among the Vhavenda.

## **1.5 BACKGROUND OF THE VHAVENDA**

History shows that the Vhavenda as a nation have been occupying their territory since as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century: N̄emudzivhaḡi (1975) maintains that the Vhangona, one of the Vhavenda tribes, might have crossed the Limpopo River towards the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Historians, ethnographers and anthropologists all agree that the Vhangona were the first inhabitants in what is today known as Vendaland.

When the Vhavenda began to arrive in this territory, they formed different groups or tribes. Each group or tribe had its own tradition or culture. As time passed, through sharing the same natural resources and through a standardization of the language, some of these groups lost their cultural and language identity. Those tribes, whose language was not regarded as pure Tshivenda by the authority of the day, were severely affected by these changes. According to Stayt (1931), tribes that were absorbed by the tribes amongst whom they settled completely lost their identity. According to Motenda (1940:154), the first people to settle in Vendaaland were the Raphulu people:

*Vhavenḁa vhukuma, mihani i ri, ndi vha ha Raphulu. Ndi vhone vhane vha shango ḁa Venḁa. Vho vha vho dzula Tshirululuni.*

(The real Vhavenḁa, according to oral literature, are the people of the Raphulu. They are the real owners of Vendaland. They stayed at Tshirululuni.)

The Vhavenḁa are composed of several different clans or groups, namely, Mungona, Munyai, Mbedzi, Muḁavhatsindi, Musenzi, Muḁlea, Mukwevho, Singo, Mudau, Dzivhani, Khomola, Kwinḁa, Mugwena, Mulaudzi, Mulovhedzi, Mudalamo, Munzhelele, Muvari, Nḁou, Ramulifho, Mavhunga and Mufamaḁi (Ralushai 1977:205). When these groups migrated into Vendaland, they separated into different tribes. Each group was probably bound by the similarity of language, culture, religion and common ancestral heritage. Concerning the languages which they spoke initially, Stevens (1988:36), says:

Anthropologists describe the BaVenḁa as a “composite” people, meaning that they did not originally all share the same language, although all of their languages belonged to the Bantu language family.

The Vhavenḁa are a superstitious people. They believe in ancestral spirits. They believe that the ancestors still control the lives of living people. According to BERCD (SA) (1979), Vhavenḁa believe that after death a person is endowed with unlimited power to control his descendants, and lives a life similar to his life on earth. Jordaan and Jordaan (1987:15) have this to say about belief in the ancestors:

The deceased also have needs and want to maintain their social ties with their relatives on earth.

Most historians, anthropologists and archaeologists are in agreement about the origin of the Vhavenḁa. According to BERCD (SA) (1979), the Vhavenḁa originated in the

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region surrounding the Great Lakes of Central Africa. The archaeologist Loubser (1988) believes that the Vhavenḁa originated from the Congo and the Great Lakes. There is a strong argument that the Vhavenḁa migrated from central Africa, around the Great Lakes, to the south, to where they are found today. N̄emudzivhaḁi (1975: 4) confirms this:

As for their place of origin, there seems to be some unanimity among existing writers that the Vhavenḁa originated from the region of the Great Lakes of Central Africa between the Lower Congo and present-day Malawi.

Jordaan and Jordaan (1987) also believe that the Vhavenḁa originally came from the Great Lakes area in Central Africa and the eastern parts of Zaire, known as the Land of Zendj. Machobane (2001:16) quotes Francois Laydevant who supports Jordaan and Jordaan, adding that many authors claim that the Bantu race was born in the region of the Great Lakes. Under pressure of an unknown cause, they emigrated; some went west, others went south.

## **1.6 THE ARRIVAL OF EUROPEANS IN VENḁA**

History indicates that the Vhavenḁa were the last nation to come into contact with Europeans in South Africa. This fact is attributed to their location which was very far from the coast. According to the historian N̄emudzivhaḁi (1975), the Vhavenḁa came into contact with whites only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Contact between the Vhavenḁa and the Europeans occurred in two ways. Firstly, men who were vying for chieftainship invited Europeans or whites to Venḁa. They wanted these people to help them in their fight against their enemies and promised

them land if they could defeat their enemies. This contact was around 1859. Thereafter, some Vhavenda chiefs began to resent the presence of Europeans on their land, because these Europeans wanted to introduce a system of taxation which was foreign to them. This resulted in conflict between the Vhavenda and these Europeans.

Secondly, the Vhavenda came into contact with Europeans who wanted to teach them to read and write. These groups were known as the missionaries. They were well received because some thought they were bringing civilization. Indeed, some of these missionaries did bring civilization because they started almost all the hospitals found in Venda today. They were given a piece of land to settle on and established mission stations. It is at these mission stations that people were taught to read and write.

Missionaries played an important role as far as education in Venda is concerned. The main aim of these missionaries was to convert the Vhavenda to Christianity. As the Vhavenda were illiterate, the missionaries realized that the only way to achieve their goal was to teach them how to read and write. That is why most of the teaching materials concerned the word of God. This system of education had a great influence on the type of personal names given to children when they first entered school.

The Vhavenda were living in an area that was not easily accessible by their enemies. The Soutpansberg mountain range made it difficult for any enemy to attack them. Stayt (1931:2) supports this:

Its koppies and spurs, precipitous slopes and general unapproachable character, have played an important part in protecting them from their enemies, and account for their being the last tribe in the Transvaal to submit to white domination.

Venḁa is not located on the coast, making it difficult for Europeans to make early contact with them. Nevertheless, there were missionaries who came to Venḁa as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Nḁmudzivhaḁi (1975), the first missionaries to arrive in Venḁa were the Dutch, in 1862. They settled at Goedgedacht. From this period on a number of mission stations were established in different areas, e.g. Maungani, Tshakhuma, Lwalani and Vari.

Although it has been mentioned above that the Vhavenḁa are a superstitious people, some have accepted the Christian faith. Nevertheless many of these, even if they are Christians, have not abandoned their cultural beliefs. BERCD (SA) (1979:36) remarks:

Most Vhavenḁa are today Christians, though aspects of their former beliefs and rituals connected with such beliefs have in large measure been retained.

This clearly shows that it is difficult to live outside one's culture. Culture means so many things other than religion. Therefore, these converts felt alienated from their people. It is difficult to drop some aspect of your culture, such as religion, and continue to speak the language. Language is culture.

Currently, a large number of Vhavenḁa are found in the Limpopo Province. Some also live in Gauteng province. A very small number of this population is found in other provinces. The area in the Limpopo Province where many Vhavenḁa live today was formerly known as Vendaland around the Soutpansberg and later, from 1979 to 1994, it was declared the Republic of Venḁa. The language spoken is Tshivḁnḁa.

At present the Vhavenda share borders with the Tsonga-Shangaans (Vatsonga) to the east, and the Basotho ba Leboa to the south and the southwest. Because of this geographical proximity, there is frequent intermarriage between the Vhavenda and their neighbours, especially between the Vhavenda and Basotho ba Leboa. This has been influenced by the fact that when the missionaries arrived in Venda they were accompanied by the Basotho ba Leboa. This intermarriage has had a great influence on Tshivenda cultural systems, including the system of personal naming. Owing to intermarriage, there are a number of Sesotho personal names found among the Vhavenda, such as *Lerato* (love) and *Ngwako* (house, courtyard).

With this background information, one is in a better position to understand the differences which might occur in the way in which people from different areas perform their personal naming rituals. Even though we have indicated that the Vhavenda is a nation with one cultural system, there are differences in the way they perform their cultural activities, depending on which tribe they belong to.

## **1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

Chapter One presents the introduction. The statement of the problem and the aim of the research in relation to other research studies are examined in this chapter. An attempt has been made to examine the history and the geographical proximity of the Vhavenda to other cultures. The research methods used in this research are also discussed in Chapter One.

The theoretical background to the practice of bestowing personal names is dealt with in Chapter Two. Personal naming practices are not a new phenomenon. All people the world over have one way or another of referring to objects or to people

themselves. This is observed in the literature review. The personal naming theory used in the analysis of the data is examined in this chapter.

Chapter Three examines the selection procedures and the meaning of Tshivenda personal names. It is revealed in this chapter that although there are some differences among Vhavenda tribes, their personal naming practices are almost the same throughout the country. An attempt is made in this chapter to show that it is not easy to separate personal naming practices from cultural activities. Personal naming practices are a mirror of the nation as far as Africans are concerned.

The role played by the missionaries in the personal naming process is investigated in Chapter Four. From 1862, when the missionaries first came into contact with the Vhavenda, many native speakers thought that the use of European and/or Christian personal names was preferable and it was seen as a sign of civilization. The Vhavenda personal naming process has been significantly influenced by this contact.

Chapter Five investigates the morphological composition of personal names. Tshivenda personal names are formed from different word categories. These include, among others, negative forms, verbs and verb stems, nouns, adjectives, pronouns, possessives, copulatives and interrogatives. In this chapter, personal names will be classified according to the way they are formed. This includes, inter alia, research on whether Tshivenda personal names have morphemes that make them gender specific. The research will include a study of the conventions used to differentiate between genders.

Chapter Six forms the conclusion by integrating the aim of the whole research study on anthroponymy and personal names as an onomastic discipline. The findings and recommendations for further research are provided in this chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND TO PERSONAL NAMING

#### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this chapter is to provide the theoretical background to the concept of onomastics, particularly anthroponymy. Only those aspects that are related to personal names will be dealt with. This study is one amongst many in the field of anthroponymy. In this chapter, the theories that have been developed by other scholars in this area will be discussed, and this will form an important part of the study. The discussion on naming theory will be divided into five subsections, namely, personal naming patterns, name givers, time of name-giving, name-giving ceremonies and teknonymy.

Although this research is about personal names under onomastics, where the term “anthroponymy” refers to personal names, this study is mainly socio-linguistic in nature. Therefore, in many instances the term “personal names” will be used instead of “anthroponyms”.

Anthroponymy is a discipline that is of great importance to onomasticians because it covers many aspects of life, including the social, cultural, political, economic, historical and religious aspects. This will become clear when we examine the theories that govern the bestowal of personal names. As far as African personal names are concerned, some Europeans could have found it is very difficult to appreciate the way they are bestowed and the importance that is attached to the meaning of these names, and the ceremonies that accompany such bestowals.

In traditional African societies there are a number of factors that influence the choice of a personal name. African people are observant of what is happening around them, and they want to record this through personal names. Because African traditional people were illiterate, they used names, personal names in particular, as an archive for storing all-important facts about their history and daily activities. Personal names became short stories in most traditional societies in Africa.

Scholars like Koopman (1986), Herbert (1990), Thipa (1983), Moyo (1996), Dickens (1985), Jayaraman (2005) and Tournier (1975) agree that personal naming customs cannot be separated from culture. In many cultures, personal naming reflects the beliefs of that group. Among the African people, meaning plays a leading, albeit not the only, role in the selection of a name. Africans prefer a name that they can readily identify with, a personal name that will always remind them of something in their life experience. This resulted in a situation where the task of bestowing personal names was the responsibility of elders in the family because of their rich experience. The African personal naming process is an African heritage and should be preserved.

## **2.2 PERSONAL NAMING PATTERNS**

African personal names are part of African culture; because of their association with African value systems, they have become victims of eradication by Western civilization. An African may receive many personal names during his or her lifetime. In the early days of European imperialism, none of these personal names were recognized as long as they were African in nature. In terms of African culture, naming is part and parcel of marking the passage from one stage to another. That is, naming marks the graduation from adolescence to manhood or womanhood or when a traditional leader is inaugurated or when a woman marries. Personal names that

were bestowed to mark these important transitional stages were not recognized by the Europeans: they accepted only European/Christian/Biblical/school names such as Peter, John, Maria and Paul.

African personal names play an important role in society, reflecting what happens in day to day life. For this reason, personal names follow different patterns. Scholars who have researched this aspect have reported on these patterns, and this is discussed below.

Mathangwane and Gardner (1998:75), in their study of personal names in Botswana, found that these names play an important role in conveying cultural values and traditions. Koopman (1989:34) provides these patterns of personal names among the AmaZulu:

1. Names referring to structure of the family,
2. Names referring to the role of God in birth,
3. Names referring to the conceived relationship between parent and child,
4. Names referring to the circumstances of the parents,
5. Names referring to the wider clan.

It is this last point that is not always found among the indigenous people of South Africa. Dickens (1985:19), who conducted research into Zulu personal names, suggests that the following patterns are followed when personal names are selected in Zulu society:

Zulu names have the additional function of reflecting on one or more of the following: a synoptic history of the circumstances surrounding the child's birth, the emotions related to the birth, the family's attitude to the birth, the place where he was born, his position in the family, the time he was born, the parents' spiritual attitudes, his appearance at birth, his parents' wishes for him, the parents' social expectations, the country's situation at the time of his birth or the clan into which he is born.

Suzman (2000:13), in her study of Zulu personal naming practices, concurs with Dickens (1985) on factors that influence the choice of personal names:

These names document several significant events in the family's history, their happiness at having first a boy and then a girl, their aspirations for continuing the family line, problems in the marriage, the mother's uncomfortable pregnancy and the birth of a child relatively late in life.

When personal names are chosen, different societies take different factors into consideration. Personal names are not chosen at random: events that happen during pregnancy, birth, naming time and also the history of the family are all considered. The wishes, happiness and sufferings endured by the family are also taken into account when a personal name is chosen. Personal names that are bestowed on people at a later stage, i.e. after initiation school or when the traditional leader ascends the throne or when a woman marries, follow the same patterns as the birth names.

In traditional African societies, personal names are not simply labels or references: they carry with them valuable information about the family or the community into which the child is born. Raper (1983:4), in support of the fact that names are subjected to the influences of social and existential facts, comes to this conclusion:

Personal names reflect, better than any language form, various social and other attitudes and relationships, social barriers, the way in which social groups behave toward languages and other aspects of society.

Although there is general consensus on the patterns of personal names, there are certain aspects that do not apply to all indigenous people of South Africa. Mönnig (1967:103) has this to say about the selection of personal names among the Pedi:

Names are frequently chosen from events occurring on the day of the child's birth. If it rained on that day, the child may be called *Mapule* or *Modupe* from *pula* "rain" or *modupe* "soft rain". Thus, the child may also come across names like Sputnik and Korea. Children may also be named after famous people or visitors. They are also named for outstanding physical features, like Ratsebe for a child with large ears.

Stayt (1931: 88) concurs with Mönnig (1967) and writes thus about the Vhavanḁa on the choice of a personal name:

Although there are a number of names in current use, any peculiarity about the child, its birth, or its parents, is generally reflected in the name chosen. Any important event in the life of the tribe, coinciding with the birth, may also influence the name chosen.

The patterns that personal names in most African societies follow have been divided into those reflecting traditional belief, meaning, cultural variety, ancestry, reincarnation and commemoration names, derogatory names and changing/replacing names.

### **2.2.1 Traditional belief**

Traditional African societies believe that there is a close connection between the soul and its bearer. Some people also believe that if a child is given an unfortunate personal name he may be influenced by it: such personal names are therefore avoided. Bean (1980:312) quotes Guemple (1965), who agrees with this view, in her research:

Name and bearer can each have an effect on the other. Bearers can bring honor or dishonor to a name so that the Eskimo, for example, consider the moral conduct of the original owner before conferring a name: the name of a murderer will disappear, but successful people have many namesakes.

Raper (1983:2) supports this view, quoting Paustian (1978):

Because a name may be used in working magic against its bearer, name secrecy is observed among various people in West Africa, and American Blacks tend to keep their African names hidden from all but their closest associates.

Mbiti (1969:119) supports Bean and Raper when he notes that the name is the person. Traditional societies believe that when a person is bestowed a name of a very successful person the new recipient will emulate the previous owner of this name. In some instances this belief is proved true. There are people who, sometimes, want to live up to their personal names. Most Vhavenda people try to avoid bestowing names such as *Khakhathi* or *Phusuphusu*, meaning “trouble makers”, on their children, believing that if they do so these children may do what their names mean. That is one of the reasons why Guemple (1965), quoted by Bean (1980), says the name of the murderer will disappear.

It is important to note that not only is a name bestowed to influence the character of the person, but it may also be given as a reminder to the name-giver of something bad that happened once during his life. Therefore, one should not necessarily interpret the name *Khakhathi* as the parents’ wishing their child to become a troublemaker. In this instance the name might be referring to an experience rather than a desire.

### 2.2.2 Meaning

Meaning is defined as what a word means, signifies, expresses and its inner and psychological importance, inter alia. It is the idea of the word or the action. But in this study, the word “meaning” is used to embrace all aspects and circumstances that are taken into account when a personal name is bestowed on a child. For example, the name *Tshifhiwa* (Gift) might have different interpretations in two different families. Suzman (1994:253) believes that African people chose personal names that pointed to a range of people and circumstances that were relevant at the time of the child’s birth. Then the word “meaning” in this study refers to these circumstances around the birth of the child which are recorded in the name that is bestowed on the child.

Names, like any other words, may have conceptual, descriptive or lexical meanings, but these meanings become irrelevant when the connotative or pragmatic meaning is attached to the name. As has been mentioned earlier, people, especially Africans, do not choose names at random without attaching to them something important in their life. A personal name must carry some meaning or be commemorative or be a family name, referring perhaps to a relative who died some time ago. It seems unlikely that an African would have a personal name that is meaningless; this would not be regarded as a real name. Depending on the factors motivating the naming process, a name may have a descriptive or a connotative meaning.

Nevertheless, although there is general agreement among the onomasticians that African names do have meaning, there are certain names that do not have a recognized meaning. Yanga (1978:238) quotes Faik-Nzuji when he notes that not all proper names have a particular meaning in the community. Some personal names such as *Mpooyi*, *Odya* and *Booyi*, which apparently do not have any structural

relationship to other elements of the Luba language, have been recognized by the speech community and transmitted as proper names. Such names are few, however. Personal names of this nature are bestowed on people because they are transferred from one generation to the next. The meaning that a name has is based on how it reflects the culture of that particular society. Names, as part of language, are able to transmit culture, just as the languages of all cultures do. Raper (1983) states it clearly when he says that personal names are regarded as more or less important, depending on the culture. This means that names should not be undermined or regarded as a useless tool in any cultural society, particularly African society. When personal names such as these are bestowed on children, the name-givers are using them as remembrance names.

Questions such as: What is your name? What does it mean? are very common. But it is the second question that is most important in naming. This question implies that a person has to be given a personal name that bears meaning, with which one can identify. Kimeyi (1989), in his research on the meaning of personal names, found that, like oral literature, personal names are useful tools in ethnography, ethnology and ethno-history.

If names from cultures which do not have written documents are studied properly, they can, like oral literature (myths, legends, folktales, proverbs) help the researcher to reconstruct people's history, both cultural and eventful. Personal names can reveal important details about historical events such as migration, wars and contact with other cultures, and so on. They can also tell us about people's past existential experiences: political systems, social organizations and religious beliefs. Personal names can also reveal something about the actual culture: what the people value most, their concept of the world and life, how knowledge and education are

transmitted and so on. Bosch and De Klerk (1995:23) also highlight the importance of meaning in African personal names:

Foremost among the trends discernible in African naming practices is the role of meaning: while names still serve the referential function typical of all proper names, they nevertheless retain their meaning-bearing function and are much less arbitrary, their meaning generally being transparent and accessible and often recording complex details about their bearers.

Arensen (1988: 126), on the meaning of personal names among the Murle people, adds:

There are a number of bases for choosing a name, but it is essential that a Murle name always has meaning. Names can be taken from a number of different categories. Often something observed by the midwife or the mother during late pregnancy is chosen for the name.

Without a doubt, if African personal names are properly studied, people's history, culture and philosophy can be put into perspective. Ignorance of the study of African personal names is equal to ignorance of the study of people's philosophy. Khumalo (2009:1) notes the following about the meaning of the middle name of Jacob Zuma, for instance:

Jacob's middle name, Gedleyihlekisa, encapsulates the household tensions – the name, given to him by his father, is a shortened form of the Zulu sentence “ngeke ngithule umuntu engigedla engihlekisa” (I won't keep quiet when someone deceives me with a beautiful smile while he is doing damage to me) – a name pregnant with meaning.

Some societies prefer to add the name of the clan to their names. Although this practice is not common among the indigenous people of South Africa, among the AmaZulu a name that refers to the whole clan may be bestowed on a child (Koopman:1986).

### 2.2.3 Cultural variety

Culture is defined as the way in which people of the same society or tribe go about their daily activities. It includes what people believe in. Culture is a way of life, and it differs from one society to another. Ndlovu (1997: 9) defines culture as follows:

Culture conditioned the behaviour of the people of that society and is reflected in the language they speak and write.

Berreman (1971) sees culture as socially learned and transmitted patterns of behaviour, mutual expectations, common understandings, and values an individual shares with others of his group. They do not regard it as something that conditions people, because they learn it in the process and ultimately find themselves living in that way. After they have learned these manners, customs and beliefs they live by them in their daily activities. Cohen and Eames (1982:413) see culture as:

The way of life of a particular group of people and their shared set of learned manners, customs and beliefs.

Unfortunately, missionaries did not see anything positive in African culture. Everything African was judged according to Western cultural practices. Masuku (1998) makes the observation that one of the most important aspects by which Western missionaries judged the Third World was their own culture. Smith (1990:34) notes:

In the traditional society of the past, before the dislocations brought about by Western imperialism, education and law developed under the aegis of religion, the clergy had an important role in the function of social control, and the legitimacy of government rested squarely on religious notions. The traditional ruler was viewed as either a god or as an agent of God.

Religion and culture are sometimes very difficult to differentiate. The perception is often held that missionaries were in Africa not to learn and promote African cultures, but to destroy whatever Africans had and to colonize them. Machobane (2001:10) says that evidence for missionary destruction of Basotho culture is glaring and abundant. The missionaries did not target the Basotho culture alone, but every corner of the African continent. Machobane (2001:12) claims that French missionaries found in the Basotho a more communal society, one in which individualism, not individuality, that is self-centredness and acquisition of material things, took second place to community welfare.

Every culture of every human kind has important elements of morals and *ubuntu* and should therefore be protected and preserved. No culture is superior to another, and cultures are very different and unique. African culture is steeped in strong moral values, and people were taught to respect one another. Because Africans were regarded as barbaric and uncivilized by the early missionaries, Manyeli (2001) says it is understandable that the destruction of some traditions by these missionaries was a *sine qua non* or a *quasi* absolute condition.

From the above quotations by Smith (1990), Machobane (2001) and Manyeli (2001); it is clear that culture is something that is learned. After people have learned these customs and beliefs they tend to live by them, which is where the word “conditioned” comes in.

In a way, research into personal names helps one to understand the culture of the people under scrutiny in this study. Personal names and culture are inseparable. The way in which personal names are bestowed on people reflects the customs and beliefs of those people. The Europeans were well aware of what they wanted to

achieve when they made Africans despise their own culture, especially the use of their personal names.

There are many types of traditional African societies and the patterns that influence the choice of personal names within these are different. This is found even among people who live in the same country, i.e. South Africa, where a variety of cultures shares the same natural resources. The emphasis on the meaning of personal names differs from one culture to another.

Lienhardt (1988:107) did comparative research on personal naming in Western cultures and African cultures. He quotes Ubakwe (1981) on the Igbo people of Nigeria:

An indigenous African name on the whole personifies the individual, tells some story about the parents or family of the bearer and in more general sense, points to the values of the society into which the individual is born.

Any statement that meaning is the only important factor in the choice of an African personal name is open to contradiction. If we take a European personal name like *Victor*, for example, meaning a winner in a battle, we see that this also has a meaning although it might be irrelevant when the child is named. Such arbitrariness in naming also occurs in African names. There must be another reason for using African personal names besides the issue of meaning. One such factor is the aspect of cultural association or cultural binding. An African personal name binds one to one's people. If you are addressed by an African personal name, you feel that you are also an African, particularly during this period of the African renaissance.

Essien (1986:87) discovered that the Ibibio people are also influenced by particular events when they choose a name:

Ibibio people use names to mark important events. Some of these events have a lot of social significance. Such names include *Uso* "feast", *Emana* "birth". Occasions or events marked by these names are of great social significance to the Ibibio people.

Ibibio personal names reflect everything these people do, i.e. they reflect on economic or commercial activities, artistic or creative work and also religious and philosophical ideas. The Ibibio people believe that God is with them in everything they do, and when they bestow personal names on their children this is reflected in the names they select.

It is thus clear that personal names refer to something important among the people who select them. A name could mean a wish or experience or it may be used as a tool to bind one to one's society. In traditional African societies, a personal name serves many purposes, a practice which is also found in Arab communities. Hassan (1986:80), in his study of personal names in Jordan, found that names serve different purposes:

If taken from the namer's point of view, personal names may have a significant meaning implied in them by the namer, and they reflect the cultural, psychological, and social atmosphere of the namer. Names express in the Arab community of Jordan, as in many other communities, parents' wishes, expectations, likings or dislikes to either wish the baby to behave in accordance with its name or to wish the name to be a description of the baby.

Because of the multipurpose nature of African personal names, most Africans are careful when it comes to choosing one. When one studies personal names, one is in

a way studying other people's culture and their view of the world and everything around them.

#### **2.2.4 Ancestral names, reincarnation and commemoration**

Many South African traditional societies bestow the personal names of the deceased on their children, because the child resembles the features of someone in the family. Such a name is a sign of remembrance of that person. There are a number of reasons for the choice of ancestors' names. Herbert (1995:1) notes this about the names of the deceased being bestowed on children:

The category of ancestor names is interesting for a number of reasons. Such names are given when the child refuses to nurse, run a fever, has diarrhea, etc. Various explanations are offered by informants as to why some particular ancestor's name is chosen, but the general idea is that the discovery and bestowal of the right name restores the child to health.

There is also another view on the choice of a name from the ancestors. Some societies choose the name of a deceased individual and bestow it on the newborn because they realize certain features in the child are identical to those of the deceased. Some bestow on their children the name of the deceased if that person was successful during her/his lifetime, and in this way they express their wish for their child to be successful like the deceased, and this is regarded as a sort of reincarnation. According to Thipa (1983:287):

To name a child in this way is to express the wish that the person after whom he or she is named should, as it were, be reborn or reincarnated in the child. The idea is not so much that of physical reincarnation, except in a symbolic sense, but that of a reincarnation of all that is considered good in the person concerned and his qualities. They should live on.



According to Raper (1983:9):

It is believed that by naming a child after someone, the characteristics of that person are automatically inherited. When a child is named after a non-relative, it is usually a king, a chief, or some other important person or historical figure (such as Napoleon, Alexander the Great, and so forth).

Raper (1983:10) says that among Muslims, choosing a name for the newborn child dictates that names should be connected with the victory and achievement of the bearer, should indicate the prosperity and security of the bearer, should indicate the hardiness and the ability to fend off an attack, should include the name of the first animal seen by the husband after leaving the tent where the wife had given birth, and should include the name of the deity.

This view of ancestors' names bestowed on children is supported by Yanga (1978:239):

The rebirth essentially consists of the belief that the newborn is one of the ancestors who has come back. Thus, his name should be given to the child, and in so doing that ancestor (i.e. his memory) is perpetuated. In many cases this name will influence the behaviour of the child in social contexts, depending upon the structural relationship between the ancestor, whose name was given to the child, and the child's parents.

Therefore, to inherit or to receive someone's name is to inherit or receive at the same time his qualities, faults and his destiny.

There are people who do not believe in reincarnation, and they may bestow the names of ancestors on their children or any other person later in life with a different purpose. The most common ancestors' personal names found among Africans are those that are bestowed on children when they become ill. When a child becomes ill

and does not show signs of recovery, a traditional diviner is consulted, who will find out the cause of the illness. In most cases one of the ancestors is pointed out as causing the illness. The reason for this is sometimes said to be that the ancestor wants to be remembered or wants to come back. In order for the child to heal, the name of that ancestor is bestowed on the child.

Not every illness warrants the bestowal of an ancestral name, however. Names of this nature are bestowed only after attempts to cure the child have been unsuccessful. It is also important to note that a female ancestor will cause the illness of a female child and *vice versa*. It is rare to find a male ancestor's name given to a female child.

Stayt (1931:247) reports that when an illness or misfortune is divined to have been caused by a female ancestral spirit who desires her *dzembe* (plough/hoe) to be put up, the diviner orders that it shall be made at once, depending upon the generation of the deceased. If it is a child who is ill, the father immediately reports the diviner's finding to the *malume* "uncle". The diviner is then again consulted and decrees who must visit the smith to arrange for the making of the required *dzembe*. When it is made, it must be put outside the kraal for a night to become cool. It is often put in a calabash of water, and sometimes it is laid on the ash-heap outside the kraal.

From what Stayt (1931) has said it is clear that this is done in order to pacify the troubled ancestor's spirit. It is during these ceremonies that a diviner may order the family to bestow the personal name of the ancestral spirit troubling the family on the person who is ill. In most cases the ancestor's name is not the first name given to this person, but it is one among many names that are bestowed later on in life. In order for the person to heal or to pacify the ancestor's spirit, this name must be used daily.

It replaces any other personal name and if it is not used the person affected will not recover.

Some people name their children after the deceased as a sign of commemorating the dead. When parents decide to name their child in this way, the deceased should be a very close relative of the family, such as a great-grandfather or great-grandmother.

### **2.2.5 Derogatory names**

These are personal names that are bestowed on children who are born after successive deaths of other children in the family. When the parents realize that the ancestors have caused these deaths, this is done to deceive them. In this way, parents pretend that they do not want the newborn child.

Herbert and Bogatsu (1990:6) quote Eiselen (1928), Molema (1920) and Mönnig (1967), remarking that children who are born after deaths in the family are given protective or derogatory names in order to confuse the ancestor spirits and have them believe that the parents do not care about this child. Taking the child away will thus not be a punishment. Thipa (1986:209) notes that this choice of derogatory names for children who are born after several child deaths occurs among the Basotho and the AmaXhosa. He notes that the passing away of one child is disturbing to any parent. The death of more children is even more disturbing, especially if this happens in succession. When such frequency of death occurs the Basotho and AmaXhosa say a woman bears children for the grave, *O tswalla fatshe* or *uzalela phantsi*. In Sesotho a child who succeeds two or more children who have passed away is variously referred to as *Thotobolo* (Place for dumping rubbish or refuse), *Ntja* (Dog), *Moselantja* (Dog's tail) or *Mokoto* (A thing of naught).

Some of these phenomena mentioned above by Herbert and Bogatsu (1990) and Thipa (1986) are not found in Vhavenda tradition. It is rare to find that a derogatory name is bestowed upon a child who is born after repeated deaths in a family. It is also rare to find a name that refers to a person's physical appearance, especially if such appearance is unattractive. When such names are used, they are used in the form of nicknames, e.g. *Munyamani*, a person who has a dark complexion or *Magoza*, a person who takes long strides when he walks.

In contrast to the AmaXhosa and Basotho cultures, and many cultures in West Africa, the Vhavenda do not believe that, if they do not give a child a derogatory name, the ancestral spirits will take it away. Instead, in most instances where there are successive deaths, children born after these deaths are given consolation names, such as *Hangwani* (Forget).

#### **2.2.6 Changing / replacing names**

Most of the above examples apply to personal names given to children immediately after birth. It seems that, when a new name is chosen in later in life, some of the factors mentioned in the previous sections also play an important role in determining the type of name chosen. In some cultures, such as the Bapedi, personal names given to children early in life are temporary names whereas in other cultures such names become permanent names until after initiation school, as is the case among the Vhavenda. Societies which do not have initiation schools do not change children's names; rather, they have names added to their birth names. Traditionally, among the Vhavenda, when a new name is bestowed, this new name replaces the previous name, and the person is henceforth addressed by the new name.

This also applies when a woman marries into a family; upon her arrival she will be given a new name. From the day she receives this name, her previous name is no longer used. This is also the practice when the chief, headman or traditional leader is crowned or inaugurated; his new name is used from that day onwards. This practice is unique to Tshivenda culture.

### **2.3 NAME-GIVERS**

Name-givers are people who have the responsibility of naming the child. In traditional African culture not everyone can take on the task of naming the child. This is reserved for the elders of the family. It is evident that the introduction of Christianity and European culture in some traditional African societies has weakened the customs of naming children. Traditionally, the elders of the family or the community or the traditional doctors or religious leaders were the only name-givers.

People who play an important role in name-giving differ from one culture to another. There is no clear distinction between people who may or may not fulfill this role. Herbert (1995:5), in his research on the South African Bantu-speaking people such as the AmaXhosa, the Basotho and the AmaZulu, found that family members, especially parents and grandparents, give the bulk of names. Parents are the most common name-givers, followed by paternal grandparents and then maternal grandparents, especially the grandmother. He found that this was different from Western culture where usually only the parents play an important part in bestowing personal names on their children.

Ndimande (1998:91), in an article entitled "A Semantic Analysis of Zulu Surnames", supports Herbert on this point:

According to Zulu cultural practice fathers were the name-givers, but the practice has changed since any relative can name the child in the family.

Herbert (1996:188) observes that:

The basic workings of the Nguni system are well-known: the name-giver is typically a senior member of the husband's family who bestows a name reflecting conditions surrounding the time of birth, physical features of the infant, social conditions within the family, or any subjective state of the name-giver. It is only a slight exaggeration to say a word, phrase or sentence may serve as the basis for an individual's birth name.

Suzman (1994) notes that among the AmaZulu fathers were the name-givers.

Khumalo (2009) supports this: Jacob Zuma's middle name, *Gedleyihlekisa*, was chosen by his father.

Koopman (1986: 32), in his research on the AmaZulu also found that both the mother and the father participated equally in name-giving. According to his research, parents were the chief name-givers, and the other members of the family played a lesser role in this matter. Bosch and De Klerk (1995:72) differ from Herbert and Ndimande, finding in their studies comparing the AmaXhosa and Western people that:

English informants reserved the right of naming exclusively for the parents of the baby. In contrast, the Xhosa informants allowed the grandmother to make the choice. This would suggest that English speakers place heavy emphasis on the nuclear family, while the extended family still plays a role among the Xhosa speakers.

In some societies the traditional doctors are given the role of naming. In other traditional societies only the fathers and the grandfathers on the paternal side are considered name-givers. In support of this, Moyo (1996:10) notes:

When it comes to personal names, the Ngoni and the Tumbuka followed Ngoni cultural practices in that the fathers and the grandfathers of the husband's family became the sole name-givers. The name given to the child carried with it great significance within the larger family, with the result that the personality of the child was seldom the focus of his/her name.

According to these societies, name-giving could be said to reflect attitudes within social contexts on the paternal side (Moyo, 1996:12). Bean (1980:309) is of one accord with Herbert (1996), Ndimande (1998) and Moyo (1996) on the issue of namers:

Bestowal of a child's name is often the duty of the parents, but is as likely to be the duty of a senior kinsman or of a ritual specialist and the participation of members of the larger community is usually required.

Bean (1980) found that prefixes attached to certain personal names indicated people who had played a role in the choice of that particular name. She found that the bestowal of a child's name is often the duty of the parents, but is as likely to be the duty of a senior kinsman or of a ritual specialist and the participation of members of the larger community is usually required (e.g. *Ga* names are bestowed by the senior patriarchal relatives, *Kewa* names are said always to be bestowed by the child's father and *Wishram* names are bestowed by two specially empowered men, with audience repeating the name.

Hassan (1986:81) remarks that in Jordan the bestowal of a baby's name these days is the parent's duty. Most traditional societies prefer the elders to choose names for their children; parents are not given this responsibility, unlike parents in Western cultures. In Western cultures the issue of the nuclear family is emphasized, whereas in traditional African societies the extended family is the focus. By giving this role of

personal name-giving to the grandparents or anyone elderly in the family or society, their presence and their wisdom is acknowledged. As far as African culture is concerned, it is regarded as a sign of disrespect on the part of young people if they do not allow the elders to carry out the personal naming. However, even though elderly people are mainly responsible for personal naming, other people are also allowed to fulfill this function. Some cultures prefer people from the father's lineage to be responsible for the name-giving, as can be seen in the Vhavenḁa and the Bapedi. Stayt (1931:88) makes this point concerning name-givers among the Vhavenḁa:

The name is generally given by the father's sister, *makhadzi*, or the father's brother, *khotsimunene*; failing them it may be given by another member of the lineage.

As far as name-givers are concerned, Mönning (1967:103) echoes Stayt (1931), he reports that among the Bapedi the father's elder sister has the final say in the naming of a child. The mother may bestow a name on the child, but such a name will remain temporary until the father or his elder sister ratifies it.

Arensen (1988; 126), who conducted research among the Murle of South Eastern Sudan, reports that the close relatives of the child are the people primarily responsible for choosing a name, but sometimes the midwife who delivers the baby also makes suggestions. According to the tradition of these societies, the father will announce the child's name at the naming ceremony.

In most traditional societies, e.g. the Vhavenḁa, the AmaZulu, the Bapedi etc., the parents of the bride do not play a role in naming her children. This custom shows that most of these societies practise a patriarchal system. In a patrimonial system, only

the members of the bridegroom's family are given the opportunity to actively participate in any family event.

It is interesting to note that different cultures follow different customs and practices concerning the people who take on the duty of choosing a name. It is equally interesting that in certain societies, where there is a cordial relationship between couples, the husband and wife agree to alternate in naming their children. It is a well-known fact that in African tradition women, except *makhadzi* among the Vhavenda and the Bapedi, are not given important roles to play in life. In a situation where a woman is given a chance to play an active role, she will be afforded that opportunity at her home (her parents' home), not where she is married.

It seems that the younger generation does not follow traditional practices as far as name-givers are concerned. Today, most parents have taken on the role of naming their children. Moyo (1996:17) found that in Malawi, with the passing of time, however, there seems to have been a shift from grandparents playing a role in name-giving to fathers or the couple themselves playing a dominant role. He says this may be attributed to the rather loose ties in urban centres. Suzman (1994:255) agrees with Moyo when it comes to the issue of name-givers:

Western acculturation, religion and economic pressures have altered traditional social institutions and attitudes. The extended family is no longer the only social source of names. The traditional name-givers – the grandfathers and fathers – often do not live with the family, and hence have lost their prerogative as name-givers.

It could be assumed that this is so because some communities or individuals are still mentally colonized, especially those who bestow non-African personal names on their children, i.e. giving their children Western or Christian personal names. There

are still some among the indigenous African people who believe that to follow their cultural systems is a sign of a lack of civilization and therefore they continue to give their children European names. But with the concept of the African renaissance being preached, those who are left behind, still believing that to have a European name is a sign of being civilized, may decolonize their minds by reverting to their traditions. But this will not happen automatically.

It is not clear from the literature reviewed who the name-givers are when a woman gets married, when boys return from initiation school, when a traditional leader ascends the throne or when a child is baptized.

## **2.4 THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE**

The birth of a child is something of great importance in any society. In some African cultures, childless couples were not allowed to participate in some communal activities. They would not be given senior positions in the community until they had had a child. The main purpose of African marriage is for procreation. The absence of a child in the marriage could destroy it or could result in the man marrying another wife if the problem is perceived to be caused by the wife. On the other hand, the wife may go back home if the problem is perceived as being the fault of the husband. The issue of adoption in traditional African societies is foreign; otherwise they would use it as a means of saving marriages. Children glorify marriages. Stayt (1931:113) states that, among the Vhavenda, marriage is regarded as something not to be taken lightly, but as the precursor of childbirth. This view clearly indicates that a childless marriage is seen as an incomplete one until such time that a child is born. In such a situation, marriage is not based on love or companionship, but on procreation.

Married couples in traditional societies are encouraged to have as many children as they can, because a big family is said to earn for its head great respect in the community. After the birth of the child, a name has to be chosen in order for people to address and identify the child.

In his research, Thipa (1987:115) found that being married carries special symbol of status. He found that status does not lie in being married *per se*. It lies instead in being married and having children. Mönning (1967:98) discovered that among the Bapedi, the birth of a child confers on the mother the status of a woman, and proves the manhood of the father. This means simply that the birth of a child brings happiness both to the family of the bride and of the groom. This is emphasized by the fact that when the child is given a name, relatives and friends are invited to witness this important event. Special food and drinks are prepared for this occasion.

In some African societies, unmarried people are not allowed to participate in the affairs of the community. They are barred from attending community meetings because they are regarded as immature. This is supported by Machobane (2001:24):

Then too, the fact that the early French missionaries were, for the most part, not yet married, imposed a formidable impediment to communication. For, among Basotho a man was not yet complete unless he was married. Hence, an unmarried person was not fit to share a serious conversation with those who were married.

All traditional African practices are carried out for a purpose. It is an African belief that if a person is not married, he or she is regarded as too immature to share ideas with the married people.

## 2.5 TIME OF NAME-GIVING

The naming of children is part of the culture; because there is a diversity of cultures, there are also different rules a society or a particular ethnic group follows as far as the time for naming a child is concerned. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that different societies have different naming periods, or to see that some societies have no rigid timetables to follow when naming children.

According to Alford (1988:2), in some societies, individuals receive their given names at birth and use these names throughout their lives, as in Western societies. In other societies, however, individuals traditionally change their names at important points in their lives.

As far as the period of naming the child is concerned, Stewart (1988:152) who did research on Naxos, reports:

Infants on Naxos, as in most parts of Greece, are not baptized immediately after birth. Parents may wait two to three years or even longer before allowing a godfather to bestow a Christian name upon them in the elaborate church ceremony.

Before a child in Naxos is baptized, it is not called by any name; parents do not give their children temporary names, as is the case in some societies who take time to name their children. During the period between birth and baptism children are called simply *moro* (*baby*), a neuter noun, or else *bebe* in the case of boys and *beba* in the case of girls. These names are said to represent the newborn child before it is incorporated into humanity.

There are other societies that wait a long time before they name their children. These people have different reasons for delaying naming. Some of these reasons concern supernatural beliefs. Tooker (1984:8) discovered that many people in Central Brazil felt that the burden of a name and all the social relationships that it carries with it is too strong for a small child. Small children are weak and could become ill and die if weighed down by a name. Therefore, they can only be named when they are strong enough to bear a name.

But Anim (1993:1) reports that the Ewe, Akan, Ga and other tribes in Ghana name their children seven days after birth. During this period the child is taken as a visiting spirit, who is only a guest in the host family. This spirit takes seven days to decide whether he likes this world or not, and whether he would like to stay with these people (parents) to whom he has come as a guest. These ethnic groups consider the child to have become a human being after seven days, and he is accordingly brought out of the room (outdoored) to meet other family and friends, and given a name.

Mönnig (1967:103) reports that among the Bapedi there is no specific date or time for bestowing a personal name, such as after a number of days or at the birth of the child. After the umbilical cord has healed, certain rituals are performed that are believed to protect the child against evil forces and witchcraft. After the performance of these rituals the child is brought out of the hut and the name is bestowed. This means that the period depends on the healing of the umbilical cord.

In support of this, Arensen (1988:129) makes this comment about the Murle people:

They looked upon baptism as a rite of passage into a new phase of life, and a name change was thought to be appropriate.

Mönnig (1967:105) describes this custom as follows:

The Pedi consider the name of a person to be more than a mere appendage by which a person is addressed. It is an integrated part of the person, a reflection of his personality and of his whole being and is colored with his spirit. This is why when a person receives a new status he also receives a new name to signify that he is now a new person, not only entitled but also able, to perform the new role which accompanies the new status. At the major changes in life, a person is given a new name: at birth, or on entry into the patrilineal group, or on initiation into the tribe.

This is not unique to the Bapedi culture. Most African cultures observe this custom.

Among the Vhavenḁa, boys get new names when they return from initiation school.

It is interesting to note that there are some societies that do not name their children until they are certain that they will survive. This is mostly found among West African peoples, who believe that a child is finally born after it receives a name. The Vhavenḁa do not associate delayed naming of the child with the idea that a child should not be named until it is certain that it will survive.

According to Raper (1983:2), the Japanese name their children within ten days of birth, on the fourth, eighth, or tenth day.

Koopman (1986:33) writes that the AmaZulu do not have a rigid timetable for naming their children, and the only available information is that they name their children immediately after birth.

Mbiti (1969) describes the period of naming in some of African societies as an event that has a fixed period. He says that the Wolof people name their children one week after birth, and this event is followed by a ceremony where friends and relatives are

informed. According to Mbiti (1969:119), the Shona name their children immediately after birth, and among the Luo, the child's name is sought when the child is crying. During this period, names of various ancestors (the living dead) are mentioned, and if the child stops crying when a particular name is called out, then the child receives that name.

In some societies, birth names are sometimes changed at a later stage. Mbiti (1969:118) found that there is no end to the giving of names in some African societies, and that a person could have acquired a sizeable collection of names by the time he becomes an old man. Even if receiving many names is an African tradition, in some cultures some of these names may fall away through disuse, a practice that is common among the Vhavenda.

From the discussion above it is clear that different societies follow different rules when it comes to deciding when to name their children. There are various beliefs attached to naming periods among different cultures and ethnic groups.

## **2.6 NAME-GIVING CEREMONIES**

Name-giving ceremonies rites of passage are performed in individual's life as he or she moves from one level to another. They are performed to protect the individual from diseases and future misfortunes in this new status (Cohen: 1982).

It is an African tradition that when ceremonies like these are organized, friends and relatives are invited to join in the rejoicing. During these ceremonies certain rituals are performed that are believed to protect the child against evil spirits. It is also generally believed that during these ceremonies a close connection between the

child and the name is established, while at the same time the ancestors are informed of the presence of the child in the family.

It has been mentioned in the preceding sections that the birth of a child is highly appreciated because it fulfils the parents' role in their society. Mönning (1967:102) writes as follows about naming ceremonies among the Bapedi:

...the doctor is summoned to prepare the child - *go thusa ngwana* (literally, to help the child).

This consists of two separate actions; firstly *go papatela* - to smooth the head of the child. The officiator adds some medicine to the water fetched by the mother with which he treats the head of the child. He then shaves off the child's hair. If it is a girl, all the hair is shaved off, but boys are left with a small round turf of hair on the central front of the head ...

This action, therefore, prepares the child, before coming out of seclusion, to have the appearance characteristics of its tribe. The second action, *go tsetsa* - to strengthen - prepares the child against witchcraft since, on coming out of seclusion; it is removed from the protection of the *lephoko*, which guarded the hut. The protective medicine, *tshidi*, is burnt in a broken potsherd over a fire, while the child is held in the smoke. The witch-doctor then makes small incisions on all the major joints of the child, the ankles, the knees, the hips, the neck, the shoulders, the elbows, and the wrists as well as on the temples. Into each of these incisions he rubs a little of the powdered medicine.

Finally the *lephoko* is lifted which prohibited entry into the hut. The father, who now for the first time enters the scene, and mother sit on opposite sides of the *lephoko*, the mother in the hut and the father on the outside. They then rub one another with medicine, after which they cross over the *lephoko*. The father is then allowed to see his child.

People who practise these rituals are encouraged to do so because of the beliefs that are attached to them. There is a belief that if this is not done, the child will become ill and die. Because no parent wants to lose his or her baby, people who believe this

follow the tradition. Mbiti (1969:115) made the following findings on naming ceremonies in his research among the Akamba society:

When a child has been born, the parents slaughter a goat or bull on the third day. Many people come to rejoice with the family concerned, and women get together to give a name to the child. This is known as “the name of *ngima*”, the “*ngima*” being the main dish prepared for the occasion.

When Akinnaso (1980:278) conducted research among the Yoruba of Nigeria, he discovered that they also perform rituals that accompany the naming of the child:

On the day of the ceremony, the baby is bathed and dressed (usually in white, signifying purity and innocence), and carried on the lap by its mother, grandmother, or eldest woman in the extended family or clan. The baby is made to taste basic food items including yam, palm oil, honey, dried fish or meat, salt and water. The baby’s feet are made to touch the floor and it is later made to go through some mock rainfall outside the house - all to expose the child to both the joys (honey, etc.) and hazards (rain) of life. After these preliminaries, the child’s father or grandfather takes the baby, whispers its name into its ears, drops some money in a calabash of water and then announces the baby’s name to the gathering. The baby’s mother and grandmother announce their own choice of name and other relatives and well-wishers follow in suggesting still other names for the child. In the end, however, it is the name given by the child’s parents (especially the father) that is adopted over time as the child’s permanent name.

Akinnaso (1980) notes further that the naming ceremony is a symbolic invitation to the baby to enter the society and life. All its kinfolk are expected to attend and participate in the ceremony, joining in the cooking, eating, singing and dancing as well as contributing goods and services.

Bean (1980:310) provides a similar report, emphasizing the importance of rituals that accompany the naming of children:

For children the bestowal ritual always coincides with or constitutes the child's acceptance as a member of his group, his recognition as a social person (e.g. the moment the umbilical cord is severed among the Wik Monkan (Thomson 1946); from the time of the return from the birth hut until several months after among the Kewa (Franklin 1967)). An inquiry into the reasoning behind the timing of bestowal rituals for children would yield interesting information about concepts of the development of person and the process of socialization.

Many onomasticians, such as Bosch (1995), Herbert (1995), Koopman (1987), Raper (1983) and Thipa (1987), to mention but few; do not mention the importance of these rituals that accompany the naming of children. One onomastician, Koopman (1987), did try to investigate this field, but only quoted the work done by Mönning (1967). This is one of the most important occasions of name-giving among Africans. In most cases, traditional healers perform these rituals. Others prefer to use a priest to conduct the rituals. Among the Vhavenda, most traditional healers who are used for this purpose are women.

It is clear from the above exposition that Africans place great emphasis on the importance of these rituals. Should these procedures be neglected, the family and the child concerned are said to suffer from a number of ailments or bad experiences. It is also believed that members of the family will not progress in life in general if the ancestors are ignored and not informed of the arrival of a new member (baby) in the family. In the case of the ceremony that accompanies the bestowal of a new personal name on traditional leaders when they ascend the throne, the rituals performed are also thought to protect the leader against witches and to strengthen them so that their subjects will always respect them. If this is not done, it is believed that the leader will not rule his subjects for very long.

No ceremony accompanies the naming of initiates, but names are given to mark the transition from one stage to another.

## 2.7 TEKNONYMY

A teknonymy is a term that refers to a name given in a situation where a father, mother or grandparent is addressed by the personal name of his or her child or grandchild. Alford (1988:7) notes the following concerning teknonyms:

Teknonymy is a practice whereby parents at the birth of their child cease to be known by their former personal names and are known as “father of” (child’s name) and “mother of” (child’s name).

As far as teknonymy is concerned, Anim (1993) says that from the day on which a child is shown to other members of the family and a name has been bestowed, the father and the mother may assume the name of the child.

Some people use a teknonym as a means of showing respect to the parents or grandparents of a particular child. It is seen as a sign of disrespect for one to address someone who is superior by his/her first name and therefore the use of the child’s name is found to be most appropriate in this situation. Before any child is born, people address each other using title, e.g. *Vho-*, which is equivalent to the English Mr or Mrs, mostly affixed to the Christian name and/or the surname. The Tshivenda *Vho-* is used to address people of both sexes. It does not denote gender. Most African societies prefer to use the names of children when addressing the parents and the grandparents of these children. According to Anim (1993:4), parents in Ghana are addressed by the personal names of their children from the day when the first-born child is given a name.

It is usually the name of the firstborn that is used. This practice sometimes results in children not even knowing their parents’ first names. It not only confuses the children;

even some elderly members of the community do not know the first names of their friends, because they mostly address each other as the mother or father of (child's name). As long as couples have children, there is no need to worry about their first names. The parents feel respected if they are addressed by the personal names of their children, and they are pleased as they realize that the community also recognizes them as parents and adults. It sometimes happens that people fight just because someone has addressed them using their first name. The offender is reminded by the offended that he or she has a child and should be given the respect this deserves, and demands that the personal name of her/his child be used as an address. Arensen (1988:129) makes the following point about this practice among the Murle people:

After a man marries and has a child he is often referred to as the father of that child rather than by his personal name. My oldest child is called Lisa, so I was often called *Baatilisa*. This name was used by people when formally greeting me, but most people dropped this respectful form and referred to me as Jon. Children often use such a term in addressing an older person since it would be disrespectful to call him by his name as if he were their equal.

Koopman (1986:43) discovered that this system is also practised among the AmaZulu:

Zulus too use the eldest child's name but may use the second child's name if the eldest is a girl and the second a boy. Frequently, if the eldest is a girl and the second child a boy, the husband will address his wife as "*Mama ka*" (daughter's name) while she addressed him "*Baba ka*" (son's name).

Thipa (1987:116) also remarks that the Basotho use children's names to address parents and grandparents in their communities.

Al-Shahi (1988:133), in his research into the Riverain of Northern Sudan, found that it is not proper, even impolite, among them to address a person to his face by his personal name unless the speaker is very much the social superior. He goes on to report that this form of address applies to older women. He found that in speaking to superiors, equals or near-equals, it is obligatory to use, as a mark of respect, secular or religious titles.

Al-Shahi (1988:134) also found that an individual's personal name is not used in the normal mode of address; instead, they are addressed by the name of their eldest (or only) son and occasionally by the name of the eldest daughter if there are no sons. Generally, in Tshivenda tradition, children do not address their parents by their first names; they address them as father or mother of, i.e. *baba* and *mmawe/mma* respectively.

According to Thipa (1987:116), this practice of addressing parents by their children's personal names is not found among the AmaXhosa because they give the bride marriage names immediately after the wedding. Among the Vhavenda both parents are addressed as the mother or father of (child's name), and there is no strict rule that stipulates that if the firstborn is a girl, her name will be used to address the mother only, while the father will be addressed by the name of the boy if the boy is the second child.

This practice goes further by being applied as a form of address to the grandparents. Both grandparents on the paternal side are addressed by the name of their firstborn grandchildren, the granny of (child's name).

Unfortunately, most scholars reviewed in this study did not report on this aspect of teknonymy in their research on personal naming.

## **2.8 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the theoretical background of personal naming was discussed in detail. The patterns that are followed when personal names are bestowed were explained. Various scholars who have conducted research on this topic were consulted, and their contributions assessed. It emerged that, when personal names are given, people follow different patterns but that some patterns are common to several societies. In particular, it was found that the desires parents have for their children play a significant role in name-giving.

Some cultures use the naming system as a means of recording their history and experiences. They use personal names to remember their heroes and their ancestors. Some give names that describe the appearance of the child. Many important elements of the lives of these people are recorded in the personal names that are bestowed on individuals.

According to African tradition, senior members of the family were the only name-givers, even though this role has now shifted to the fathers and relatives of the family, as reported by Suzman (1994), Ndimande (1998), Stayt (1931) and several others. This has come about as a result of a weakening of the African tradition since the arrival of Western people who forced the indigenous people to abandon their traditions and follow the culture of their masters.

These personal names are not given at any particular time of the day. Different societies follow various traditions as far as when children should be named is concerned. Name-giving is often accompanied by rituals that are believed to protect the child against disease, and it is during ceremonies such as these that the living will communicate with their ancestors.

Many African societies use the child's name when addressing the parents and grandparents. This again emphasizes the value that having a child has for Africans. Detailed work on this aspect has been done by Mönnig (1967) among the Bapedi. He reported that if couples do not have a child they are given no role to play in the community. They do not deserve to belong to the category of adults because they cannot bear children. This is seen as an insult; the result may be that the man will take another wife who will give him a child. In situations where there is no child, the woman is always blamed, unless there is proof that it is the fault of the husband.

In the following chapter a detailed study of Tshivenda personal naming patterns will be presented.

## CHAPTER THREE

### NAMING PROCEDURES AND MEANING OF PERSONAL NAMES

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In all cultures, the basic purpose of naming is to provide a symbolic system of individual identification; such a symbolic system is usually historically constructed, socially maintained, and based on shared assumptions and expectations of members of a particular community (Akinnaso, 1980:277). This chapter explores aspects such as naming procedures and the meaning of personal names. A brief discussion of naming practices post-1994 will also be provided.

Every cultural group has its own traditional way of doing things, and the naming process is no exception. This study of Tshivenda personal names will reveal that Vhavenda have a unique culture, and their own procedures for giving personal names to their children. It will further show that naming procedures among the Vhavenda do not end at giving birth names. When people graduate from one stage in life, as in any other traditional society, among the Vhavenda this transition is marked by the bestowal of a new personal name, commonly accompanied by the performance of a ritual.

In the analysis of names given to children at birth and when they enter school, the trends followed by parents, priests and school teachers in the choice of personal names will be explored. A great deal has been said about the influence of the missionaries on the choice of personal names in Africa, and particularly in South Africa. Now that the South African people have been liberated from their colonial and

apartheid oppressors, the bestowal of Tshivenda personal names reveals some interesting trends. This chapter explores how the unbanning of political organizations in 1990 and the democratic dispensation that was established in 1994 has influenced the selection of names among the Vhavenḁa, and it examines the factors that influence this selection.

The arrival of a child in a family is welcomed with joy. In most African societies married couples are not respected if they do not bear children; they are often laughed at. Such a marriage is regarded as incomplete. In traditional African society the blame for not bearing children is laid at the woman's door and this will result in divorce if a solution is not found. Tournier (1975:10) notes the importance of the personal name in this regard:

The name, then, is of great importance. It is the key to effective relationship between two partners, both for the one who is named and for the other who uses his name in speaking to him.

It should be mentioned at this stage that in the Tshivenda culture, as in any other, irony and sarcasm are prevalent in the naming system. One may select a name like *Athifhelimbilu*, literally meaning "I do not worry". Its surface or hidden meaning might be that the name-giver is indirectly protesting against the unfair treatment he/she receives from people around him/her. Personal names like this are usually chosen by the parents-in-law and the irony is directed at the daughters-in-law.

In most cases when a new name is bestowed, the original name will no longer be used. However, this principle does not apply to school or Christian names. The new name together with the Christian names will now be regarded as the formal names through which an individual will be identified. Some people may still prefer to use their "birth" name, especially if this name was given after the recipient had been ill or

if this is the name of an ancestor. Such names are respected.

It is common practice among African people, Vhavenḁa in particular, that when a person graduates from one stage of life to another, he or she is given a new name. It is believed that this new name marks a transitional period, a move from one status to a new one. When a new name is given, certain rituals are frequently performed to appease the ancestors and to ask them to protect the “graduate” against the evil forces or spirits that might inhabit the new status. It is a Tshivenḁa custom that when a person gets a new name, people are discouraged from using the previous one. This is a practice that is still followed today by the Vhavenḁa, especially among traditional leaders.

A Muvēḁa would be addressed by the last name bestowed at all social gatherings. A Muvēḁa person may have as many as five personal names, depending on the number of stages or initiation schools that the individual has been through.

### **3.2 NAME CATEGORIES**

Personal names in Tshivenḁa fall into six main categories, namely; birth, initiation, school/Christian, marriage, traditional leader and teknonymy names. This is related to what Koopman (1986:19) notes with regard to the Zulu:

The average Zulu has three names:

- 1) the igama lasekhaya: Zulu personal name
- 2) the igama lesilungu: European “baptismal” name
- 3) the isibongo: the clan-name (used as a surname)

A Muvēḁa will be given several names between childhood and adulthood, depending on the number of life stages he or she has passed through. For example,

marriage names are given to brides. Men would not have such names, while traditional leaders' names are given only to Vhavenda traditional leaders.

### **3.2.1 Birth names**

Birth names are given to children immediately after birth. These names are very important because they carry the message as decided by the name-giver. Vhavenda children might be given names such as *Nndwakhulu* (Big fight), a child born when there was a fight at home; *Vhuthuhawe* (His kindness), referring to the kindness of God for giving this child; *Asivhanga* (They are not mine), when the father disputes that the children are his; *Zwanga* (My things), referring to a situation where the parent claims that whatever is there during the birth of this child is his/hers; *Khakhathi* (Problems), meaning that this child might have been born when there was a fight at home or in the village; *Maḽodzi* (Tears), suggesting that when the child was born there was a death in the family; *Athinandavha* (I do not care), meaning that when this child was born somebody, in particular the name-giver, was not happy about something at home; and *Mmbengeni* (Hate me), suggesting that those who do not accept the birth of this child should hate him/her.

### **3.2.2 School/Christian names**

When the child goes to school he or she is given another name, called the school or Christian name. Because of the prestige attached to this name in traditional African society, children prefer to be called by this name. This is a significant observation, especially regarding those children born into non-convert families: when these names were bestowed on such children, no ritual was performed. They would just be given the name on the first day of school. In his research into the naming system in

Rwanda and Burundi, Kimeyi (1989:48) makes this observation about European/school/Christian names:

The naming process has been affected among the people who have been colonized mentally, the ones who received European education, the half-intellectuals. These individuals give European names to their children and have introduced the “last name” system which didn’t exist in both Rwanda and Burundi. The imitation and assimilation of the colonial culture is seen as liberation, progress and “civilization” by the colonized mind but it is in fact deeper alienation.

In this vein, Guma (2001:271) notes:

Children were given names derived from the Bible to denote their newly acquired status, English names were also used in this fashion particularly for those who had to go and work for European settler families.

The adoption of English names as consistent with Christianity was another ploy by which missionaries divided Basotho society between “Converts” and “Non-Converts”.

Nevertheless, English names became identified with being a Christian; being civilized, being a smart and proper thing to have, and a mark of alteration in status. Alongside Christianity, the adoption of European names by Basotho entrenched European cultural hegemony, further subordinating their cultural traditions to that of Europeans.

In support of Kimeyi (1989) and Guma (2001), Yanga (1978:238) reports that the early missionaries regarded authentic African names as symbols of paganism. Those who used them were regarded as uncivilized and backward. This attitude towards African culture had a negative influence on the choice of names by those Africans who regarded themselves as civilized during the early stages of colonization. European/school/Christian names were so dominant that everyone wanted to be addressed by such names.

Regarding this use of European names by Africans, Mandela (1995:12) notes in his

autobiography:

On the first day of school, my teacher, Miss Mdingane, gave each of us an English name and said that from thenceforth that was the name we would answer to in school. This was the custom among Africans in those days and was undoubtedly due to the British bias of our education. The education I received was a British education, in which British ideas, British culture, British institutions, were automatically assumed to be superior.

That day, Miss Mdingane told me that my new name was Nelson. Why she bestowed this particular name upon me I have no idea.

Vhavenda also followed this trend. They gave their children English names when they were registered at schools. Children were given names such as Peter, Victoria, Paul, Maria, Nelson, William and Livingstone. When these people became adults these names were preferred over their African personal first names. The bearers of these names felt respected and civilized whenever they were addressed by their English names.

### **3.2.3 Initiation school names**

These are names given to children who have been to initiation schools. This applies mainly to boys. The child will use his birth name until he attends initiation school. On his return he will be given a new name and the birth name will no longer be used. From this day it will be a punishable offence for anyone to use his birth name. Initiation schools have many important cultural functions among Africans. As Mandela (1994:24) notes:

I had now taken the essential step in the life of every Xhosa man. Now, I might marry, set up my own home, and plow my own field. I could now be admitted to the councils of the community; my words would be taken seriously.

In traditional Venda, an uncircumcised man is always regarded as a child. Traditionally, circumcision occurred only at initiation schools, and an uncircumcised man was not allowed to participate in community activities; he was also not accorded the status or respect that is given to men who had attended circumcision school; this compelled parents to send their children to these schools.

Mathivha (1985:26) reports that the Bantu usher in this state with pride and celebration and with seclusion in schools where the young are taught the arts and behaviour of adulthood, particularly the art of married life. "Formal" education of the Vhavenda was offered at recognized initiation schools. The schools marked a transitional period from girlhood to womanhood or from the boyhood to manhood. At these schools the young were taught formulae (*milayo*), songs and physical toughening.

In the traditional African society initiation schools give the youth prestigious status. Once they have passed through these schools, the youth are regarded as "young adults". They assume full adult status when they get married and have their own children. Mathivha (1985:27) notes that the training initiates received at these schools is sometimes very hard and tedious. Upon graduation, new names are bestowed on them. Sumbwa (1997:49) says this about names that are acquired later by boys:

Boys assume such names at the adolescent stage of their growth. As adolescents, they consider themselves as being no longer children and endeavor to drop the childhood names which they associate with that stage of growth. Once the new names are chosen, and self-proclaimed, their bearers make sure that all those younger than themselves, cease to call them by the old names.

In the traditional Tshivenda, when boys returned from the initiation schools, they would have new names such as *Matevhutevhu*, *Maluṭa*, *Nkhelebeni*, *Ntshavheni*,

*Nndanduleni* or *Nndwakhulu*. The initiation school personal names would from that point on replace their birth names.

### 3.2.4 Marriage names

These are names that are given to brides (*vhaselwa*) when they get married. In traditional Tshivenda culture the bride (*muselwa*) (*makoti* in IsiXhosa) would be given a new name during the induction course, *u laya muselwa*. Traditionally, when a bride was married, the older people, together with the *makhadzi*, would sit down with the bride and teach her the laws and rules of her new home and status. This was done on the day on which the bride came out of seclusion. The *makhadzi* or anyone assigned with this task would announce several names before the bride. When a name she liked was announced she would show a sign of acceptance. The audience would sing with joy. From this day onwards, everybody would address her by this new name and she would also identify herself with the group of married people. The new name gave her a new identity: she was no longer a girl, but an adult and at the same time a married person. In some families the bride would be given a name that would later be bestowed on her firstborn regardless of the child's gender. Vhavana brides would be given names such *Nyadenga*, *Nyamasindi*, *Mususumeli*, *Phophi*, *Nyatshisevhe*, *Nyaluvhani*, etc.

When brides with names such as *Nyadenga* and *Nyamasindi* gave birth, their first children would be called *Denga* and *Masindi* respectively. The prefix *nya-* means "the mother of". Most Tshivenda personal names do not differentiate between genders, i.e. a name like *Mususumeli* may be bestowed on people of either gender. However, names that start with the prefixes *nya-* and *riwa-* are not bestowed on men. The Tshivenda prefixes *nya-* and *riwa-* denote female gender, and they mean the child

of.

According to the informants, Vhavenḡa also use maiden names to address brides; they affix the prefix *Nwa-* to the maiden name, such as *Nwakhakhu*, *Nwakhadi*, *Nwasundani* and *Nwafunyufunyu* (Mathivha 1961: 5-12). The prefixed *Nwa-* means that the bride is “the child of”. This system means that the bride is always linked to her family.

As in other naming processes, the process of naming brides is followed by a ceremony at which the ancestors are informed of the new family member. One of the informants said that rituals are sometimes carried out by her family before the bride moves to the bridegroom’s home. The purpose of the ritual in this regard would be to wish her good luck in her new life and also to protect her against diseases and witches. Rituals are also performed to ask the ancestors to help her to conceive as soon as possible.

According to the informants, a similar process of bestowing a new personal name on a bride is found among the AmaXhosa. Here the process is used as a sign of welcoming and accepting a new member of the family. The AmaXhosa personal names bestowed on the bride also serve as sign of the expectations the bridegroom’s family has of the new bride. A new bride might be given personal names such as:

(a) *Nokhaya* (Home)

This name is usually given to a bride who is married to the firstborn son. According to AmaXhosa culture, the first son is the one who will remain in the home, staying with his parents. Therefore, his wife will be expected to carry the legacy of the family should the parents-in-law die.

(b) *Nophumuzile* (Reliever)

This personal name means that through the marriage, the mother-in-law has found someone to relieve her of some of the family duties. The mother-in-law will now find time to rest.

(c) *Nokwakha* (Builder)

This personal name is given to the bride with the message that the family should now grow, meaning that she will bear more children for the family. This personal name also means that she will bring unity by joining the family.

(d) *Noxolo* (Peacemaker)

In some cases when a new bride arrives, she influences the husband negatively and the husband will begin to hate his parents and siblings. Through the use of this personal name the family is telling the bride that they expect her instead to bring peace and unity to the family.

According to the informants, in IsiZulu brides are addressed by their maiden clan names. In this way they are given the highest honour: they feel respected and appreciated. This system allows brides to be properly identified, and the communities are constantly reminded of where they come from. The prefix *ma-* is affixed to the maiden name, for example, *MaNtuli*, *MaMkhize*, *MaKhumalo*, *MaMlambo*, *MaNdlovu*; and where the surname starts with the prefix *ma-*, the prefix *ka-* is used instead, for example, *KaMabuza*, *KaMagwaza*, *KaMabaso*, *KaMakhanya*.

When the bride has been given this new personal name, her original personal name ceases to exist. It will only be used when she visits her home. However, among the AmaZulu and among some Tshivenda clans, brides are addressed by their maiden clan names or by their fathers' personal names. The name-givers are mostly female

members of the family or the mother-in-law. It is crucial to understand that personal marriage names are not nicknames.

### **3.2.5 Traditional leaders' names**

All Tshivenda traditional leaders are given new names during their inauguration ceremony. A name selected during this ceremony may also refer to the neighbouring chief or to members of the royal family who do not agree with the choice of nominated successor, e.g. the name *Dzulani* (Stay/Seat) refers to the headman and his community. The contextual meaning is that after this community was forcibly removed from their land, they managed to return. When their headman was appointed, he was accorded this name to mean that no one would evict them again.

The name *Gumani* (Stop), is bestowed on a headman after a dispute over a boundary, in cases where the neighbouring chief wants to extend his boundary into the headman's territory. The contextual meaning tells him to stop this action. This headman is appointed to stop the chief from invading their land.

Guma (2001) has noted that names bestowed on individuals may refer to historical events, experiences, emotions, status relations, clan and kinship relations as well as authority. This is practised particularly when Vhavana traditional leaders are given names during their inauguration ceremonies, e.g. *Midiyavhathu* (Historical events). The person given this name used to burn the homes of the enemies he defeated. *Takalani* (Emotions) tells the community to be happy because they have a new leader, or *Thavha* (Mountain, Authority), tells the community that they now have a new leader who is brave and will be difficult to defeat. In traditional African societies bravery was a characteristic that made one a good leader.

It should be emphasized that, traditionally, Africans are superstitious people. The purpose of rituals is to strengthen an individual when that person attains a new status/role in life. These rituals are performed to prevent sorcerers from sending their evil spirits to the “graduate”.

### 3.2.6 Teknonymy

As has already been stated, teknonymy occurs when a parent or grandparent adopts the name of the child or grandchild. Anim (1993), discussing teknonymy, notes that from the day a child is shown to other members of the family and is named, the father and the mother may assume the name of this child.

This system means that members of the family/community tend to “forget” the real names of the parents and grandparents. The use of this system is mostly welcome as it shows respect (*u hulisa*) to someone with children or grandchildren. However, Tshivenda has other names which indicate respect (*u hulisa*) such as *mmane* (maternal aunt), *khotsimunene* (paternal uncle), *malume* (maternal uncle), *vhamusanda* (chief), *vhafunzi* (priest), *makhadzi* (paternal aunt), *makhulu* (grandmother/father or parents-in-laws) etc. The most common indication of respect in Tshivenda is the use of the prefix *Vho-*, used before the first name or surname. According to Guma (2001:271):

It is taboo for a married woman to address her father-in-law by his first name, while the same holds for the mother-in-law in relation to her son-in-law’s name and vice versa.

Thipa (1987:116) supports this:

Basotho have a custom whereby parents adopt the name of their first-born child. Usually this is done by prefixing *Mma-* (mother of) and *Ra-*

(father of) to an existing noun. Such names have two components, namely politeness and status. Their use with respect to parents is regarded as a polite form of address in so far as it reckons with their enhanced status in the community.

In traditional Tshivenda this practice is still being practised. In their homes, parents and grandparents are addressed by the names of their children and grandchildren respectively, and sometimes this even happens at social gatherings. For example, if a child or grandchild is called *Mashudu*, one would hear addresses such as *mme a Mashudu* (the mother of *Mashudu*) or *khotsi a Mashudu* (the father of *Mashudu*) or *makhulu wa Mashudu* (the grandparent of *Mashudu*). However, there are no rituals that are performed as far as the system of teknonymy is concerned.

### **3.3 NAMING PROCEDURES**

The Vhavenda are a nation that has its own culture and traditions. As Africans, Vhavenda were not excluded from Western or colonial influences that came with the early missionaries. The analysis of Tshivenda personal names provides an interesting phenomenon in this regard. Aspects mentioned in Chapter Two that determine the selection of personal names also played a role in personal naming practices among the Vhavenda.

The Vhavenda, like many other cultures, are very careful when it comes to the selection of personal names. A child is born, a bride is married, and initiates return home, a traditional leader is installed: the events that coincide with these ceremonies have an influence on the choice of the name. People who are responsible for the choice of names in these circumstances will always take into account the events and behaviour observed at the time of name-giving. This observation will provide them with the necessary information for the selection of an appropriate name. A favourable

event and/or behaviour will be rewarded with a better name, while unfavourable circumstances or behaviour will elicit a name that likewise has negative connotations. On the subject of Ovambo children of Namibia, Saarelma-Maunumaa (1999:40) remarks:

When a child is born, he or she was first given a temporary name, a "birth name" which usually indicated the time of the day the baby was born, e.g. *Angula* (boy) *Nangula* (girl) "morning" *Uusiku* (boy), *Nuusiku* (girl) "night", or events occurring at the time of birth e.g. *mvula* "rain", *Uukongo* (boy), *Nuukongo* (girl) "hunting".

Aspects that are taken into consideration in the choice of a personal name include a variety of things. Candidates may be bestowed with personal names that refer to a national disaster or family bereavement or misfortunes. Personal names of the ancestors/forefathers are also selected. In the case of naming children, some parents prefer to name their children after themselves or their grandparents, who may be alive or dead. Some parents also like to give their children personal names referring to a national celebration, such as national freedom. Some also prefer to give their children names that refer to what they wish for in life, or what they wish the child to become or achieve.

As far as traditional leaders are concerned, though some tribes or clans choose to name their leaders after their forefathers, the majority of names bestowed on traditional leaders refer to events that occurred around the inauguration period, such as disputes regarding the rightful heir. Sumbwa (1997:47) comments thus on the practice in Zambia:

Some Zambian names are like springs. They constitute sources of valuable information in various disciplines including those of anthropology, history and linguistics.

Tshivenḡa personal names, like most other African names, form a condensed story of what is happening in the family and the community, and sometimes they act as a short history of society in general. A name like *Tshitereke* (Strike) is given to a person who is born during war between the two villages or during protests. One who is born when there is conflict in the family is often called *Ndwakhulu* (Big fight), and one born when there is famine in the country may be addressed as *Tshiwandalani* (The one born when there is famine).

If the child is born after the in-laws have discovered that the bride does not like them, and that when she cooks she does not give them food and shows signs of disrespect, they will choose a name that reflects their unhappiness with this ill-treatment. Situations like these are very common because often the in-laws, especially the parent-in-laws, interfere in the activities of the daughter-in-law. This results in conflicts, because most daughters-in-law like to do things their own way, which in most cases is different from what parent-in-laws want done. This is where personal names like *Athihelimbilu* (I do not worry), *Mulambilu* (One who worries too much), and *Athinandavha* (I do not care) originate.

Traditionally, Vhavenḡa do not give children names before they are born. They fear that if they do so, the child might die. They wait to name the child until after the umbilical cord has healed or until after the child has gained enough weight. Once the child has been given a name, everybody is allowed to hold it. It is not considered safe for the child to be carried before this. However, one of the informants said that the traditional Vhavenḡa named their children after three months.

### 3.3.1 Naming Ceremony

Traditionally, a child does not get a name immediately after birth as mentioned earlier. There are different procedures that are followed by different cultures when it comes to the choice and bestowal of a personal name on a child. Generally, when a child is given a personal name, the name-giving ceremony is accompanied by the performance of certain rituals. These rituals differ according to cultures and they serve different purposes.

A naming ceremony is a ceremony in which a person is bestowed with a name. During this ceremony the family prepares enough food and beer for guests. Among the Vhavenda, the main guest at the name-giving ceremony is the traditional healer, *maine*, who performs the ritual. The second most important guest is the *makhadzi*, the father's senior sister.

It is believed that if these rituals are not performed the child may suffer from disease or even die young. Some of the medicines used during this ceremony are meant to give the child a boost so that it gains weight as quickly as possible. This ritual is performed in order to immunize the child. These rituals also serve as a sign of thanksgiving to the ancestors, as it is generally believed among Africans that the ancestors play an important role from the day the child is conceived and that they will continue to look after it until death. Mbiti (1967:115), in his research on the importance of ritual among the Akamba society, discovered that:

When a child has been born, the parents slaughter a goat or bull on the third day. Many people come to rejoice with the family concerned, and women sit together to give a name to the child. This is known as the name of *ngima*, the *ngima*.

Africans, as part of their faith, report everything important in their lives to their ancestors. Kimeyi (1989:12) makes this comment about naming in Burundi and Rwanda:

Naming is a big social event in both Rwanda and Burundi. The naming ceremonies take place in the evening of the seventh day after the baby is born. Prior to the ceremonies, the mother and the baby stay inside the house. Relatives take care of them during that time. The mother has to recuperate, and the baby is too fragile and has to be protected from contagious diseases.

Jayaraman (2005:478) comments about the Hindu culture:

The actual naming ceremony consists of two related rituals. First, the child's father's sister brings some red threads fashioned from cotton and silk, and ties one to each of the child's wrists and ankles, two to his or her waist, and one to the cradle. In some households, the threads are black, but regardless of whether they are red or black, the idea is that they protect the child against the Evil Eye. The paternal aunt also presents the child with two small pieces of gold or silver if her family is well-to-do. Second, the child is usually taken from the room where he or she was born and placed in a wooden cradle or hammock made from a *sari* (cotton dress). The four corners of the cradle or hammock are held by the nearest relatives of the child, including his or her brothers and sisters, and the aunt pronounces the child's name at the auspicious moment.

Stayt (1931: 87), in his research on the Vhavenḡa, found that:

After the cord has dropped off the doctor visits the hut- the medicine-man proceeds to make small incisions all over it, on the forehead, the front and back of the neck, shoulders, elbows, wrists, thighs, knees, ankles, stomach and buttocks, into which he rubs medicine to protect it against sickness and to enable it to grow into a strong and lusty child.

Traditionally, when Vhavenḡa perform these rituals, elderly people who live in the neighbourhood are invited to attend the ceremony. Family relatives from the paternal and maternal sides are invited to the ceremony. As mentioned earlier, this ceremony

is conducted by a traditional doctor, *maine*. In most cases, each family has one traditional doctor who performs this function for all children born into that family. Whether male or female, this person is addressed as *maine*. The word *maine* is a Tshivenda word meaning “a specialist”.

The outdooring function, *u thusa riwana*, is mostly conducted in the morning or late in the afternoon, *nga mathabama*. It is accompanied by a party where participants enjoy food and beer prepared specifically for this occasion. Once the outdooring ceremony is over, everybody is allowed to see the baby. The father is also allowed to see the baby for the first time after this ceremony: before this ritual has been performed, the father of the child is not allowed to see the baby because he is regarded as not “clean”. Due to the polygamous system practised by the Vhenda, the belief is that the father is involved in sexual intercourse with other wives, and therefore not “clean” to touch the child. It is believed that if the father touches the child or enters into the secluded hut before the outdooring ceremony, the child may become ill and die. After the hut in which the mother and the child have been staying is “cleaned” by the *maine*, everybody is allowed to go in and the mother and the child are also allowed to go outside and mix with other members of the family and community.

It is also important to note that before the *u thusa riwana* is conducted, only children who are not yet mature and women who have reached menopause are allowed into the hut to see the mother and child. This group of people is considered to be “clean” from sexually related diseases because they are assumed not to be sexually active. There is a firm belief among the traditional Vhenda that if a person who has had sexual intercourse enters the mother’s hut, the child will become ill (*riwana u a fhisa*) immediately. It is important to understand this philosophy and also that traditionally African people are superstitious. This taboo was meant to prevent parents from

engaging in sexual activities while the child was still young, because in those days there were no family planning methods as there are today. In traditional African culture, parents are not allowed to engage in sexual activities while the mother is breastfeeding: a mother could breastfeed her baby until it is as old as four before engaging in sexual intercourse again.

It is during this ceremony that the child will be given a name by which he will in future be known. This ceremony also marks the acceptance of the child as a human being into the community. Before this ceremony is conducted people are not sure whether the child will survive, hence most people in the family and community do not have access to the child. Raper (1983) notes:

Among the Western African people (and American blacks) for example, a child is not considered to be finally born until it has been given a name, it is not considered human until named, and often no name is given until the parents are certain the child will survive.

Thipa (1983: 110) reports that:

A child is regarded as a gift from the supernatural. A child is not only regarded as a gift from the supernatural but also a gift which comes through prayer.

At this stage other members of the family do not know what the child looks like, except for the little information that they have received from the few who have had the privilege of entering the hut to see the mother and child. This makes other members of the family and community eager to participate in the name-giving ceremony where the majority of family members and the community will see the baby for the first time. This is another reason that this function is important in the community.

Anim (1993:2) concurs with the above description when he says that the *outdooring* ceremony is the day when the baby, who has been kept away from the public all this while, may be brought outdoors. This is when the baby is accepted as a human being and given a human name, which signifies his own human identity. This is the proudest moment for the parents, and family members on both sides of the baby's parentage are "invited", as are friends and neighbours of the couple.

During this ceremony, relatives, neighbours and well-wishers present gifts to the couple. These gifts depend on the practice of that particular society. According to Akinnaso (1980:227), the following occurs at the naming ceremony in Nigeria:

Among the Yoruba, child naming is a ritual in itself, a communal festive occasion celebrated jointly by relatives, friends, neighbours, acquaintances and well-wishers. Traditionally, the naming ceremony usually takes place in the morning of the seventh day after the child's birth if it is female and the ninth day if it is male.

In traditional African society where naming ceremonies are still conducted, they happen at different times of the day depending on the culture of that particular society. Some prefer to do it in the morning, while others prefer the afternoon.

Traditionally, Vhavenḡa prefer to conduct this ceremony in the morning or late in the afternoon. One of the informants said that these times are preferred because they are the times when the deceased are buried. Another informant said that they prefer these times because there are no baboons roaming around. They believe that if the child sees a baboon during the naming ceremony, it will imitate the way the baboon walks. In order to avoid such behaviour the ceremony is conducted when the presence of baboons is unlikely.

Vilakazi (2002: 10) reports that among the Ndebele the naming ceremony takes place early in the morning (at about 4:00) and it is over before sunrise (which is normally around 6:00).

School or Christian names are bestowed on children when they are baptized in church. Those who belong to families which have not been converted receive their names from teachers or their parents when they register at school. This system also applies to names given to senior persons at work. They are either bestowed by their superiors or colleagues. With these types of names no ritual or ceremony is performed, except when names are given at baptism.

Initiates choose initiation names themselves upon graduation. Anyone in the community who wants to know the name must kneel before the initiate and ask his name. The name will only be given after the initiate has beaten this person severely. Most of the people who come to ask for the name are young women. The initiate is not allowed to tell anyone his name without going through this protocol. If he fails to do this he will be severely punished by the elders. During this period all initiates are smeared with reddish ointment. These personal names mark the graduation from one stage to another.

In traditional Tshivenda culture girls do not get new names when they return from traditional school. They have only a name that shows that they are mature enough to get married, *dzina la vhusidzana* (adolescent name). Like the initiation names for boys, they choose these names themselves.

As far as marriage names are concerned among the Vhavenda, a day before bridesmaids are allowed to leave the house where they have been secluded for a

certain period, they will secretly “steal” water in the evening. This is a sign to the family, and the community at large, that tomorrow the bridesmaids will be out of seclusion. At the ceremony different personal names are mentioned before the bride: she should give a sign of acceptance only to a name she likes. All bridesmaids are smeared with traditional reddish ointment (*luvhundi*), and their heads are half shaved (*Tshiundu*). Members of the family and the community will then enjoy beer and food prepared for this ceremony. From here onwards, bridesmaids are given different tasks by those related to the family of the bridegroom.

After the bridesmaids have returned home, the *makhadzi* will ask the ancestors to protect the marriage and bless new family with children. This practice is not performed by all families among the Vhavenda.

Before the inauguration of a traditional leader, he/she is taken to the family traditional doctor, the *maine*. The *maine* performs all the necessary procedures, including protecting the new leader against malevolent spirits. The *maine* will also inform the ancestors about the appointment of the new leader and ask for their help in protecting this leader. On the day before the inauguration, or early on the day of the inauguration itself, the *makhadzi* will ask the ancestors for the protection of the new leader from malevolent spirits. The announcement of the new name is made at the inauguration ceremony.

The bestowal of a child's name on parents or grandparents is not accompanied by the performance of any rituals. After the child has a name, his or her parents and or grandparents are simply addressed by that name.

### 3.3.2 Name-givers

In traditional African societies the issue of registering people, dead or alive, in a census, was not part of their tradition. This was part of their oral history. Everything which was of great value to Africans was recorded in their oral literature. In traditional African society, children were born at home and not in hospitals as became the case after the arrival of the missionaries (Neethling, 2005). In the traditional Venda setting midwives were elderly women who were experienced in delivering babies. The naming of the child immediately after birth was discouraged owing to many beliefs and taboos, as has been discussed above.

In some cultures, parents are primary namers of their children, but in others, and African cultures in particular, senior members of the family carry this responsibility.

Herbert (1995:5) states:

It is apparent that the vast bulk of names are given by family members, especially parents and grandparents. Parents are the most common name-givers, followed by paternal grandparents, and then the maternal grandparents, especially the grandmother.

Raper (1983) reports that among the Japanese, children are named within ten days of birth, on the fourth, eighth or tenth day. The essential feature in this ceremony is that a child is named after someone.

Kimeyi (1989) found that in Burundi and Rwanda the father is the name-giver. Names given by the mother are temporary.

Suzman (1994:254) quotes Krige (1936) who reports that among the Amazulu, the father or the grandfather names the child within a few weeks of birth after consulting

other members of the family. Suzman (1994) emphasizes that it is the responsibility of the father or grandfather to name the child after this consultation. According to Sumbwa (1997:49), among the Barotse of Zambia:

Parents are responsible for name-giving during the first stage. They select names of the newly born babies or approve ones suggested by their relatives, whether these be old or young. Such names are usually taken from the existing pool of names of relatives (both living and deceased) for the purpose of perpetuating their (the names) existence. Besides the need to ensure their continuity, the choice of such names is equally influenced (in the case of deceased persons) by the desire to honour them and to make certain that they have a place in the family's history.

Bean (1980:309) quotes other scholars on the role of personal name bestowal:

Bestowal of a child's name is often the duty of the parents, but is as likely to be the duty of a senior kinsman or of a ritual specialist and participation of members of the larger community is usually required.

In most cases the naming ceremony is conducted by a female *maine* as there are many taboos associated with this task. In traditional African society, issues of childbirth are associated with females, and it is culturally accepted that a male person cannot perform this task. One informant said that where a male *maine* is asked to perform this task, he is usually accompanied by a female assistant. Another informant said that the female *maine* is preferred because she knows about female matters. Some informants claimed that both male and female *maine* are allowed to carry out this task, depending on their expertise. Koopman (1986:32) notes:

The various peoples of Africa differ on who customarily gives the name. In some societies the father has his right, in others the mother, or perhaps a grandmother or aunt. In some societies there is no one person who customarily chooses the name: anyone in the family may name a new born child.

Though most of the informants among the Vhavenḁa agree that the *makhadzi* is the only one who chooses the name, they also note that the *maine* is sometimes allowed in some families to choose the name for the child. A *maine* is regarded as the family doctor; therefore he or she is part of the family. By virtue of being the family doctor, s/he knows all the family secrets. One informant said that in the traditional Tshivhenḁa culture, the midwives were also allowed to choose a name for the newly born child. The chosen name reflects important events that have occurred in the family. Moyo (1996:12) says that:

When it came to personal names, the Ngoni and the Tumbuka followed Ngoni cultural practices in that the fathers and grandfathers of the husband's family became the sole name-givers. The name given to the child carried with it great influence within the larger family, with the result that the personality of the child was seldom the focus of his/her name. Ngoni patrilineal culture played a dominant role while the child's maternal side played no role in name-giving, except in exceptional cases where *lobola* may not have been paid in full; invariably power was vested in the father as head of the family. Name-giving could then be said to reflect cultural attitudes with social contexts on the paternal side.

As Vhavenḁa follow a patriarchal system, the paternal grandparents are the ones who decide on the particular name for the child. However, the father may put in a request to be allowed to name the child after some living or dead person who has been an important factor in his own life. Also, with the present socio-economic-political changes, the grandparents's role in bestowing names is becoming weaker. Vilakazi (2002:18) says:

There is a dramatic change in the traditional family structure. Grandfathers and fathers are no longer regarded as name-givers as people no longer live with the extended families. Children are now given names by their mothers in most instances (or sometimes by their fathers) before they are born. In Ndebele they are sometimes given names that are not drawn from their language or culture.

This is the case among the modern Vhavenḁa. In the modern setting, a Muvenḁa parent chooses a name for the child without involving the grandparents. Some of these names are decided upon long before the child is born. Taboos that traditionally prevented parents from naming their children have been weakened because of socio-economic-political changes. Herbert (1996:188) further reports:

The basic workings of the Nguni system are well-known: the name-giver is typically a senior member of the husband family who bestows a name reflecting conditions surrounding the time of birth, physical features of the infant, social conditions within the family, or any subjective state of the name-giver. It is only a slight exaggeration to say word; phrase or sentence may serve as the basis for an individual's birth name.

Among the Vhavenḁa, names bestowed on traditional leaders are selected by the person who will officially install the leader in consultation with the royal council. In Tshivhenḁa, the official installation is done by an elderly person, who comes from the senior house, a *khotsimuhulu*, father's brother or an uncle, *malume*, a successor's mother's brother, usually from the same clan. When a headman is installed, the chief will officiate and decide on the name of the new leader. In this case the chief may or may not consult with others.

### **3.4 MEANING OF PERSONAL NAMES**

The fundamental purpose of naming in African society is to convey a message from the name-giver to the entire family and the community at large. As has been reported in the previous sections, a name is chosen which encapsulates events during and around the birth. Though there are other cultures or families that choose to give their children names of ancestors, those names carry meaning in that they continue to remind the family of their forefathers. Most scholars agree that names are used as

pointers or to distinguish one individual from another. However, this is not the sole aim of a name in traditional African society. Meaning carries more weight than identification as far as African personal names are concerned.

When analysing Tshivenda personal names one realizes that there are many features recorded in these names. As far as the African personal name is concerned, it should have meaning. The meaning that is referred to in this instance is a cultural or a contextual meaning. By this is meant a meaning that is associated with one's culture. A name must refer to one's culture, history, religion, economy and so on. A personal name should link the recipient to his or her cultural environment.

Like most African societies, the Vhavana also recognize the existence of God. Some of the personal names that they choose for their children refer to these beliefs. These include personal names such as *Mashudu (Lucky)*, meaning we are lucky to have this child from God, *Fulufhelo (Faith)*, meaning it is through our faith in God that we have this child, *Rofhiwa (Given)*, meaning, this child was given to us by God, *Lufuno (Love)*, meaning it is through the love of God that we have this child, *Tshilidzi (Mercy)*, meaning it is through the mercy of God that we have this child, and *Khathutshelo (Forgiven)*, meaning it is through the forgiveness of God that we have this child. All these refer to the existence of God and confirm the belief that it is through God that these children were born.

Tshivenda culture features many taboos and superstitions. The observation of these taboos and their superstitious life meant that the Vhavana lived harmoniously with their environment before the arrival of foreign culture with the early missionaries.

African personal names reflect the socio-cultural, political and religious environment



on which the society depends. While all theorists agree that names have lexical and contextual meaning, the majority of African names in particular carry contextual meaning. The study of personal names reveals that information encapsulated in names may mirror the philosophy of the name-givers and the community. African personal names are not mere labels as we have been led to believe; they are fountains of emotions, wishes and history.

Naming forms part of the oral tradition in Africa. Through naming, important events are recorded for future reference. A person named *Maḥodzi* was born immediately after the death of a relative; this name will always remind the family of this death. It is important to note that sometimes when one asks someone's date of birth, one will be referred to the date of the event recorded in the name (i.e. Question: When were you born? Answer: I was born after the death of my grandmother, hence the name *Maḥodzi*). The name *Muvhuso* was given to a person born in 1979 when the then Republic of Venda received its independence from the Republic of South Africa. Independence Day fell on 13 September 1979; therefore, *Muvhuso* was born on this day. According to Willis (1994:2):

Names offer a valuable window on the process through which constructs of social identity were and are made, on how these processes have differed over time and in different societies, and on how these constructs of identity relate to one another.

Jayaraman (2005:478) reports the following about the meaning of personal names in Hindu tradition:

In the Hindu tradition, a name not only reveals a person's self-identity, but also his or her cultural, sectarian, *varna*, and caste identities. Further, it is believed to signal one's spiritual worth not only in this world, but also in the next. In everyday life, Hindus give great significance to a name.

Thus names given to individuals refer to historical events, experiences, emotions, status relations, clan and kinship relations, as well as authority. An African personal name plays a very important role in the daily life of African people. It ties one to one's culture and community. Akinyemi (2005:116) comments on the importance of Yoruba personal names:

Yoruba personal names are used in the Diaspora to preserve the African identity, to reinforce a sense of community among groups of people who use these names, and to specify a person's lineage, history, professional affiliation, and spiritual patronage.

Akinnaso (1980:278) says this about the meaning of personal names among the Yoruba of Nigeria:

The Yoruba personal name system serves to reinforce those cooperative and self-other relationships as well as those highly esteemed virtues which together define the social order. Through the naming ceremony and subsequently its personal name, the new baby is identified with its people and the social order of which it is a part. In particular, its personal name often shows very clearly that the baby is viewed as a reflection of the social order for it is those events, values, and belief systems which have psychological and socio-cultural reality for its family, clan, or community that provide the cultural information and rules for the construction of the baby's name.

Tshivenda names that are bestowed on children attach to them their cultural environment. A person with a Tshivenda name like *Muṭhuphei* (One who is suffering) feels greatly attached to Tshivenda culture, unlike one called Peter. The name Peter does not have any Tshivenda cultural attachment. On the other hand, when a Tshivenda name is bestowed, a Tshivenda ritual accompanies the naming.

Akinnaso (1980) makes a significant observation which applies generally to almost all African naming systems. He says that Yoruba personal names serve as an open

diary by providing a system through which information is symbolically stored and retrieved. This view emphasizes the fact that African names are not only pointers, but record keeping devices or archives. African personal names could be called “short essays”.

When a foreigner settles in an African community, he or she is usually given a local name in the form of a nickname. He/she will gladly accept this name in order to be accepted by the local community. This shows the importance of an African personal name. It carries with it a sense of belonging. Herbert (1996:187) reports:

The name is a free creation on the part of the name-giver: one needs to refer back to the social circumstances in which the name was conceived / bestowed in order to understand its significance. Information about the donor, viz. what s/he perceives as significant, is conveyed by the name.

On the meaning of personal names, Guma (2001:267), who did research among the Basotho of Southern Africa, says:

The meaning attached to names by Basotho plays a significant role in the definition of “personhood”, because it is believed that a given name not only serves as an identity but also determines the type of person the individual will be. Names are believed to have influence on the character of the bearer.

Sumbwa (1997:51), in his studies on Barotse names in Zambia, disagrees with theorists who say that the function of a name is to signify or represent its bearer. He gives as an example the name *Kekelwa* that was bestowed on a child whose survival appeared doubtful and induced people to utter anxious remarks. He adds that, like *Kekelwa*, most names, if not all, have special meanings and are selected to serve certain purposes or explain certain occurrences or experiences.

Personal names function to individualize and distinguish people from others. Although Sumbwa (1997) pays considerable attention to the meaning of African personal names, one can further conclude that African personal names have several functions. Musere and Byakutaga (1998:01) report that:

They may identify one with an occupation or implements used in this occupation, and establish one as an associate (or relation) of a group or a person involved in an occupation. They may infer one as an inhabitant (or a descendent of an inhabitant) of a locality. Names may identify one with phenomena that are prevalent in one's area of habitation. Names may also depict the past and the present modes of production and living in an area. African names often reflect negative or positive opinions of the name-givers towards the child or other people (usually kin, neighbours, or friends). The child's name can commemorate significant events or circumstances at the time of birth. Because a large volume of African names is based on circumstances surrounding the birth of the child, proper interpretation of them involves philosophical insight and application.

Akinnaso (1980) says that in all cultures the basic purpose of naming is to provide a symbolic system of identification. He adds that such a symbolic system is usually historically constructed, socially maintained, and based on shared assumptions and expectations of members of a particular community.

Akinnaso (1980:277) believes that personal names are used to differentiate individuals. He further argues that these names should also have meaning.

In general, one finds that the Yoruba personal name system provides some structured perspective in terms of which the individual makes sense out of, stores, and processes information about his own experience and about the world. Therefore, besides its more obvious function which is the differentiation of individuals, personal naming in Yoruba is another way of talking about what one experiences, values, thinks and knows in the real world.

Tournier (1975:7) places greater emphasis on the identification function of a personal

name:

The child, then, must from the start become aware of himself as a person. It is through his personal name that he will come to this awareness. Your child will hear his name, the name you chose for him in advance – Francis, perhaps – many thousands of times throughout his life, and he will know that it means him, an individual, responsible for his own feelings and actions.

The view raised by Tournier (1975) is not the African philosophy of naming. He is emphasizing the issue of identification rather than meaning. Names are not labels as far as Africans are concerned. If names were mere labels there would have been no need for the early missionaries to force African people to abandon their African names and adopt theirs. African personal naming process forms an important component of culture.

Most onomasticians agree that African names carry meaning. There are very few African names that do not do so or whose meaning is not known. In Tshivenda, one does find names like *Masindi*, *Mukatshelwa*, *Phophi*, and so on, whose meanings are not known today. Thipa (1987:108) supports this:

It is not every person's name which has some cultural significance. For example, Xhosa *Nocawe* is the name of a girl born on a Sunday. There does not seem to be anything more to that name than that. On the other hand, Xhosa *Velaphi* ("where do you come from") refers either to a boy who had long been expected to be born but in vain, or, appropriately, it refers to an illegitimate boy. In the latter sense the father disowns the child, and is, in fact, saying, "I do not know how you were born because I did not father you".

Bangeni and Coetser (2000: 63) comment on the AmaXhosa naming practices as follows:

Whilst the adoption of Western names by AmaXhosa who became educated and had more contact with whites was prevailing, in the rural areas where you would find illiterate people, traditional African names were given to babies, names which centered on everyday community life.

It has been revealed that African personal names carry meanings related to the social, political and religious environments which affect their daily life. Various theorists agree that these names are also used to differentiate individuals.

The next section discusses personal names which have been categorized according to meaning.

### **3.4.1 Emotion-related names**

These are names given to children which reveal a particular emotion on the part of the name-giver. The message carried by these names may refer to situations at the time of the child's birth. The message might be a wish or an expectation from the name-giver for the child or the family, i.e. *Dakalo* (Happiness), *Faranani* (Work together), *Livhuwani* (be thankful). Jayaraman (2005: 487) reports:

In the south, as in other parts of India, names may tell the joy and expectations of parents of newborn children. For example, if a child is born to a couple many years after marriage, he may be endearingly named after some precious metal or gem, such as *Ratnam* (diamond), *Sona* (gold), *Banghru* (gold) or *Muthu* (pearl). Naming may also be related to other family experiences. For example, in Tamilnadu, if a family has experienced a high child mortality, a surviving child may be named *Pichi* (gift of god) if male, and *Pichiamma* if female.

Elements of idiosyncrasy and creativity are also apparent in Indian naming customs. For example, an eminent professor of Telugu in Andhra Pradesh gave his daughter one of the longest names encountered: *Sri Arunachala Kadambavana Sundari Prasunnamba Kanyaka* (the blessed virgin who is beautiful and carries with her the radiance of sunshine, the fragrance of garden flowers, and the presence of God).

Jayaraman (2005: 479) adds:

In the choice of names, there are various considerations. However, one essential element in the selection of a name in all parts of India is the birth star of a person. Most Hindus consult an astrologer to decide the appropriate name.

Tshivenda names which fall into this category include the following:

- (a) *Dakalo* (Happiness). This name tells people to be happy after the birth of this child. People are always anxious to have normal children. When one arrives everybody is relieved and happy.
- (b) *Ntambudzeni*, (Abuse me). The child bearing this name was born when somebody in the family was being ill treated. Those memories of abuse are encapsulated in this name.
- (c) *Faranani*, (Work together). This name carries a message of peace and cooperation. Parents and family members are urged to work together through the naming of this child. The birth of this child is expected to bring a stronger sense of unity among family members.
- (d) *Mavhungu* (Big worms). This name is given to a child born after successive deaths in the family. If the child is born after the death of a child from the same mother, the baby will be given this name. It means that the survival of this child is not assured; it may be eaten by worms (die) like its predecessors.

### 3.4.2 Ancestors' names

Sometimes ancestors' names are given to living people. These names are given for various reasons. Firstly, an ancestor's name may be given to a person in order to perpetuate a previously bestowed name in the next generation. Secondly, such a name may be bestowed, especially on a child, after the child has become ill. The family consults the traditional doctor and it is discovered that an ancestor is the cause of the illness. The traditional doctor advises the family to give the child the name of this ancestor.

Guma (2001:261) quotes Mahome (1972) when he notes that the system of naming children after their paternal or maternal relatives among the Basotho serves to perpetuate the names of ancestors, and it brings grandparents and grandchildren closer to one another. It is also believed that the child so named will inherit the virtues of his grandparents. Religiously, to honour ancestral forces for their influence upon the living, a child is named after one of them. Yanga (1978:239) says:

The re-birth essentially consists of the belief that the newborn is one of the ancestors who has come back. Thus, his names should be given to the child, and in so doing, that ancestor (i.e. his memory) is perpetuated. In many cases this name will influence the behaviour of the parents towards the child in social contexts, depending upon the structural relationship between the ancestor, whose name was given to the child, and the child's parents.

Yanga (1978: 239) quotes Faik-Nzuji (1974):

The power of the name consists of the belief that the name represents the soul of the individual. Therefore, to inherit or to receive someone's name is to inherit or receive at the same time his qualities, faults and even his destiny.

The following are examples of names in this category:

*Dimbanyika* (One who refused land given to him). This was a name given to one of the Vhavanḁa forefathers, who refused land in Rhodesia, now known as Zimbabwe, and moved southwards to what is known as Venḁa today.

*Miḁiyavhathu* (Other people's homesteads). This name was given to a leader of one of the Vhavanḁa tribes because he used to fight his enemies by burning their homesteads. Through this name the family remembers one of its ancestors who was a hero in his time. They wish the present leader to be as strong as his forefather.

*Ramabulana* (One who plans well). This name was given to this man after he predicted that on that day rain would fall, and it rained in the evening. People gave him this name because of his accurate weather prediction.

It should be emphasized that the meaning of names in this category does not refer to their bearers today, but to their forefathers. People select these names in remembrance of these forefathers.

### **3.4.3 Political names**

Political names refer to political events that happened at the time of the birth of a child. These are also names that are bestowed on Vhavanḁa traditional leaders. In a situation where these names are given to traditional leaders, all the political differences in the community on the day of the inauguration are encapsulated in the selected name.

(a) *Muvhuso* (Government). This is a name given to a person born on 13

September 1979 when the former Republic of Venda received independence from the Republic of South Africa. It will always remind people about the political situation at the time of this child's birth.

- (b) *Nndweleni* (Fight for me). This name is given to a headman who has been asked to assist the chief in "looking after" his subjects in another village. This name carries with it the message of fighting whoever intends to invade the chief's territory. This headman is given the responsibility of fighting the enemy.
- (c) *Ratshinyiwaho* (Do whatever you want to do). This name is given to a headman. It refers to a situation that prevailed when the headman was installed. There were other members of the family who were against the decision to install him. Therefore, the message carried by this name is to tell those who are against his inauguration that, no matter what they want, he will be their leader. Those who support him are prepared to fight whoever is against this choice.
- (d) *Gundo* (Victory). This name is given to a chief who is a disputed heir. Before his inauguration, some members of the family took the matter to court to stop it, but the court ruled in his favour. He was given this name as a sign of this victory.

#### **3.4.4 Historical names**

These are names that record the history of events in the past. These could be the history of the family or of the whole tribe or community. Most Tshivenda personal names fall into this category. Names like *Nndwakhulu* (Big fight) were given to a

person after a conflict in the family or community. The same applies to *Tshifereke* (Strike). If one is born after a strike in the village, a name that refers to this event is bestowed on a person. *Musiwa* (One left behind) is usually bestowed on a child, one or both of whose parents, particularly the mother, passes away immediately after the birth.

These names record what has happened around a particular time. Whenever people use these names they remember the events leading to the bestowal of these names. Guma (2001:269) says:

Similarly, to name children after events may serve psychological and emotional needs of the society or family. When the birth of a boy coincides with a calamity that has befallen a family, he is named *Kotsi* (danger or accident) or *Tsietsi* (accident), during an invasion of locusts that have destroyed planted crops the name *Tsie* (locust) or *Sehlolo* (disaster) may be used for boys. Often people will refer to an event whenever one asks for their dates of birth. It could be said that naming after events serves as a “recording” system. Therefore, individuals embody the meaning associated with their names and in the process try to live up to the expected behaviour or personage that is dedicated to the name.

In traditional African society, a child belongs not only to his/her nuclear family, but also to the extended family and the whole community in general. An African child is the child of the community. Thipa (1987:108) remarks:

In African society the naming of a child assumes some very particular significance. A child, especially in the very traditional homes, is regarded as belonging not only to his immediate biological family but also to the extended family and eventually to the community.

This is why one finds that children’s personal names refer to events affecting the whole community. In Tshivenda, names such as *Muvhuso* (government) and *Tshifereke* (strike) occur. Events referred to by these names affect the whole

community.

### **3.4.5 Christian names**

Christian names are bestowed on children born into Christian families. They reflect their family's feelings about the role God plays in their lives.

- (a) *Riḍomushumela* (We shall work for Him). This name reflects the family's belief in God. Through this name they are saying that they will always work for God. They are making a commitment through the use of this name.
  
- (b) *Unariḅe* (He is with us). God is always with us. He is our saviour. Through this name the family is saying God is with them, and He gave them this child because He loves them.
  
- (c) *Phaḥhutshedzo* (Blessings). This child is a blessing from God. We are blessed to have this child. The parents are thanking God for the child. They acknowledge the role played by God in bringing this child to earth.

### **3.4.6 Warning names**

These names are bestowed on children, traditional leaders and brides as a warning to protect themselves against being poisoned or being otherwise assassinated or dethroned. These names carry the meaning of "take care", "do not trust anyone around you", "be aware" and "be careful" every day of your life.

- (a) *Avhasei* (They are not laughing). This name constitutes a warning to the leader that he should not relax or believe that all people accept his appointment. They may plan to dethrone him, and therefore he should always be on the alert.
  
- (b) *Muthuhadini* (A person is not troublesome). This name is derived from a Tshivenda expression, *Muthu ha dini hu dina zwiito* (a person is not troublesome, but his deeds are). This name conveys a message to the leader not to trust all his subjects equally, because they do not exhibit the same behaviour. Some may plan to kill him.

### 3.5 CONCLUSION

It has been pointed out that in traditional Tshivenda culture, personal names are given by the elders of the extended family, preferably by the grandfather's elder sister, *makhadzi*. Grandparents are also allowed to give the child a name. In some families even the traditional doctor, *maine*, could be given this responsibility. Traditionally, even the midwife is allowed to choose a name for the child. Urbanization and Christianity have played a pivotal role in changing the roles of name-givers among the Africans, the Vhenda in particular. Parents are now the main name-givers because the majority of children are born in hospitals, and most parents live far away from their extended families. In some instances, the name is decided and agreed upon by the parents before the child is even born.

In traditional Tshivenda culture, children were not given names immediately after birth. People feared that if the child was named while still young it would die. They therefore waited until they were sure that it would survive before naming it. Before the

child was named the mother and the child were secluded, and sexually active people were not allowed near them.

In traditional Tshivenda, when a new name is bestowed, it is accompanied by rituals. The Vhavenda, being superstitious people, believe that the performance of these rituals will prevent evil or supernatural forces from causing harm to the “new” person. It has also been revealed that new names are in most instances given to mark the new status attained by the recipient of the name; one receives a new name when one attains a new status, i.e. a boy who has attended initiation school or a bride or a traditional leader.

The Vhavenda also follow the teknonymy system. Married couples who have children are addressed by the names of their children. Once they have children, their personal names cease to exist at home and in their community. Their children’s names are now used to address them. This system also applies to the grandparents who are addressed by the names of their grandchildren. This is a form of respect, *u hulisa*, to the addressee.

This research has also shown that there are five stages at which people receive new names in traditional Venda culture, namely: birth, initiation, school, traditional leadership and upon marriage (this applies to the bride only). Vhavenda are unique in their naming practices, as they are the only ethnic group that bestows a new name on their traditional leaders when they are instated.

In terms of meaning, almost all Tshivenda names have a descriptive element, except very few names such as *Masindi*, *Phophi* and *Mukatshelwa*. Vhavenda prefer to name their children after some important event that happened in the family or in the

community, i.e. death or joy. They also name their children after their forefathers, in remembrance or in an attempt to pacify the ancestors. Some of the names chosen by the Vhavenda refer to politics, such as *Muvhuso* (Government) and *Gundo* (Victory, fighting for the chieftainship).

From 1994 there has been a significant change in the naming process among the Vhavenda. Most parents, urban or rural, now prefer to give their children African names. Though English names are found among the younger generation, they are fast giving way to African names. The reasons for this change in preference will be explored in detail in Chapter Four.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE INFLUENCE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION ON TSHIVENḌA PERSONAL NAMING

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

“Recent studies dealing with African reactions to various forms of European contact have confirmed previous impressions that missionaries, Africans as well as their European mentors, disseminated education neither for its own sake nor to enable Africans to challenge colonial rule. Missionaries established schools because education was deemed indispensable to the main purpose of the Christian denominations – spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. Missionaries recognized that the school was, in the words of one commentator, ‘the nursery of the infant Church’. The school was used as an inducement to lure Africans into the Republic” (Berman 1940: xi).

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the role played by Western civilization in bringing changes to traditional African systems, particularly the personal naming system, with special reference to the TshivenḌa personal naming process. The chapter will examine the impact of the contact between the VhavenḌa and the Europeans on the TshivenḌa personal naming process. This research has shown in previous chapters that Africans could communicate through the naming process. When their naming practices were tampered with, this also affected their communication system in particular and their culture in general.

As indicated in Chapter One, the majority of VhavenḌa live in the Limpopo Province, the northern part of what was previously the Transvaal. They share borders with Zimbabwe in the North, Botswana in the North West, Vatsonga in the North East and the Basotho ba Leboa in the South. They are also found in large numbers in Gauteng

Province.

The Limpopo Province was the last area to come into contact with the missionaries in South Africa. The first missionaries to settle in Venda were from Berlin, Germany. They arrived in Venda in 1872, though this is not the first time Vhavenda had come into contact with Europeans, as mentioned in Chapter One. Mafela (2005:36) reports that:

Beuster was the first Berlin mission station to be established in Venda. It was named after Rev. C.F. Beuster, who worked with the Bapedi first and then moved to Venda. C.F. Beuster worked under Johann Christian Wallman. He and Klatt were sent to establish mission work among the Vhavenda. They arrived at Hatshivhasa (Sibasa) in November 1872.

However, before the arrival of the missionaries, Vhavenda had already had some contacts with Europeans. Khorommbi (1996:20) notes that in 1820 the sons of a hunter and trekker, Coenraad du Buys of the Cape Province, were the first to settle around the Soutpansberg Mountains (Venda). After the discovery of diamonds in 1866 and gold in 1885, many of the Vhavenda started to move southwards seeking employment in the gold and diamond mines. These movements brought them into contact with Europeans, which later on influenced their personal naming process. Van Warmelo (1960:19) records that in 1859, when Ramapulana was struggling for the chieftainship against his brother Rabvuma, he asked for help from the independent Dutch Republic of Lydenburg. This proves that Vhavenda had some contact with Europeans long before the arrival of the missionaries. Mathivha (1985:41) adds:

Education in Venda started as a direct result of the Great Trek, as well as the discoveries of gold and diamonds in the Southern Transvaal.

When the rush to seek employment in the gold and diamond diggings was on, adventurous Vendas who had left home to go and work there were attracted by the teachings and preachings of missionaries. Attracted as they were, some even went to the extent of kneeling before the missionaries' pulpit to be baptized. Others took the chance of attending what was universally known as "night school" for the purpose of learning the three R's.

Suffice it to say that Vhavela came into contact with Europeans in the 1800s.

No nation can live in seclusion and still claim to survive on its own. In order for nations to survive, they need a symbiotic relationship between themselves and other nations. It has always been the case that people from one country or continent have had to move around and interrelate with other people or nations. Such interrelations meant that people have had to share and exchange many things in life, and this has had both positive and negative long-term effects.

In 1652, the first Dutch arrived at the Cape to establish a station for nations travelling from Europe to Asia. Some of these Europeans moved northwards into the African continent. It is this movement, northwards, which brought the Europeans into contact with the Africans and with the Vhavela in particular.

It is apparent that peoples' cultures are not static. From time immemorial religious, social, economic and political factors have played a major role in changing and shaping peoples' cultures and traditions. When these changes, or acculturations, occurred they also affected the way in which African personal names were bestowed.

When the Europeans came to Africa they brought with them their socio-cultural systems together with their political, religious and economic systems, all alien to Africans, and imposed these upon the Africans. Khorommbi (1996:114) remarks that

the missionaries' encounter with traditional African customs and religious practices was thus not a peaceful one.

Madiba (1994:33) confirms this, noting that Vhavenda contacts with English and Afrikaans speakers present a very interesting case of contact, because of the fact that although some of the Vhavenda had direct contact with speakers of these languages, they seem to have been influenced mainly through the diffusion of cultural material, concepts or ideas from these languages. These changes were further established when the missionaries started missionary schools. In areas where these schools were established, Africans were forced to abandon their cultural personal names and acquire new ones that were Biblical or European. Whenever the Vhavenda came into contact with Europeans their cultural customs were in one way or another affected.

It is through contacts like these that people's cultures and traditions influence each other. In most instances the most affected cultures, in this case the Africans were weakened by the pressure of European value systems.

Saarelma-Maunumaa (1996:21) maintains, with reference to the Ovambo people, that the influence of westernization and the adoption of Christianity have changed the traditions of African people. She discovered that from the 19th century, when the Finnish missionaries began to establish themselves in Ovamboland, traditional naming practices and individual names were also drastically affected because indigenous people gave in to the pressures of westernization and Christianity. This resulted in their abandoning their traditional practices, including the use of Ovambo personal names.

## 4.2 WESTERN CIVILIZATION AND AFRICAN CULTURE

Long before the arrival of the Europeans, Africans had their own cultural value systems which they treasured as much as their heritage. It is regrettable that the Europeans did not think about the promotion of these value systems when they first met the Africans. The aim of the Europeans was to change everything that had to do with African culture and tradition, such as the indigenous personal naming process, because African cultural values were associated with heathenism, lack of civilization and paganism. The Europeans imposed their social, economic, political and religious systems on Africans because they believed that their systems represented Christianity and civilization. Mphahlele (1972:94) remarks:

But some of the customs and traditions to which the Bantu were firmly attached proved a stumbling block. The Chiefs and most of the males, for instance, resented the Christian idea of monogamy. Deep seated beliefs and customs like polygamy, lobola (dowry), ancestor worship and initiation school had to be changed gradually. Unfortunately the early missionaries failed to adapt the Christian teachings to the circumstances that prevailed.

The Europeans regarded everything that is African as inferior and made Africans acknowledge that their culture and traditions were indeed inferior to European cultural and traditional systems. Europeans felt that Africans needed to change and follow their systems. This change was made deliberately in the name of colonialism and slavery. Africans were regarded as slaves in the country of their birth. For example, African people who wanted to attend a Western church and school, get a job, or apply for an identity document, were forced to have European names, and they abandoned their African personal names that attached them to their cultural

values and gave them their dignity. When traditional African practices were discouraged, so were African personal naming systems. The result was a weakened culture, which would later be regarded as serving no purpose to Africans. Mphahlele (1972:93) notes:

The weaker culture of the Bantu began to disappear or to be modified as a result of this contact with the superior and stronger culture of the missionaries.

Mphahlele (1972:93) quotes Lekhela (1958): "Their native arts disappeared, respect for their established chiefs waned and their customs and traditions received scant attention."

Before the arrival of the Europeans, Africans from different communities participated in their cultural activities in peace and tranquility. Africans were under traditional leadership, i.e. they had kings and chiefs. The king or chief, together with subjects, would practise polygamy, bury their dead the traditional way, i.e. using animal hides to cover the corpses, worship their ancestors, plant maize seeds on top of the graves and so on. These practices annoyed the Europeans because they judged African standards against theirs.

The land was owned by the community and not by an individual. People would share natural resources such as grazing lands and water: everything was shared among the members of the community. When the Europeans came, they changed the whole traditional system, replacing it with a European system, individual ownership and taxes. This was foreign to the Africans. According to Muyebe (1999:33):

The economical and political elements of the British presence were built upon the concept of superiority of the British elements over the African elements. The religious, economical and political scheme, as

introduced by the British presence in Malawi, was construed as something that was superior to the religious, economical and political scheme, as existent and operative within the African population prior to the coming of the British population.

Because the Europeans were economically powerful they began to take over African resources like land and livestock. They passed laws governing natural resources and ownership of land which were foreign to the natives. Through the introduction of the European system of ownership, the African traditional system, i.e. communal, was also affected, as were the personal names referring to the communal lifestyle. Froise (1996:46) comments on the role of the Europeans in Swaziland:

The Boers were the first to gain concessions when they obtained the use of land in the Lydenburg area. Mswati also gave concessions to the settlers in the south and to the west in the Amsterdam area. The Boers then sought to secure title to the land they occupied by asking Mswati to put a cross on documents he was unable to read and which was in fact a deed of sale.

African traditional leaders were not conversant with European systems; they were made to sell their land to the Europeans, unaware that they were transferring the communal properties into the hands of the settlers, as was done by Mswati when he unwittingly gave away land to the Boers. This strategy was used by many Europeans who came to settle in Africa because most of the African leaders were illiterate.

All mission stations were colonies; the local traditional leader had no power over the activities taking place on these stations. The local community was denied free access into them, unless they were converts themselves. Masuku (1998:26) notes the following about the mission stations:

Mission stations didn't only separate missionaries from the other people, but also their converts from the fellow country people. This means that those who were converted usually settled in or around the mission stations. By so doing, they separated themselves from many

social and cultural responsibilities. For instance, they withdrew themselves from the authority of the chiefs and looked down on their “unconverted” fellow country people. In this manner, they created a situation of dichotomy of the converted and the unconverted and friction emerged between the groups.

Traditional African leaders were later taken aback by this move. They did not realize that when they signed title deeds they were in fact transferring the land into the hands of the missionaries. This meant that they would never have free access to or control over these areas again and that their converted subjects would no longer pay allegiance to them.

The African tribal system was discouraged by the Europeans because it tightened social interaction amongst Africans, and through it, it was easier for the Africans to continue practising their cultural value systems, i.e. ancestor worship, initiation schools etc., which were denounced by the Europeans. This is confirmed by Loram (1917:7):

In the old days tribalism was the universal system of social organization among the Bantu, as it is, indeed, the prevailing system today. Each member of the tribe recognized and gave willing allegiance to the chief as the hereditary representative of the tribal spirit. The individual was nothing, the tribe everything.

Muyebe (1999: 33) concurs with Loram (1917):

In this line of thinking, the Christian religion, the capitalist mode of relations and production and the western mode of governance and administration were regarded as realities that were superior to the African traditional religion, the traditional means of relation and production and the traditional mode of governance and administration respectively.

Through the colonial system, Europeans made laws that would govern everybody

they vanquished. These laws were based on the ideologies and philosophy of the Europeans. When they designed official documents, they were designed to cater for Europeans, i.e. the inclusion of a term Christian name in the official documents was made deliberately to force Africans to acquire the so-called European/Christian names. There were many reasons advanced why Africans should be bestowed with European/Christian personal names; either on the grounds that their names were “complicated”, “foreign” or “heathen”, or to show that they were colonized. Hence the existence of so many European personal names among Africans (Moyo, 1997:8).

The Europeans were well aware that culture provides an individual with an identity and a dignity. They therefore decided to attack African culture, making sure that in the end Africans would be left with no identity. On the subject of culture and identity, Dyantyi and Mxotwa (1999:8) note that when Bob Mabena resolved to use his African personal name, *Kgomotso* (Comforter) when he was employed by a radio station which was perceived to be white, it was in order to keep his “black identity”. The Europeans wanted to Europeanize Africa. If this was not their only motive, they would have encouraged the African converts to bestow on their children African personal names that promoted the Christian faith. Mbeki (1998) summarizes the European’s motives in this way:

In the end, they wanted us to despise ourselves, convinced that, if we were not sub-human, we were, at least, not equal to the colonial master and mistress and were incapable of original thought and the African creativity which has endowed the world with an extraordinary treasure of masterpieces in architecture and the fine arts.

There was another group of Europeans that brought changes to African cultural practices and values. These were the traders. Froise (1996:45) reports what happened in Swaziland:

The traders unwittingly brought about further changes. Local skills fell into disuse, such as the blacksmith who formerly made articles such as implements for tilling. Another change which occurred was the move from community decisions to individual choices. Changes such as these assisted in the decline of a traditional way of life and eroded the authority of the community.

The contacts that Africans made with European traders affected the traditional African value systems negatively, especially the personal naming process. There were personal names that were bestowed on African people that depicted their natural talents and skills, i.e. making fire from natural resources, making iron tools and so on. These were names such as *Muvhambazi* (Salesperson/hawker), *Rammbaḁo* (One who makes an axe), *Mabannda* (One who deals with belts) and *Mutsila* (Artist). When the European traders arrived in Africa, introducing a different way of doing business, Africans abandoned their trades and followed the Europeans trading systems, and with this their personal naming patterns as well.

Africans looked to the Europeans for employment because of economic pressures. The Europeans used employment opportunities to eradicate African cultural values, including the personal naming process. Because Africans were reduced to little more than beggars in their motherland, those who did not have European personal names were given these in order to be employed. Molefe (2006:34) argues that Africans were not historically beggars; they were made so by the outside ideologies and religions. By this he is referring to European ideologies and religions. Indigenous African personal names were reduced to use solely at home.

The discussion in the following section will focus on the impact of Western civilization on the Tshivenda personal naming process, with the emphasis on religious, social, economic and political influences.

### **4.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE TSHIVENḂA NAMING PROCESS**

There are many factors that influence the personal naming process. Some are internal and some external. The naming process may be influenced by the type of life in a particular society or by two groups which come into contact, i.e. acculturation.

#### **4.3.1 Religious Factors**

The African personal naming process was affected by the introduction of the European religion, the Christian faith. Mission stations were established in Africa and had a significant effect on the African personal naming process. Before the arrival of the Europeans, the religion of the Africans, the VhaventḂa in particular, was centred on ancestor veneration. This was revealed through various activities, such as ancestor worship, and the performance of various rites to appease the ancestors through the use of traditional doctors. Each name-giving ceremony was accompanied by the performance of certain rites through which the candidate would be introduced to the ancestors. But when the Europeans came, all these practices changed; African religion was discouraged and associated with heathenism.

It was mentioned in Chapter Three above that Africans were forced to adopt another name on the pretext that such a European/Christian personal name was necessary when they were accepted into the church. The Europeans had a negative attitude towards African religion, particularly ancestor worship and burial. Fiedler (1996:8) quotes A.J.Temu (1972) who describes the negative attitude of missionaries towards African religion as follows:

The missionaries failed miserably to adjust their religion to the African Milieu but proudly believed, for example, that their own forms of

marriage and burial, their theological approach, their narrow concept of family and individualism, were the best for the Kikuyu, Akamba, Teita, Nyika, Pokomo and Moslem Swahili.

This idea is supported by Wakatama (1976:13) in his observation:

The problem is not that the missionaries are changing cultures but that they are failing to adapt the naked gospel to different cultures wrapped with cumbersome paraphernalia of Western culture. This has not only retarded indigenous expressions of the Christian faith, but at times it has unnecessarily caused confusion in and harm to existing social structures.

Africans live a communal lifestyle. They have extended families and they take care of their elders by living with them. The land they live on is shared among the whole community. The younger or the elder son, depending on the culture, remains in the family with the parents. This lifestyle, in which people live on the land without paying tax, was foreign to some missionaries.

#### **4.3.1.1 Europeans' Aims and Attitudes**

The negative attitude of Europeans towards African religion made it difficult for these two groups to respect each other. The missionaries pretended that they were not aware that the Christian faith does not reside in the name of a person or outfit, but in the soul. The use of an African personal name when addressing a convert does not make that person a reprobate. The reason the missionaries discouraged the use of African personal names was that, if an African was allowed to continue using this personal name, it would promote the practice of African traditional values, a practice which the Europeans disapproved of. However, African personal naming and African traditional value systems are indivisible and it is not a sin to use an African personal

name and to practise African traditional values, as Africans were made to believe.

According to some European prejudices, God did not exist in African religions. African traditions and cultures were unholy, whereas anything European was holy. However, some African customs and cultural practices, e.g. the use of African personal names, have nothing to do with the Christian faith. One does not necessarily have to follow European culture and value systems as a vehicle to salvation. Muyebe (1999: 150) notes:

The missionary campaign, as carried out by most of the missionaries in Africa, was often defined in terms of planting the church as an institution. This orientation was sustained by the theological affirmation to the effect that there was no salvation outside the institution of the church. In this line of thinking, conversion entailed a radical dissociation with the realities outside the church. The axiom, Outside the Church, no salvation, generated the impression, among some missionaries, that Christ's saving grace presence operated exclusively within the Church as an institution. Christ's saving grace operated outside the culture of the African people since such cultures lay outside the realm of the Church as an institution. In the light of this factor, some missionaries defined and prescribed conversion of the Africans in terms of departure from one's culture, departure from the life outside the Church, in view of being inserted into the Church as an institution that mediates salvation.

If the Europeans, when first coming into contact with the natives, had given themselves time to learn and appreciate the natives' religion and culture, they may have won their hearts. Unfortunately, owing to their prejudices about African systems, the Tshivenda religion in this case, they failed to do this. Gundani (2004:310) remarks:

Because of this European prejudice, which the missionary was part of, there was no interest in studying the beliefs and cultures of the African as there was for the Asian.

As already indicated, to be accepted into the communities of the Africans, the missionaries should have shown appreciation for the African traditions and encouraged Africans to practise their cultural activities. This was not the case, however, because the missionaries wanted to colonize the Africans by the imposition of their own religious values. The best thing the missionaries could have done would have been to blend their religious values with the good in African religious values.

How do you show “Christianity” in personal naming? Some post-colonial writers state that the early missionaries had problems in communicating with the Africans and also in pronouncing their African personal names. Because of the complexity of this problem, and to make it easier for them to communicate with the Africans, they forced them to change their names and to acquire European ones. This was the norm for Africans who were accepted into the church through baptism. Africans, Vhavenda in particular, were given Biblical names such as Thomas, Peter, Mary/Maria and Elizabeth.

Mbiti (1967:232), who did extensive research into African religion and philosophy, does not appreciate what most of these Europeans did to the African belief system. This is clear from his report:

Christianity has expanded rapidly in the first half of this century (19th century), through the joint efforts of overseas missionaries and African converts.

It is clear from the above statement that when the Europeans invaded this continent, they had one aim in mind: to change the indigenous African people into Christians and discourage them from following their traditions and cultures. Mafela (2005:1) notes that the missionaries were sent to Africa to propagate the Christian faith. They

did not appreciate African culture or tradition and saw nothing good in it. Mafela (2005:38) quotes Berman (1975) on African inferiority:

They believed that African traditional beliefs, those “pagan practices” were ipso facto inferior to Christianity. This belief in the innate inferiority of African religions, coupled with the lack of contact with major world religions, convinced missionaries that they would have little difficulty persuading Africans of the superiority of the Christian Gospel.

Vhavenḁa who followed their traditional cultural value systems were not welcome at the mission stations. They were discouraged from worshipping their ancestors. This prohibition on the practice of Tshivenḁa religion included the prohibition on the use of African traditional attire by the converts: those who continued wearing this clothing were not welcomed into the community of believers. Mafela (2005:42) remarks that the missionaries wanted to discourage “African heathen superstitions and savage customs”.

The Europeans also thought that if the Africans could read, especially the Scriptures and the Bible, it would be easy to root out African beliefs which were regarded as pagan and heathen, such as witchcraft, ancestor worship and so on. According to Mphahlele (1972:91):

The ability to read and write did not only enable the convert to read the Bible, it also helped to emancipate him from the bonds of superstition, animism and witchcraft.

Mathivha (1985:103) agrees that the Europeans wanted to rid the Africans of superstitious beliefs in witchcraft, rainmaking and other evil ways, and they aimed to achieve this by spreading of the principles of Christianity.

It is interesting to observe that during this time all Christian personal names were in European languages, mainly English, and no African or Tshivenda personal names were regarded as Christian names.

#### **4.3.1.2 Name-giving at baptism**

As mentioned earlier, Tshivenda personal names suffered a great deal in the era of the missionaries. The Europeans found the African names strange and unusual for the purpose of baptism. Therefore, when they baptized Africans they change the names. This was coupled to the fact that the authentic Tshivenda personal names were changed or people were given other names upon baptism. To them, learning the pronunciation of Tshivenda personal names was tantamount to the advancement of the Tshivenda religion, and an African religion in general. Thus they forced the Vhavenda, directly or indirectly, to take European personal names upon baptism. Mathivha (1985:249) reports:

At Pentecost the widow of Mutshaeni was the first Venda to be baptized. Her name was Mufanadzo, and she was given the name Johanna.

From then onwards Mrs Mufanadzo Mutshaeni was addressed as Vho-Johanna, Johanna being her Christian name. The prefix *Vho-* is a Tshivenda form of address. The name Johanna has a biblical connotation. It is derived from the name of John the Baptist. John is phoneticised into Johana or Johane. There are also names such as Joseph, which refers to Joseph, Maria's husband; Maria/Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ; Moses, who led the Israelis from Egypt to the Promised Land; Peter, one of the Jesus' disciples, and so on.

The notion of giving new Christian names to Africans upon baptism was used as a sign of total commitment to the Christian faith by the Africans and to please the missionaries of the time. Gundani (2004:305) discusses Christian names among the Congolese people:

On baptism, the Bakongo were required to renounce their Kongolese names and adopt a Portuguese one.

The use of European personal names in their churches was aligned with their purpose of making Bakongo converts. This system was a strategy employed by the Europeans to divide Africans, which they successfully implemented.

Africans in European churches also adopted European cultural values, i.e. they prayed before eating, stood when talking to an adult, looked directly into the eyes of the person they were talking to, avoided eating with their hands and so on. Adopting the European religion meant they should also adopt Christian or school personal names. European personal names, disguised as Christian/school names, were devoid of traditional connotative meaning when compared with authentic Tshivenda personal names. Christian or school names did not carry attributes such as wishes, history or important events that characterize Tshivenda personal names. The choice of European names for the Vhavenda was never based on meaning.

The early missionaries also regarded African personal names as a sign of paganism. For them, African culture and tradition was filled with superstitions and belief in witchcraft. Muyebe (1999: 152) remarks:

...the culture of the converts was portrayed as something that is evil and superstitious. By way of contrast perception, the concept of salvation was explained against the backdrop of the evil and superstitious culture: the missionaries were propagating Christ who had come to liberate the Africans from their evil and superstitious culture. In extreme cases, the origin of culture was traced out to the devil: the devil was the source of the African cultures and the

missionaries were propagating Christ who had come to Africa to liberate Africans from the devil that was hidden in their culture.

Moyo (1996:12) reports that in Malawi the missionary factor played a key role in neutralizing the existing cultural values and attitudes; in that converts of the new faith, particularly the youth, felt strongly attracted to the acquisition of English or Christian personal names as they commonly came to be known. Kimeyi (1989:46) observed this in Rwanda and Burundi:

During the colonial period, the missionaries succeeded in converting a lot of people to Christianity. Although the people of Rwanda and Burundi were religious and had the same concept of God as Christians, the attitude of the former towards Him were completely different from that of the Christians.

All those who continued to use their African personal names were seen as backward, and were not allowed to enter into the mission schools or their premises. According to Herbert (1994:16):

The influence of Westernization and Christianity plays an important role during this period. For example, children were not baptized by their traditional names, but parents were asked to choose a new name, that is, English or Afrikaans name. To have an English or Afrikaans name was regarded as a sign of change from the primitive to the modern world. This attitude was implanted into peoples' minds to the extent that Africans themselves were not willing to be baptized into the new religions without having English or Afrikaans names accompanying the act of conversion.

Yanga (1978:238) found in Zaire that the people were also forced to abandon their traditional personal names, because authentic African names were regarded as symbols of paganism by the early missionaries.

The negative attitude shown by the missionaries in Zaire exemplifies the attitude of

all missionaries who came to the African continent. Wherever they went, they changed the traditions of the local people as a sign of a total denial of the traditional values and heritage. Africans were totally disempowered and belittled through the adoption of European cultural value systems with which they were completely unfamiliar.

During the missionary period, African converts, whether young or old, were given Christian names upon baptism. This was done only on the day of baptism. In the African process, personal names were given at birth, but after a certain period, as mentioned in Chapter Three, or after the completion of a certain activity, i.e. initiation, new names were bestowed. Most importantly, African personal names have a traditional meaning that is lacking in the European personal names that were bestowed on Africans during baptism because the underlying meanings of European names are not relevant to their choice as a name.

#### **4.3.2 Social Factors**

In this study, social factors refer to factors such as western education and status within the society or in the peer group. Western education in this context refers to the education that came with the Europeans, i.e. reading and writing. This education included European philosophies and ideologies and traditional values. Masuku (1998:20) makes the following comment about the missionaries' thinking:

The sense of superiority that was dominant among Westerners led them to believe that they were above other people in many respects including cultural matters.

African people who came into contact with Europeans at school and workplaces often

acquired European personal names. When these Africans with European personal names returned to their communities from work or boarding school they were admired by those who did not have these names. These African people were believed to be living a better life than their fellows who had remained behind, and who had not received a western education. When they saw their fellow Africans who had been exposed to a western education leading a better life, and using European personal names, they decided to change too, as if a better life was to be attained only once one had changed one's African name to a European one. In this way European personal names were ultimately associated with a better life by Africans, Vhavenda in particular. Tshivenda personal naming as part of this African culture was also overtaken by European personal naming, because Africans, particularly the Vhavenda, thought that the choice of European personal names would elevate them socially.

The Europeans brought western schools to Africa through the missionaries. At first, the educators were all white missionaries; later on, they were joined by African converts. The African converts were there to advance the aim of the Europeans, i.e. to make Africa a European colony. Everybody who desired a western education during the missionary era, i.e. to be able to read and write, was given a European personal name. Lesiba (1999:165) comments thus on the role of the mission schools in Africa:

Mission schools forbade the natives from the use of their language. Nuances of communication were lost and those of the colonials could not be fully grasped with all their subtleties.

African culture and tradition were suppressed in these schools. People were Europeanized, forced to disregard the value and meaning of their authentic African

names. Those who attended mission schools during the missionary period were detached from their culture. African children were given European personal names by their educators on the day of registration. Mandela (1995), like most Africans during this period, reported that on his first day at school he was given the name Nelson. This was done to mark the new status an African child had acquired by getting into a European school and also to colonize the African people. During the colonial era Africans were, unfortunately, made to believe that to be regarded as educated they had to acquire someone else's culture, in this case that of the Europeans. Masuku (1998:21) agrees:

Most of the practices of the indigenous people were deemed "archaic, barbaric and backward". For some missionaries, indigenous names were synonymous with heathendom while Western names were equivalent to Christianity.

Masuku (1998) adds that attitudes portrayed by some of these missionaries such as ignorance and ethnic pride led them to look down on other cultures and regard theirs as the norm.

This is one of the main reasons for Africans being given European personal names upon registration at Western schools. There are many Africans today who are known by names such as Joseph, John, Mary and Elizabeth as a result of the missionaries' influences. Although in some instances the teachers were Africans, they followed the instructions of their masters, the missionaries, which said that all Africans should have European personal names if they were to be accepted at the mission school. If an African persisted in using his/her authentic personal name, it meant that in the eyes of the missionaries such a person had not as yet become a Christian. Unlike the process followed when an African name is bestowed, i.e. the conducting of a ceremony, these school/European names were bestowed without any ceremony.

They also lacked the semantics of African personal names. This was a strategy of the Europeans to ensure that African value systems were not followed by Africans.

African personal names are a tool that may be used to bond one to one's culture. Once one has decided not to use one's personal name anymore, one is indirectly deciding to cut ties with one's culture and to forget one's heritage. This is confirmed by Mphahlele (1972:95) who observed this at South African mission schools:

At all mission schools, vernacular names were not used at all because they were not "Christian names". Any child without a "Christian name" had to be given one. Anything Bantu was scorned and sniffed at. This was the tragedy of moving from one extreme of paganism to the other, of "Europeanising" the black man name, language and all. Christian teaching and Western culture were presented to the Bantu as if the two were synonymous.

The missionaries' aim of teaching Africans to read and write is commendable. However, it was wrong for the missionaries to indoctrinate Africans with European values, which were wrongfully associated with Christian value systems. This resulted in Europeans designing an education system for Africans which removed the African from his customary environment. Education for Africans, Vhavenda in particular, had been at odds with its context for many years. It was aimed at teaching the Vhavenda the master's value system, a European value system. One was viewed uneducated until one had mastered the language of the colonizer, English. Unfortunately, there are many people today who still believe that education and civilization come through the mastery of English. Although it is certainly not a sin to know another's language, it is wrong to use it to oppress people. During the period of the missionaries all graduates were supposed to have done religious studies at school. Mphahlele (1972:88) says:

Indeed education of the Bantu in the country in general and in the

Transvaal in particular was a missionary enterprise. Naturally the aims of education that the missionaries pursued were mainly religious. Initially the state showed very little interest in the education of the non-whites, especially of the Bantu, beyond subsidising the salaries of the teachers in the hands of the missionaries. Thus questions of the ultimate aims, that is, the physical, mental, moral, social, economic, cultural and spiritual development of the Bantu received scanty attention from the Transvaal Education Department.

The content of the curriculum for religious studies was based on the content of the Christian faith. Nothing good about other faiths was mentioned, particularly traditional African faith, i.e. ancestor worship.

#### **4.3.2.1 Naming and Western Schools**

Mafela (2005) reports that the introduction of the Western school seriously undermined many aspects of African social structure, such as the parents' role in naming, African rites that accompany naming, the meaning attached to the name and more. When children were admitted to Western schools most parents were no longer involved in the choice of their European personal names, and only teachers had a say. These school names did not reflect the parents' wishes. The Europeans hoped that through the reading of the Scriptures and the Bible Africans would learn the Christian values associated with Western education. This was a biased interpretation of Christian values and understandably so, because they had ulterior motives, that of colonizing the Africans. Zvobgo (1996:149) makes the following observation on the objectives of missionary work in Zimbabwe:

Initially, the objective of missionary education was religious. In order to strengthen the faith of the converts, it was felt necessary that they should be able to read the Bible and the church's instructions about its faith. It was largely for this reason that instruction in reading was begun.

In some countries, only text from the Bible was used as study materials; in others, such as Zimbabwe, the whole Bible was used as the prescribed book because of a shortage of relevant study materials promoting the Christian faith. Children who attended these schools were also given Biblical names. It is interesting to note that even today some African universities teach African languages through the medium of English.

The traditional African system, and personal naming in particular, was also affected because children who wanted to go to Western schools were forced to take another personal name, or Christian/school name. Everything they learnt at these schools was based on European ideologies and philosophy. The curricula were designed to teach African children European cultural systems, and not their own African cultural system. Through European education an African child was in a dilemma, unsure which culture to follow. The result was that they were made to look down upon their own cultural value systems; they were made “little Europeans” who did not, however, enjoy the same status as the real Europeans. Everything that was African, including their indigenous personal names, was regarded as substandard.

#### **4.3.2.2 Naming and Traditional Schools**

As far as the European understanding of African culture was concerned, anything concerned with Tshivenda tradition was viewed in a poor light as long as it did not help to advance the Word of God, the Christian faith. It is important to understand that if the missionaries had earlier meant to educate African children and equip them with life skills, they should have based this education on African ideologies and philosophy. They should have incorporated lessons from traditional African school curricula into this education, i.e. from *murundu* (initiation schools for the boys),

*domba* (snake dance) and *Umhlanga* (reed dance). The aims of these schools will be discussed below.

Unfortunately, the Europeans had their own aims and these were not simply to educate the Africans. As indicated above, they wanted Africans to be converted to Christianity and to abandon their cultural and religious practices which were regarded as inferior. Ultimately, they wanted to colonize Africa. Gundani (2004:310) comments on the role of the missionaries' education in Southern Africa as follows:

For this reason Iberian missionaries in Southern Africa were not consciously prepared to receive anything from the African world view. They were thus not prepared to adapt themselves to local conditions and environment. Rather, they were only prepared to give what they believed and what they knew.

Mafela (2006:6) states that the curriculum for teaching African children was full of stories from the Bible and those from African indigenous folklore that were considered supportive of Christian values. This is supported by Zvobgo (1996: 152) who researched the role of missionaries in Zimbabwe:

...to enable the pupils to read and understand the word of God was the main aim of the school work and the Bible was the textbook throughout. The missionaries also taught the pupils to memorize certain portions of the Scriptures and the singing of hymns for purposes of daily worship.

Before the introduction of Western education, African children were given education by the elders at various traditional schools established within the communities, under the leadership of a king or a chief. These "educators" were chosen because of their high moral standing in their respective communities. The graduates, called *midabe* in Tshivenda, were also assigned with the task of teaching the new initiates at these traditional schools, because they were regarded as sufficiently experienced to offer

good guidance. Children were taught traditional African riddles and stories that contained ethical and moral lessons. According to Machobane (2001:26):

While castigating initiation rites on other grounds, Casalis remained clear that the primary objective was “to drive vice from [young] people’s hearts”. For, as young people at the lodge were scourged, they were told: “Be men! Fear theft! Fear adultery! Honour your parents! Obey your chiefs”... The admonition reminded him of the dictum of the Ten Commandments.

There were various types of traditional African schools which catered for different sexes and different purposes: *murundu* (initiation school for boys), among the Vhavenḁa; *ulwaluko/entabeni* among AmaXhosa, *vhusha* (initiation school for girls) among the Vhavenḁa; *ukuthombeni*, among the Amaxhosa; *Umhlanga* (reed dance) among the AmaZulu. There were also schools which boys and girls attended together, e.g. Domba (snake dance) among the Vhavenḁa and *uDawuseni* (the name of a big pool in a river with rocks where boys or girls or both meet) among the AmaZulu. At these schools, African children were prepared to be good citizens when they were grown. The curricula at these schools were prepared in such a way that when the students graduated they were ready to face real life situations. Mathivha (1985:23) says that the aim of traditional Tshivenḁa schools was to train young ones to be good community members. Mafenya (2002) concurs:

At these initiation schools, the society’s traditional cultural assumptions, norms and values are taught. Sex roles within the culture are conveyed. The nation’s beliefs and expectations are taught.

The Europeans’ education aimed to instill Christian values and to give children lessons in life skills. They were so blinded by their objective, to colonize Africa, that they did not notice any value in traditional African schools. These schools were abolished, and replaced with Western schools, where African children were expected

to learn European moral and ethical values which had nothing to do with their traditional values. Knowledge of reading and writing does not dwell in one's culture.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, traditionally, Africans, Vhavenda in particular, bestow new personal names when a person graduates from one life stage to another. One of the informants notes that graduates from these traditional African schools choose personal names for themselves, except in situations where a name is bestowed to on a traditional leader or a bride. This new personal name becomes the only personal name that a person is known by. However, it has further been explained that the elders are the only ones who are still allowed to use the birth name. Personal names that are chosen at these schools include *Nndwakhulu* (Big fight), referring to a fight that might have occurred in the family before the initiates went to school and *Alidzulwi* (One cannot stay in this land/place), referring to a situation where people are not allowed to occupy certain land, perhaps because it is contested by two villages.

The curriculum in traditional schools covered matrimonial life, particularly sexual matters including the mysteries of sex and childbirth, as well as potential pitfalls in life. Mafenya (2002:75) says that during Domba, boys and girls are taught about sexual relationships by means of symbols and metaphoric language.

When Mafela (2005:1) examined traditional African stories, he found that these were mostly told by elders who had a good reputation as narrators, and they taught moral lessons. The hardships these children suffered at these traditional initiation schools prepared them for the hardships they would encounter in real life. Unfortunately, in the eyes of the Europeans, the curricula of these schools did not promote the Christian faith; thus they were never included in the core curriculum of the education

offered at Western schools. These traditional African practices were not accepted and were discouraged by the Europeans, particularly because it was believed that they did not uphold the Christian faith. Mathivha (1985:13) notes:

The stories had great value because they were told to children during their most impressionable stage. Whether the story had a sad or happy ending, there was a moral lesson contained in it.

At Western schools African stories were replaced with stories from the Bible. The African stories were not interrogated to determine their value in the development of children. As long as they were stories from Africa about Africans, they were not encouraged at Western schools. With regard to the influence of Western ideas on the Tshivenda religion and culture, Mafela (2005) says that had the Vhavenḁa culture been introduced to children in their education, they would have been able to link it with their daily life. The education would have covered many themes since almost all spheres of life are covered by Tshivenda tradition and culture.

#### **4.3.2.3 Naming and Social Pressure**

Because of social pressure, many people have had European names imposed on them by their parents. These parents did not want their children to be laughed at by their peers at school because they were using Tshivenda personal names. Parents believed that this would mean that they were still backward or uncivilized in the eyes of their friends and the community, and so they took the initiative. According to Moyo (1996:13), in Malawi it was considered old-fashioned and educationally unprogressive to have an African personal name only, particularly after puberty. From this observation one uncovers the damage done to the mind of Africans by colonialism. Africans no longer saw any worth in their own cultural value system. As

Kimeyi (1989:44) puts it:

The contact and experience that Burundi and Banyarwanda have had with Europeans are attested to in names. Some people gave to their children the names of the first missionaries who arrived in these countries.

At first Africans did not realize that Western education had been introduced to them at a price. First they were forced to renounce their African personal names and value system in order to receive this education which came with its own value system. The price that Africans paid was their dignity and heritage, which they lost when their personal names, which gave them African dignity, were replaced by European personal names. As they lost their culture, so they lost their dignity and became disempowered.

Because English is seen as the language of business and politics, those who have European personal names were regarded as more important and better people and therefore these names were associated with prestige. This has been the case in most African countries. Mathangwane and Gardner (1998:80) note that in Botswana:

Here we found that many respondents gave prestige as the main reason for giving English names.

This is supported by Moyo (1996:31), who points out that the vernacular Ngoni or Tumbuka name was replaced by an English name for use at school, church, or in the workplace, in government offices or mission hospitals. Such English names as Bywell, Edwin, Livingstone or John were thus acquired, fulfilling religious, social and educational functions among the outward-looking and aspiring youth. Moyo's (1996) findings indicate that the missionaries and the colonizers were determined in their quest to change the traditional way of life, especially the personal name-giving

process, of Africans.

During the period of the missionaries, people who were using authentic Tshivenda personal names were regarded as backward, uncivilized and primitive by their peer group and also by some sections of their community, especially those that had been recruited to schools by these missionaries. As a result of the type of education they received at the mission schools, Vhavenda themselves, especially the converts, played a key role in promoting the use of European personal names and culture. According to Nkuna (2006:31), the European education system:

... produced brainwashed educated Africans who were, by and large, alienated elite that treasured the English language and culture, and looked down on African languages and culture.

During the missionary era Africans, particularly Vhavenda children, believed that having a European personal name was something special that lent prestige and civilization to the bearers. Vhavenda youths, who wanted to be seen as civilized and progressive among their peers and communities, chose for themselves a European personal name. Those who did not have European personal names emulated those who did, for the sake of social status.

Through social pressure, African personal names, particularly Tshivenda names, were not used as they were perceived as the names of people who were backward and uncivilized. Nobody wanted to be associated with personal names that reflected lower status in the society. In South Africa, where there are many different cultures, the use of European personal names was preferred because it hid one's identity, especially in the case of those who belonged to minority groupings such as the Vhavenda, Vatsonga and Ndebele. In urban areas, people who wanted to hide their

identity could use European names rather than their authentic African ones.

#### 4.3.2.4 Naming and Cultural Knowledge

For Africans, particularly the Vhavenḁa, European/Christian personal names were simply labels and a means of identification. Tshivenḁa personal names, like *Khakhathi* (Troublesome), mean something to the person who bestowed it and to the recipient. Names may remind them of problems they experienced when that person was born, as in the case of *Pfuluwani* (Relocate). This name was bestowed on a child who was born when people were forcibly removed from their land by whites in 1966 and forced to settle elsewhere. The message of this forced removal is encapsulated in this name and it will always remind the family and the community at large that there was a time when they were removed by force from their ancestral land. Before the arrival of the Europeans, Africans were unable to read or write. Instead, they stored their information through personal naming. Personal names became archives where important family or community information could be stored. It could be retrieved when needed by referring to these names.

Some Europeans may not have been prepared to learn to pronounce African personal names. This contributed to the neglect of African personal names. Van Warmelo (1932:18) cites Trichardt, a European, who used to call *Ravele*, a Venḁa chief, “*Rossetoe*” because he had difficulties in pronouncing the name *Ravele*. Mandela (1995:16) concurs:

Whites were either unable or unwilling to pronounce an African name, and considered it uncivilized to have one.

This highlights the unwillingness of some early missionaries to learn or promote

African culture and tradition. For example, “*Rossetoe*” and *Ravele* is not the same thing. It would have been better for Trichardt to have learnt how to pronounce a Tshivenda personal name such as *Ravele* before pronouncing it wrongly or corrupting it. Regarding mistakes made by the early missionaries, Wakatama (1976:17) says:

In light of these facts it is foolish for anybody to say missionaries' work should come to a halt. Rather, the emphasis should be laid on the necessity of missionaries to learn from their past mistakes and to listen to national voices. Above all they must have the proper cultural and social qualifications as well as spiritual qualifications to enable them to work in other cultures effectively.

It is not surprising even today to find that some Africans and Europeans are not fully accepting of each other; this is often because of disrespect for one's culture, especially African culture. If one desires peace and tranquility among people, settlers in a strange country should abide by the traditions and customs of the indigenous people.

But the Europeans were not prepared to follow this simple rule, because their aim was to colonize the Africans. The result is the hostility that we see between some Africans and Europeans today, a reminder of how the Europeans, mainly through ignorance and a lack of respect, were not prepared to allow Africans to practise their culture and traditions. Nkuna (2006:32) believes that to speak a native language helps one to associate with the group and generates a feeling of confidence. By speaking the language one will also get to know the culture of the people, because culture and language are inseparable. Wessmann (1908:94) supports this and says about the Vhavenda:

Unless one has had intercourse with them for years, speaks their language, and knows their customs, they do not show him the least

confidence. They draw back as soon as he merely hints at this or that question, and behave like tortoises or snails: they retire into their shell as soon as one gets into contact with them.

The example of Trichardt calling *Ravele* “*Rossetoe*” did not promote good race relations between the Vhavenda and the Europeans at the time. Had Trichardt wanted to improve his relations with the Vhavenda and also to develop and promote Tshivenda as a language, he would have at least learnt to pronounce Tshivenda personal names. Had he done this, the Vhavenda might have realized that these were people like them, and may have accommodated them peacefully in their land.

Europeans brought names from various cultures and countries with them and imposed them on Africans. According to the informants, instances such as the one quoted by Van Warmelo (1932) above, were common. If they could not pronounce a name, the Europeans would simply apply the process of phoneticisation to produce a new one as close in sound to the original as possible. Thus *Mmbulaheni* became Brian, *Tshililo* became Lillian, *Tshidino* became Donald and so on. Semantically, Brian does not have the same meaning as the name *Mmbulaheni* (Kill me). This name indicates that around the naming time a family member died or family members were fighting, resulting in death. The reason for the choice of African personal name was lost in this way. It must be kept in mind that once one tampers with the African naming process, particularly in Tshivenda; one interferes with the phonological, morphological and semantic rules of the word. Naming is also part of oral literature; tampering with it means tampering with the oral literature. Personal names are treasures and reservoirs of African ideologies, philosophy and archives of previous experiences.

African personal names are chosen based on their meaning. Mandela (1995) notes that he has no idea why the name Nelson was bestowed on him: as an African, a Xhosa at that, he was well aware that African personal names refer to something important to him or to those who chose his name. In his autobiography, Mandela (1995:15) notes how an African teacher gave him a European name. For Mandela, the name Nelson lacks any African semantic significance or meaning.

The example cited by Mandela (1995) is interesting in that the teacher in this case was an African. Nonetheless, she still gave these African children Christian/European personal names. One must assume that she did not have any difficulty in pronouncing the African names of these learners. One can only conclude then that it was a policy of the mission schools that each learner, particularly an African, should have a school name which was English or European in nature.

#### **4.3.2.5 Significance of European Names**

In the late '60s Africans began to bestow on their children English names that would reflect African personal naming characteristics that express aspects like a wish, commemoration, respect, historical event etc. This resulted in the introduction of personal names like Patience, Lucky, Faith, Given, Welcome, Precious, Pretty, Victor, Joyce, Rejoice and Obedience. These personal names reveal that African people, Vhavenda in this case, although they have received a Western education, still want to be associated with their own cultural values, where the choice of a particular personal name is based on meaning.

Personal names like those mentioned above reveal the name-giver's wish for the recipient, e.g. *Given*, the family takes this child as the gift from God; *Obedience*, this

name carries the message to obey. Somebody was not obeying certain values, and through this name he/she is being advised to obey, or it may mean that when the child was born members of the family espoused certain values. In the case of *Victor* from victory, it is suggested that when this name was bestowed on a child, someone in the family might have won something important which demanded celebration. This name records that achievement. These personal names are different from names such as Joshua, John, Maria, Jacob, William and Thomas because the latter are English or biblical, and the former, however English or biblical, reflect inner feeling and the values of the parents or family.

The use of names like Patience, Lucky, Faith etc., which have meaning, shows that Africans wanted to rid themselves of the yoke of European oppression. African elites were beginning to realize the importance and value of African culture, and this strategy of using a European personal name that encapsulates African elements, like meaning, is evidence of this trend.

Western schools and social status played an important role in the use of European personal names during the missionary era. During this period, European personal names were associated by African communities with civilization and higher social status. Later on, Christian/school names became the preferred names. Regarding initiation names, one of the informants said that the birth name would be used by elderly people at home, while the initiation names becomes the name by which the candidates would be addressed by his/her peers and younger people. The Christian/school names attained the same status as initiation names, however: where there was a Christian/school name, it would be preferred to any African personal name, be it birth or initiation, except in the case of names given to traditional leaders, particularly the *Vhavenda*, during their inauguration. See annexures A, B and C.

### 4.3.3 Economic Factors

Modern economy was introduced to Africa and South Africa in particular, by Europeans. This introduction affected many aspects of African life, including personal naming. People, who once depended on subsistence farming and hunting, were now introduced to modern techniques to sustain their families. When Africans became dispossessed of their land, the source of their livelihood, men left their homesteads to go and work in industries, gold and diamond mines and on farms. Some men worked as gardeners and kitchen “boys” in urban areas. Women, on the other hand, worked on farms and in urban areas as domestic workers. Employers, mainly Europeans, found it very difficult to pronounce African personal names (as mentioned above) from diverse African cultures. These employers thus gave them personal names such as John, Maria/Mary, William, Sara etc. to make it easier to communicate with them. It is possible that Africans accepted these names happily because they felt closer to their masters. When they returned home they were considered civilized because they had acquired new European names.

Industrialization meant that there was no chance for the African to refuse the imposition of a European name. Any refusal of such names would mean the denial of employment. The Vhavenda were in a dilemma because their new personal names lacked the African characteristic of meaning, discussed in Chapter Three. When Vhavenda were given these names it was a totally new experience as these names did not relate to their daily experiences or any previous events. However, because of economic pressure, they were forced to accept these names.

Before the arrival of the Europeans, Africans were used to having personal names

that depicted their trade or talents. These personal names included *Badzhi* (Jacket) tailor, *Muvhambadzi* (Salesperson), *Mulimisi* (Farmer), *Nematei* (Medical specialist), *Ramawa* (Diviner) and so on. Once African people entered into trade with the Europeans, talents and skills like these began to disappear from communities, as did the personal names referring to their God-given talents. People began to depend on the Europeans for employment.

#### **4.3.4 Political factors**

Political influence was exerted by government policy on the use of Christian/European personal names by African people. The politicians, who were Europeans by the time of the missioneries and colonialism, had a great influence on the bestowal of Christian/European names on African people. The influence exerted by politicians was both direct and indirect.

Direct influence was exerted when government officials insisted that African people use Christian/European names when asking for government services, such as applying for identity documents or registering at government and mission schools. Indirect political influence occurred when the official documents themselves were designed in such a way that they required applicants to provide a Christian/European personal name as if all the people were Christians.

During this period, African traditional systems were always regarded as inferior to European culture. Mphahlele (1972:19) elaborates:

During the era of colonialism Africans were denied all rights and were considered big children who needed training for a new lifestyle. Africans were denied any reference to their own past. For the colonizer, the African's real life and history starts from the time of the

colonizer's arrival. The colonized then easily forgets about his past and even becomes ashamed of it. Africans lost their real cultural and spiritual identity at the dawn of colonialism.

This is reflected in the fact that their African names were replaced by European ones. Some people received European personal names when they applied for official identity documents. Europeans introduced the identification documents for Africans. All Africans of a certain age were required to carry identity documents for the purposes of control. In these documents the names of individuals were supposed to be reflected. However, it was difficult for some officials to spell and pronounce African names. Therefore, they opted to give Africans European personal names which they would be able to write and pronounce. It was the norm that an official document would not be processed unless the applicant had a European personal name. This is how some of these names were introduced among the Africans.

All official documents, e.g. applications for identity documents, birth certificates, work permits and so on, required the applicant to have a Christian name. This was not part of African culture or tradition. Traditionally, Africans get their names, particularly new names, when they graduate from a life stage, for instance from adolescence to adulthood, marked by attending initiation school. When the initiate graduates, according to the Tshivenda tradition and custom he or she is given a new name. This new name replaces the first one, which becomes the name that is used only by the elders. Young people are not allowed to use this first name, because its use by young people is regarded as disrespectful.

During the time of the missionaries and colonialism, government documents did not cater for African naming practices. It is a Tshivenda tradition that the most recent name one gets becomes the only name by which one is known. But with the bestowal

of a European personal name, the African personal name became in effect the second name. During the period of the missionaries, these Christian names were European in nature. Politically, no African personal name qualified as a Christian name.

Those African people who did not have Christian personal names until they requested government services were given one upon application. Some Africans, including the Vhavenḁa, would choose their own Christian names for fear of being given names they did not like.

It is important to note that the majority of Christian/European names were given without any traditional ceremony, unlike African personal names. Naming ceremonies were performed only for those Christian/European personal names that were given upon baptism. No ceremonies were performed in the case of personal names that were given at work or at school or when the recipients requested government services. African culture was not followed, and this was very different from when their authentic, significant African personal names had been given them.

The migratory labour system also played a role in changing Tshivhenḁa personal naming. In South Africa, Africans were regarded politically as foreigners in cities and towns. They were not given residence in these areas. This affected people who lived far away from these centres, including the Vhavenḁa. Those who went south seeking better employment opportunities on the diamond and gold mines in Johannesburg and Kimberley came back with new personal names, i.e. European names. As mentioned earlier, this made communication between the labourers, in this case Africans, and their European masters easier.

When these migrant workers returned home, some gave their children who had reached school-going age European personal names that they had learnt from their masters. Children were instructed to mention this name when asked by the teacher.

#### **4.4 THE REACTION AGAINST THE INFLUENCE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION ON PERSONAL NAMING AFTER 1994**

It was mentioned in the introduction that one of the aims of this study is to determine the reaction to the influence of western civilization on the personal naming process after the advent of the democratic dispensation in 1994. After the unbanning of political organizations, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was released from prison on 11 February 1990. Many other political prisoners were also released and many of those who had been in exile returned home. The first democratic elections were held on 27 April 1994.

With the establishment of a democracy in South Africa in 1994, the dignity of black South Africans was restored. Black South Africans, who had been denied the right to choose their government for many decades, voted for the government of their choice for the first time in 1994. Colonialism and apartheid policies were removed; all the people of South Africa were now equal before the constitution. African traditional values were given equality with European values. The Bill of Rights granted all South Africans and their cultures and languages equal rights. Now no language or culture is superior to another. All the barriers to equal human development have been removed.

Some scholars, such as Al-Shahi (1988), regard the bestowal of a name that does not reflect one's culture as a fashion that changes with time and circumstances. He

maintains that the repertoire of personal names among the Riverain people remains one of the idioms through which Islam, Arab culture and social differences are expressed. This carries some truth for South Africa as, after the Africans were freed from the yoke of oppression, they began to choose indigenous personal names for their children. The fashion of viewing European personal names as a sign of prestige and civilization seems to be disappearing among most Africans.

After South Africa attained freedom, prominent South Africans like politicians, celebrities and academics started to use their bona fide African personal names. This included prominent South African political leaders like Shepherd Mdladlana who became known as *Membathisi Mdladlana*; Patrick Terror Lekota became *Mosiua Lekota*. *Mosiua* means one born when someone in the family passes on. Samuel Shilowa became *Mbhazima Shilowa*; and radio and television personalities, such as Bob Mabena and Desree Makote became *Kgomotso Mabena* and *Nthabiseng Makote* respectively. Academics such as William Mokgoba and James Steven Khumalo became *Malegapuru Mokgoba* and *Mzilikazi Khumalo* respectively (Dyantyi and Mxotwa, 1999:8). *Mzilikazi* is a praise name, meaning one who abstains. Koopman (1989) indicates that the AmaZulu choose personal names that refer to the wider clan, hence the bestowal of the name *Mzilikazi* on *Khumalo*.

These outstanding people are leading South African society towards a renaissance of African dignity through the personal naming process. The stigma and inferiority complex attached to the use of African personal names is fading through the role played by these prominent people.

Many other leaders on the continent are also working towards this revival of African traditional practices. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), formerly known as

Zaire, one of their former leaders, President Mobutu Joseph Désiré, is now known throughout the world by his authentic African personal name, *Sese-Seko*. This was decided upon in order to force change in the use of African personal names in the then Zaire. *Mobutu Sese* means “the inveterate defender of the forefathers’ land”. *Mobutu Seko* means “the audacious warrior who ignores defeat because his endurance wins” (Yanga (1978:240). From this example it is clear that the meaning of a personal name plays an important role in its choice among Africans. This is another great step towards a renaissance in African personal naming practices.

With the influence of the Black Consciousness Movement, whose aim was to challenge white supremacy in South Africa and more recently, the African Renaissance campaign, which aimed to transform Africans by taking them back to their cultural and religious roots, a revolution in personal naming has come about. Many African people have begun to think about their cultural roots and to give their children African names. African personal names are used in schools, churches and all places of employment. Many Africans have expressed the impact of freedom from the yoke of oppression and colonialism by reverting to the use of their African personal names. The continent in general and South Africa in particular, is now under the control of black governments. Many Africans feel degraded by the use of European names on the pretext that these are what make them Christians; hence many of them are reverting to their authentic, meaningful African personal names.

The fact that the South African constitution has declared all eleven languages of South Africa, i.e. Afrikaans, English, IsiXhosa, IsiZulu, Sesotho sa Leboa, Sesotho, Setswana, Siswati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga, to be official languages, forces and empowers everyone to use his or her own language. This decision has gone a long way to giving the African traditional value system its rightful place and purpose in

South Africa. The impact of this decision is attested to in the use of African personal names by many. Even children who come from Christian families are given Christian African personal names. For example, *Unariṅe* (He is with us), meaning God, the Almighty is with us, *Murendeni* (Praise Him), meaning God should always be praised, *Phaṅhutshedzo* (Blessings), meaning the child they have is a blessing from God, and so on. These African personal names, Tshivenda names in this case, convey a Christian message. This shows that God need not only be praised in English. There is no longer the need to use European personal names to indicate that one is a convert; now one is free to use one's authentic Tshivenda personal name.

Social changes affected other aspects of personal naming. The role played by grandparents in naming is diminishing. Parents are the main name-givers. The naming ceremony, *U thusa riwana*, is no longer practised by many families, and where it is it has unfortunately lost its value.

In most families children are now given personal names immediately after birth. This is different from the custom which traditional Vhavana followed. As mentioned in Chapter Three, traditionally, Vhavana would bestow names on their children after a certain period, at least within three months, depending on the health of the child. Under the democratic dispensation, a personal name is agreed upon between the mother and father long before the child is born. Suzman (1994:255) reports that:

The traditional name-givers – the grandfathers and fathers – often do not live with the family, and hence have lost their prerogative as name-givers.

Under the democratic dispensation, Africans are free to live where they want to. As a result of this freedom and because of urbanization, most blacks are migrating to the

cities and form nuclear families as opposed to the extended families in which they grew up. Most families in urban areas are composed of the father, the wife and the children. The father and the mother have the responsibility of selecting personal names for their children. Owing to technology, most parents know the sex of the child before it is born and can choose an appropriate name before the birth. Many of the taboos associated with naming have fallen away because people are exposed to more sources of information than their forefathers: these forefathers are no longer the only source of knowledge. This reduces young parents' dependency on their forefathers.

The political changes in South Africa have also affected the attitude that people have to the use of African personal names. Many black Africans feel it is time to bestow on their children African personal names, without giving them a second name, or Christian or school name. The names that children are given at home are used as Christian/school names. Teachers, who may not be mother-tongue speakers of the child's language, are expected to learn how to pronounce African personal names.

African names are regarded in the same light as European names. There are no more forced "foreign" names to accommodate non-African language speakers. Table 1 below indicates the personal names of children in a grade III class in 2003. Many children born after 1994 have only one name, as revealed in this example. It is important to note that even in the case of those who have more than one name, this is the choice of the parents; it is no longer a law. European attitudes towards African personal names have changed. Europeans, especially those who are in Africa, are trying hard to improve their knowledge of how to pronounce African personal names. This will go a long way towards the promotion of the use of African personal names in the future and improving race relation between the Europeans and Africans.

The following examples were taken from a school register to illustrate the above point:

**Table 1: Gondolikhethwa Christian School: Grade III 2003 (See Annexures D – F)**

.Attendance register for learners	
Surname	First name(s)
1. Khangale	Edzani (Be like)
2. Mabanda	Masala (The one who remained behind)
3. Maiwashe	Fulufhelo (Faith)
4. Makhera	Muimeli (Representative)
5. Makhokha	Vhutali (Wisdom)
6. Makushu	Mualusi (Guardian)
7. Mphaga	Phindulo (Answer)
8. Mudau	Pfariso (Assistance)
9. Mashoti	Collins
10. Ndou	Tsireledzo (Protection)
11. Nekhavambe	Mulisa (Shepherd)
12. Nekhofhe	Obedience
13. Nekhongoni	Mupfumedzanyi (Mediator)
14. Nethononda	Phatutshedzo (Blessing)
15. Ramaru	Unarine (He is with us)
16. Tshivhase	Ndingatshilidzi (It is through the mercy of God)

In this table, only two learners have English personal names. These names are used

as first names; the other fourteen learners have African, Tshivenda in this case, personal names. Although we do not have the exact dates of their birth, these children were born after the lifting of banning orders against black political organizations in 1990.

The following are examples of personal names bestowed on children born in 2006, as recorded on the Netcare website, <http://www.netcare.co.za>:

1. *Masana-A-Tshilidzi* (The rays of Grace of God). This child is seen as the rays of the grace of God to his/her parents because God loves them by giving them this child.
2. *Mutondi* (The care-giver). This refers to God. God is seen the care-giver to this family, by giving this child.
3. *Murendeni* (Praise God). God should always be praised: it is through Him that we have this child.
4. *Vhuthuhawe* (God's kindness). God is seen as very kind by this family. If it was not for his kindness, this child would not have been born.
5. *Orifha* (He gave us this child). They have the child because that was a sign of God's love.
6. *Rinae* (We are with Him). They are always with God.

The above data also reveals that in the new democratic era many parents bestow personal names on their children immediately after birth or even before birth. Owing to the influence of the new democratic dispensation, Vhavenda now even give their children personal names of non-Vhavenda political leaders, i.e. such as Nelson *Mandela*. The name *Mandela* is used as a first name among the Vhavenda, in recognition of the political role played by Nelson Mandela, one of the leaders of the African National Congress who later became the first black president of the Republic of South Africa.

The reasons for such choices are very different from those during the era of colonial imperialism. Yet, the effects of colonialism are still being seen in the use of English

personal names such as Obedience and Collins (see Table 1 above). Mbeki (1998:3) makes this comment about the motives of the Europeans in Africa:

To perpetuate their imperial domination over the peoples of Africa, the colonizers sought to enslave the African mind to destroy the African soul.

African people who now prefer African personal names over European names say that the use of these names makes them look like a boy, but when they use their authentic African personal names they regain their dignity and pride as Africans. They are going back to their roots, and reconnecting with their cultural values. In support of this statement, Makgamatha (1998:66) notes this about Khumalo's first name:

Right through school, my father, who was a priest, called me James Steven. Yet my given name was Mzilikazi, which is such an important name in Zulu culture. It comes from the clan of the Khumalos and one of the great clan leaders was Mzilikazi, and it was after that man that my father named me, and yet my name was not used. This "Jim" business indicates you're just a boy, no matter how old you are. It became clear to me that there was everything wrong with this and I returned to my Zulu name.

After attaining democracy in 1994, South Africans no longer viewed their African personal names as inferior to the European counterparts. Now they feel very proud when they use their African names because this reveals their Africanism. Africans, Vhavenda in particular, are no longer ashamed to be addressed by their African names, whereas before 1994 this would have been regarded as sign of disrespect to the elderly person. Herbert (1994:18) concurs:

However, English personal names are increasingly disfavored, especially in the urban areas. Many parents refuse to give their children English names. Because of the Cultural Revolution, people preferred to be known by their traditional personal names instead of

“Christian” names and their children are given African personal names only. This revolution is very often found among the politicized young people.

Traditionally, it is seen as impertinent to address an elderly Muvenda by his/her African personal name. Often a child did not even know his parents’ or grandparents’ names. It was only in the very few instances where a person did not have a European name that his or her African personal name could be used, although this would have been the last acquired name (initiation or married name) and not the birth name. Even in such instances, people had ways in which they could avoid the use of the African personal name, such as the use of teknonymy or a surname, or other traditional forms of address, e.g. *malume* (uncle), *makhadzi* (aunt), *makhulu* (grandparent) or *mmane* (aunt).

When African states gained independence from their colonizers, many people thought that African traditional value systems would be renewed and revitalized, and that African values would be practised without fear or prejudice, because African people would no longer regard European values as superior to their own. This was not the case, however, because most African elites are the products of a European value system. As such, they are handicapped in such a way that some of them no longer see the value of their African value systems, including the African personal naming process. Much to the surprise of the illiterate majority, the revitalization of African traditional values did not happen as speedily as expected. Fiedler (1996:1) notes:

When the colonial era in Africa came to an end, many cheerfully assumed that, with the white man’s rule, his religion would disappear soon. Perhaps the old tribal religions would revive, or perhaps Christianity would be replaced by Islam, originating as it did from the non-white world. Today African countries are independent, most for more than a generation, and the percentage of Christians has been growing steadily.

Today in Africa, however, it is commendable that the present group of political leaders seems keen to promote African value systems. In South Africa, for example, in terms of section 7 (1) of chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic, Act 108 of 1996 as amended, the “Bill of Rights”, places all traditions, religions and cultural values on equal footing, stating:

The Bill of Rights is a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom.

#### **4.5 CONCLUSION**

The discussion in this chapter revealed what Mbeki (1998) reported in his address. The colonizers caused Africans to renounce their cultural values and to espouse European values as their own. They denied their authentic African personal names and their new European personal names played a leading role as their most important names, and were used regularly. During the colonial era Africans felt honoured when addressed by their adopted European names. The objective of the African renaissance conference was to make Africans aware of the value of their cultures and religions.

The influence of religious, social, economic and political factors on the African personal naming process resulted in personal names that lacked meaning. The name-givers were no longer parents or family members and the rites that used to accompany African naming processes were no longer performed. According to traditional African naming processes, a new name replaces the old name; however, after the introduction of European philosophies and ideologies, the new name

became the second name. According to Tshivenda custom, a new personal name becomes the only name that a person is to be known by after attaining new status. The previous name is “thrown away”.

African personal naming and particularly Tshivenda personal naming, has been affected by contact the Vhavenda had with the Europeans during the late 19th century. It has been shown that the Vhavenda met the Europeans in various places, including church, at school and at work.

Western religious, social, economic and political factors played a major role in the promotion of European/Christian names in Africa. Africans, Vhavenda in particular, were made to believe that European names gave them higher status, and they were viewed as a sign of civilization. Those who did not have them felt backward, and the result was that they too acquired these names.

This chapter has revealed that when European names are bestowed they are given when a child begins school, whereas African personal names are bestowed when an individual graduates from a particular life stage. When a new African name is bestowed the previous name is no longer used, whereas when European names are adopted, they appear together with the African name. In some instances, an African name becomes a name that is used at home while the European name is used at work, school or at church.

This chapter has discussed changes that came with the dawn of the new democratic dispensation in South Africa. The majority of black people are beginning to give their children African personal names. Christian names are now found in African languages, including Tshivenda.

By promoting the use of African personal names, government could play a leading role in the renaissance of African culture and religion. Africa is free from the yoke of colonialism and oppression. It is up to the Africans themselves to repair the damage done by the Europeans and to encourage the revival of the dignity of Africans.

A way to reverse the damage done could be the use of authentic African personal names. African people must realize that their African names bind them to their culture; the use of these names restores African dignity, and most importantly, they have semantic significance.

The resurgence in the use of African personal names no longer follows social status. The use of authentic African names cuts across class and religion. Old Tshivenda personal names, such as *Mudzunga*, *Phophi*, *Masindi*, *Mukatshelwa*, *Nndwamafo* (Eye fight), *Mukonḑeleli* (One who tolerates), *Nyawaisedza* (Spread rumours), are now preferred by the younger generation. These are names that were discarded during the missionaries' era because they were viewed as promoting paganism rather than the Christian faith. These names do not praise the Almighty Lord but are still preferred by Vhavana. They are unlike *Vhahangwele* (Forgive them), *Mupfumedzanyi* (Mediator), *Unariḽe* (God is with us) etc., which praise the Almighty.

The South African constitution makes it possible for its entire people to follow and practise their cultural activities without fear or prejudice. All cultures and religions are equal and are accorded the same status. This should help the country to reconcile. People are no longer forced to have a European personal name to use as a Christian name because all religions are equal. A Christian name can be a name in any language or culture. People no longer confuse the second name with the Christian

name, as if all people are Christians. A second personal name should remain a second name for those who prefer to have one.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF TSHIVENḐA PERSONAL NAMES

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Four we discussed how Western civilization influenced the TshivenḐa personal naming process detrimentally. Owing to civilization, and most importantly, through colonization, African cultures, and the TshivenḐa culture in particular, were drastically affected. During the colonial era people began to drop their African personal names and adopted their colonizers' culture and names.

Personal naming practices among the VhavenḐa form an integral part of their culture and tradition: the personal naming process is a social activity. Each TshivenḐa personal name, as discussed in previous chapters, represents a compact history of how the VhavenḐa perceive life and interact with the environment on a daily basis. These personal names reflect the VhavenḐas' inner being and their views about life; be it political, religious, social, or economic, as discussed in Chapter Four.

This chapter deals with the structure of TshivenḐa personal names, that is, their morphology. In the preceding chapter it was indicated that some personal names, such as *Musandiwa* and *Miḑiyavhathu*, are derived from TshivenḐa phrases. In this chapter the form of personal names such as these will be the subject of discussion. Morphologically speaking, when personal names are constructed from different word categories, it becomes easier for the name-giver to communicate his/her feelings to the entire community, minimising possible friction. TshivenḐa personal names, like

other African names, are derived from word categories such as nouns, verbs, qualificatives, interrogatives, compounds and pronouns. These terms will be discussed in details below.

The objective of this chapter is to analyze the morphology of the Tshivenda personal names in order to gain a deeper understanding of the patterns that are followed in their formation. The researcher will further point out the relationship between morphology and meaning in these Tshivenda names.

## **5.2 MORPHOLOGY DEFINED**

Morphology is the study of the structure of words. It is a branch of linguistics dealing with the forms and formation of words. Bonvillain (1997), Zungu (1999), Aronoff (1979), Nida (1976), Kosch (1997), Matthews (1991) and Haspelmath (2002) all agree that morphology is the study of the internal structure of words and that it also shows how morphemes are systematically arranged to create the meaning of a word. Zungu (1999:76) further defines morphology as the internal structure of a word that can be identified as being either a self-standing lexical item, conveying the basic meaning as found in the lexicon, or a cluster of elements comprising, beside the lexical item or stem, one or more affixes, that is, particulars added before (= prefix), or after (= suffix), or within (= infix) the stem to convey additional grammatical meaning(s).

Therefore, morphology is that important part of grammar/linguistics that specializes in the study of the anatomy of word categories found in all languages of the universe. Morphology deals with how different word categories are composed, i.e. how morphemes are arranged during the developmental stage of a word. If the

morphemes are poorly arranged, that particular word will lack recognizable meaning in that specific language. Personal names are nouns, and by virtue of the fact that they are made up of meaningful sequences of sound (morphemes), they carry meaning.

Words are constituted of different morphemes. They are constituted by prefixes, roots and suffixes. It is through these morphemes that words become meaningful. Bonvillain (1999), Fromkin and Rodman (1993), Kosch (2006), Rankhododo (1999), Guma (1971), Nida (1976), Haspelmath (2002) and Van der Spuy (1989), define a morpheme as the smallest unit/constituent of a word that cannot be further analyzed or broken down. They agree that morphemes play an important role in assigning meanings to words. A Tshivenda prefix *mu-* (class 1), for example, cannot be broken down further without losing its meaning entirely.

A root morpheme is that important part of a word which carries the basic meaning. It is the last unit of the word which remains when the word has been stripped off all its affixes. Morphemes are indispensable parts of the word category, as will be discussed with regard to Tshivenda personal names. For this reason, Vhavana derive their personal names from these different word categories. Tshivenda personal names are a mirror of these word categories. They are morphologically rich and they reflect Tshivenda culture, as it is reflected in the language. Bonvillain (1997:1) makes the following comment about the relationship between morphology (word structure) and culture (language use):

Language is an integral part of human behaviour. It is the primary means of interaction between people. Speakers use language to convey their thoughts, feelings, intentions and desires. Language is enriched by the uses that people make of it. These uses and the meanings transmitted are situational, social and cultural.

It is difficult to divorce the naming process from the use of language as a means of communication, especially among Africans. Naming is part of the language and culture. Whenever morphemes are put together to produce a new word, this new word is carefully coined to carry the message transmitted by the name-giver. The feelings and intentions of the name-giver are immediately revealed through the name.

When these morphemes are combined together to form a word, be it a verb, compound, copulative, or qualificative, they follow a particular pattern. This will be illustrated in the discussion below. Haspelmath (2002) regards morphemes as morphological atoms, the ultimate elements of morphological analysis.

Morphemes such as prefixes and suffixes, when affixed to a root, modify the meaning of the root in terms of class, gender, place, and time and word category. Morphemes can also be regarded as meaning moulders. In African languages, Tshivenda in particular, morphemes give word categories life.

Tshivenda personal names are formed from bound morphemes. Free morphemes in Tshivenda are predominantly found in the ideophones, i.e. *thwee!* (Very cold), *wee!* (Very white). According to Guma (1971:2), a bound morpheme is a morpheme that can occur only with another morpheme, e.g. *Alugumi* (That which does not come to an end) is formed from the negative formative *a*, the prefix *lu-* (11), the verb root – *gum-* (stop) and the suffix –*i*.

Most Tshivenda personal names are bestowed on people regardless of their gender.

This group of personal names is regarded as neutral, such as *Tshililo* (Weeping/lamentation), *Lufuno* (Love), and *Mulalo* (Peace). However, there are personal names that denote gender and that begin with the prefix *Nya-*, *Nwa-*, *Ra-* or *Ne-*. Personal names that begin with the prefix *Nya-* and *Nwa-* refer to females, such as *Nyabele*, *Nyadombo*, and *Nyadenga* and *Nwasundani*, *Nwafunyunyuyi*, whereas names that begin with the prefixes *Ra-* and *Ne-* refer to males, namely *Raulinga*, *Ravhura*, *Ratombo*, and *Nefefe*, *Nelwamondo*, *Nenungwi* and *Nemakonde*.

When Tshivenda personal names are closely analyzed, one discovers that they are derived from different word categories, namely: verb, pronoun, qualificative, compound, copulative and negative construction. The combination of these different word categories during the formation of personal names sometimes reflects issues of social/national importance and also generates gender-related personal names. However, national events also play a role in naming. According to Bonvillain (1997:27):

Words have referential senses, labelling persons, objects, events in the world, or in thought and imagination. Words also have cultural meaning, reflecting attitudes, values or shared symbols (e.g. apple pie). Words and sentence constructions can have situational relevance, some used in formal contexts and others in informal situations.

This means that words are not used without purpose. The coining of these new words, particularly personal names, is intended to produce a particular meaning.

### **5.3 PERSONAL NAMES DERIVED FROM THE VERB STEM**

Verb stems carry the meaning of the sentence. They show the action carried out by the subject of the sentence. The verb stem consists of the root and verb suffix. The

important element of the verb stem is the root, because the meaning of the verb stem is assigned by the root. Coates (1999:27) sees the root as the key element to which other parts of the word are added. Kosch et al. (2004:43) define the root as follows:

The root or stem forms the core of the derived word. In the African languages its meaning is often only an approximate one, which is narrowed down to a specific meaning once it is combined with the other constituent(s) of the word.

The Vhaventḁa draw many of their personal names from this category. Mostly they reflect social issues among the Vhaventḁa. In this section the focus will be on the form of these names. In terms of their structure, they are formed from a verb root plus a formative *plus* suffix, for example. A root carries the core meaning of the verb. Poulos (1990:153) notes:

The verb root represents the “core” of the verb – the part that expresses the basic meaning of the verb.

A root can therefore be understood as the foundation on which a word is built. Structurally, personal names under this category are formed from the verb root, the terminal and the imperative suffix *-ni*; as in the following examples:

(a) *Livhuwani* (Be thankful)

This is derived from the verb root *-livhuh-/livhuw-*, with the basic meaning of “to thank”. The roots *-livhuh-/livhuw-* are variants or allomorphs, and can be used interchangeably, the resulting words meaning the same thing. The terminal vowel *-a* is found in all positive verb stems. It is an ending that denotes that verb stem is in a positive state. The imperative suffix *-ni* in Tshiventḁa may refer to the one or more people who are being addressed through the given name. The imperative suffix *-ni* is actually a suffix indicating

plurality, but it may refer to one or more people in the formation of personal nouns. Thus, whatever the meaning brought about by the root, it may be directed to one person or more. In other cultures, as reported by Neethling (2005:23) among the Zulu of South Africa, the imperative suffix *-ni* denotes gender and is usually used to refer to a male person. He says:

Should the name have the form of an imperative, i.e. command, characterized by the suffix *-ni*, it is usually also a male name, e.g. Vuyani (be happy) or Bongani (praise, be thankful).

In the preceding chapters it was indicated that African personal names are used to address social, economic, political and religious issues, and personal names talk to people. Vhavenḁa, as Africans, do the same when they bestow personal names, hence the use of the imperative suffix *-ni*. They are communicating with people around them. For instance:

(b) *Fhaṭuwani* (Be wise/stay awake)

This is formed from the verb root *-fhaṭuw-* (wise/awake), terminal suffix *-a* and an imperative suffix *-ni*. The verb root *-fhaṭuw-* still carries the basic meaning of wise/awake. This personal name is bestowed when people are not careful when doing things or after something unplanned had happened to them. Through this name they are reminded to be more careful.

(c) *Thanyani* (Be clever, Be careful)

This personal name is formed from the verb root *-thany-* (clever/careful), plus the terminal suffix *-a* and the imperative suffix *-ni*. The meaning of this personal name is similar to *Fhaṭuwani* above. It means that people should be careful and not trust anybody around them. These types of personal names

are categorized as warning names, as mentioned in Chapter Three above. When they are bestowed, the name-giver sends a warning to people, based either on the experience of the name-giver or someone in the family. This is how African people warn one another when there is distrust in the community.

(d) *Itani* (Do it)

This name is formed from the verb root *-it-* meaning “do” plus the terminal suffix *-a*, plus the imperative suffix *-ni*, which refers to either one or more people. Through this personal name people are encouraged to continue doing good things in situations where they are excelling in their daily activities. It may also be used in a situation where, for example, people of the same family are dying, one after the other. When a child is born into this family, the child is given this name to warn the people behind the deaths that they should stop causing death in the family; if they do not stop they will be caught. It is African beliefs that people do not simply die, but are bewitched. Whenever there is a death in the family it is understood that someone is behind that death. In this instance, the name would also be used as a warning to the suspects who are identified through the use of the imperative suffix *-ni*.

(e) *Rendani* (Praise)

This type of personal name is formed from the verb root *-rend-* meaning praise, plus the terminal suffix *-a*, plus the imperative suffix *-ni*, referring to one or more people who should take part in the praise. The history behind this personal name may be that the child was born after a long period of infertility for the couple, or that the couple/family saw the arrival of this child as a blessing from God; therefore, they deem it necessary to praise Him.

The above examples of personal names are neutral in the sense that they can be used for any person, irrespective of gender.

#### **5.4 PERSONAL NAMES DERIVED FROM THE ADJECTIVE**

An adjective is a word category that qualifies a subject or an object in a sentence. According to Ziervogel et al (1987:81) an English adjective qualifies a noun or a pronoun.

There are three types of personal names found in this category: namely, personal names that are derived from the relative concord, the verb stem and the adjective formative *-ho*; those that are derived from a noun and an adjective; and those that are derived from adjective stems.

##### **5.4.1 Personal names derived from a relative concord plus verb stem plus an adjective suffix *-ho***

- (a) *Apfeswaho*: (The one who is listened to most).

In this case, the presupposed referent of the noun phrase is God. The relative concord *a* refers to God, *-pfesw-* has its variant, *-pfesiw-* is an extended verb root with a passive extension *-iw-*, meaning one who is listened to, derived from the verbal suffix *-a* plus the adjective suffix or formative *-ho*. The extended root *-pfesiw-/pfesw-* is derived from the root *-pf-* (listen). The name-giver is communicating with the people around him about his understanding of God. He regards God as the only being that should be listened to. The suffix *-ho* differentiates this God from others.

(a) *Tshinakaho* (Something cute/charming)

The element that is being identified or qualified in this name is housed in class 7 *tshi-*, as can be seen from the relative concord *tshi-*. The respective verbal roots, *-nak-* (attractive/beautiful) and terminal *-a* refers to the items/elements being qualified. The roots in turn are followed by the verbal suffix *-a* and the adjective suffix *-ho*. The Tshivenda personal name *Tshinakaho* is derived from the Tshivenda proverb, namely *Tshinakaho a tshi yi thambo, tshi no ya thambo ndi mutshinyalo*, meaning that something so beautiful cannot last for ever. This type of expression is commonly used when someone who is beautiful or who is admired by everybody in the community has passed on, especially if that person dies unexpectedly; or it may refer to a situation where a successful marriage seems to be falling apart.

The plural form of things that are qualified normally occurs in class 8 with the prefix *zwi-*, e.g.

(c) *Zwiitwaho* (Things that are done).

Nouns that are qualified fall under names of class 8, *zwi-*. This name usually refers to the manner (*zwiito*, noun that belongs to class 8) (deeds/actions) in which things are done. These deeds/actions are qualified from other deeds. In most instances they are undesirable. The structure of this type of personal name is as follows: relative concord *zwi-* plus the verb stem *-ita* (do), plus the passive verbal extension *-iw-*, plus the terminal vowel *-a* and the adjective suffix *-ho*.

#### 5.4.2 Personal names that are derived from a noun and an adjective

The second type of personal name formed from the adjective is derived from the formation of nouns from the noun and the adjective such as:

- (a) *Nndwakhulu* (A big fight)

The noun *nndwa* (a fight) and an adjective *khulu* (big) are combined to produce the personal name *Nndwakhulu* (A big fight). The noun *nndwa* (a fight) is formed from the class 9 (N- prefix), plus the verb stem *-lwa* (to fight) while *khulu* (big) is formed from the adjective concord N- prefix plus the adjective stem *-hulu*. *Nndwa* and *khulu* have gone through a phonological process. *Nndwa* is a noun form class 9/10, *N/dzi-*, when the nasal sound *n* combines with the sound *h* of the adjective stem *-hulu* and a new sound *kh* is formed: *N-* (prefix of class 9) + *h* of an adjective stem *-hulu* > a new sound *kh* is formed.

#### 5.4.3 Personal names that are derived from an adjective stem

The third type of personal name formed from the adjective is formed from the adjective stem. Personal names which belong to this category are formed from the subject concord (class 1) and the adjective stem. These adjectives are used to describe the subject of the sentence, but in this instance they are used as personal names or surnames. Some Tshivenda personal names are occasionally used as surnames.

- (a) *Musekene* (One who is thin). The structure of this personal name would be: the class prefix of class 1 *mu-*, plus the adjective stem *-sekene*, meaning something very thin. When prefixes belonging to different classes are used with this adjective stem, names/nouns from this class will be qualified. In this instance, the name/noun that is qualified belongs to the class 1, i.e. *muthu musekene o fuwa* (A thin person has gone).
- (b) *Mutshena* (One who is light in complexion). This type of a personal name is derived by using the adjective concord *mu-* plus the adjective stem *-tshena* (meaning white/light in complexion). When this name is used it refers to a person who has a very light complexion, like a European. Adjective stems can be used with any adjective concord during the process of formation of personal names.

## **5.5 PERSONAL NAMES DERIVED FROM FIRST PERSON PRONOUN (SINGULAR) + VERB STEM**

Most Tshivenda personal names are derived from a combination of the first person pronoun and a verb stem that the emphasis placed by these types of names is on the name-giver and not on the wishes of the person on whom the name is bestowed. In traditional Vhenda society, the grandparents were the principal name-givers, but if they were absent, this role was usually performed by an elder in the family structure or the parents of the newborn or the traditional doctor, *maine*. It has been indicated in previous chapters that African personal names reflect the wishes, religion, economic and political status of the family. Therefore, most of the personal names that fall into this category reflect the feelings of the name-giver, and how he/she has been treated by his/her relatives.

Personal names in this category are like protest names, or talking names. The name-giver talks to the people around him/her through these names. When the first person pronoun is combined with the verb stem (which may be an extended verb stem) and followed by the imperative suffix *-ni*, the last vowel of the verb stem changes to become an **e**, and the **a** of the verb stem falls away as in:

- (a) *Nnditsheni* (Leave me) (*n̄ne* + *litsha* + *ni*). This is formed from the first person pronoun *n̄ne-* (me) plus the verb stem *-litsha* (leave/stop), plus the imperative suffix *-ni*.
- (b) *Ntsundeni* (Chase me away) (*n̄ne* + *sunda* + *ni*). This name is constructed from the first person pronoun *n̄ne-* (me) plus the verb stem *-sunda* (cause to leave), plus the imperative suffix *-ni*.
- (c) *Ntsieni* (Leave me behind) (*n̄ne* + *sia* + *ni*). This name is created from the first person pronoun *n̄ne-* (me) plus the verb stem *-sia* (leave behind) and the imperative suffix *-ni*.

When different word categories are formed from other parts of speech in Tshivenda, the new formations in most cases undergo a morpho-phonological process through which some sounds will change, as in the examples above. Zungu (1999:66) says this about the sound changes that occur when new nouns are formed:

When sounds come together in speech, they tend to influence one another thus producing sound changes (phonological changes) that show up as word formation rules (morphological changes).

The examples below indicate phonological processes that took place during the formation of these new nouns (personal names).

$N\grave{n}e + -l$  (*itsha*) = *Nnd* (new sound) as in *Nnditsheni*, when the pronoun of the first person singular *nḡe-* is combined with the verb stem *-litsha*, (leave/stop) a new sound is formed, **nnd** as in *Nnditsheni* (Leave me). This personal name means that someone should be left alone.

$N\grave{n}e + -s$  (*unda*) = *Nts* (new sound) as in *Ntsundeni* (make me leave), the pronoun of the first person singular *nḡe-* combines with **s**, resulting in a new sound **nts**. *Ntsundeni* (Make me leave), is found in a situation where someone realizes that he/she is not welcome, and the behaviour towards him/her indicates this, although people do not say so explicitly.

$N\grave{n}e + -sh$  (*avha*) = *Ntsh* (new sound) as in *Ntshavheni* (Be afraid of me or respect me), when the pronoun *nḡe-* combines with the sound **sh**, a new sound **ntsh** is formed. The name *Ntshavheni* may refer to a situation where there was no respect: after the birth of this child, the name-giver is telling people that there should now be respect of some sort.

$N\grave{n}e + -r$  (*amba*) = **Nth** (new sound) as in *Nthambeleni* (Hire people to kill/harm me). When the pronoun *nḡe-* is combined with the sound **r**, a new sound **nth** is formed. *Nthambeleni* may refer to a situation where people are plotting to kill someone. Through the birth of this child, a message is sent out to the plotters that should they go ahead, their plot will be discovered.

$N\eta e + -vh$  (*ulaha*) = **Mmb** (new sound) as in *Mmbulaheni* (Kill me). In this personal name, the pronoun  $n\eta e-$  is combined with the sound **vh** to form the new sound **mmb**. This personal name is found in an environment where people are plotting to kill or have already killed someone, and through the birth of this child the name-giver tells the perpetrators that they should also kill this new born one as this is their way. But this personal name has a message of warning in it: should they decide to kill this one, they will find people ready to defend the baby.

Owing to a lack of understanding of the phonological process that takes place when some of these personal names are formed, most Tshivenda personal names are wrongly spelt today. For instance, personal names such as *Ntshavheni* (Respect or fear me), *Mmbulungeni* (Protect me) and *Mmbulaheni* (Kill me) are misspelt as *\*Tshavheni*, *\*Mbulungeni* and *\*Mbulaheni*. Following the phonological process as shown above, spellings such as these are wrong and the meaning of “me/myself” is distorted or destroyed completely. The correct spelling of these names assists in their correct pronunciation.

However, there are exceptions to the above rule; new words are formed without undergoing a phonological process, such as:

*Ntambudzeni* (*Treat me badly*) ( $n\eta e + tambudza + e + ni$ ). This name has been created from the first person pronoun  $n\eta e-$  (me) plus the verb stem *-tambudza* (ill-treat), and the imperative suffix *-ni*.

When  $N\eta e$  is combined with the verb stem *-tambudza* there is no sound change, i.e.  $N\eta e + -tambudza = Nt$  (ambudzeni).

The meaning carried by these names is of social importance. As indicated above, the name-giver is talking to those he/she meets on a daily basis. As has been pointed out in the preceding chapters, African personal names are like short stories. These are the most common personal names given to a *Muvenda* child. The message in these names is very short and clear, and the name-giver is the focal point. Personal names in this category do not refer to the wishes of the person given the name, but to the feelings of the name-giver. This is indicated by the use of the first person pronoun *nne* (I).

## **5.6 PERSONAL NAMES DERIVED FROM THE POSSESSIVE PRONOUN**

Personal names in this category resemble personal names that are formed by a compound construction. However, they also reflect possession. Doke and Mofokeng (1957:135) define a possessive as a word which qualifies a substantive, and is brought into concordial agreement therewith by the possessive concord. There are three types of personal names derived from this category, namely: noun plus possessive phrase, names derived from an adverb plus a possessive phrase and names derived from a qualificative plus a possessive phrase.

### **5.6.1 Personal names derived from a noun plus a possessive phrase**

Below are examples of personal names formed from nouns and the possessive phrase:

- (a) *Thohoyandou* (Head of an elephant). This personal name is formed from *thoho* (noun) plus *ya* (possessive concord) plus *ndou* (noun).

- (b) *Midiyavhathu* (People's homesteads). This personal name is formed from *miḽi* (noun) plus *ya* (possessive concord) plus *vhathu* (noun).

### 5.6.2 Personal names derived from an adverb of time plus a possessive phrase

Below is an example of a personal name formed from the adverb of time and a possessive phrase: *-walwo*

- (a) *Musiwalwo* (It is time) *musi* (adverb of time) + *walwo* (possessive phrase). Normally, a personal name like this would refer to a death. Through this personal name, the name-giver tries to tell people that no one has the power to stop death when it is time for someone to pass on. They may do whatever they can to prevent a death, taking the patient to various doctors, but if it is the time for someone to pass on, such a patient will end up dying. The noun *lufu* (death) belongs to class 11 (*lu*), and *lwo* is a possessive stem, formed from *lu-* + *a* > *lwo*.

## 5.7 PERSONAL NAMES DERIVED FROM A VERB PHRASE

A verb phrase is that part of the sentence that indicates the action to be performed. In Tshivenda, personal names can be constructed through the combination of different morphemes as will be shown in the following examples. In Chapter One of this study it was indicated that language and culture are inseparable. The illustrations below are good examples of this fact. According to Poulos (1990:152):

A verb in Venda consists of a number of morphemes that are in a sense “put together” – these may be, for example, a subject concord

which refers to the subject of the verb; a tense marker or formative which expresses a certain tense; an object concord which refers to some or other object; a verb root which expresses the basic meaning of the action or state; and a suffix which comes at the end and which sometimes gives us some indication of the verb.

The verb phrase in Tshivenda consists of many morphemes. When Tshivenda personal names are formed from this category, all of these morphemes become part of that particular personal name, i.e. the verb phrase *zwi ḡo fhela* (The bad treatment will come to an end), will become the personal name *Zwiḡofhela*. According to Rankhododo (1999:46),

The verb in Venda consists of two parts viz, an inflectional and verbal category. In syntax, the verb *u – a - ḡ - a* can be divided between the verbal category [V] i.e.. [- ḡ -] and various inflectional categories such as mood, tense and agreement. Inflectional categories known as functionals have five categories in Venda: mood, tense, agreement, negative, and aspect.

This echoes Roxburgh (1980:106):

Verbs perform a predicative function in the sentence. They must incorporate at least a radical and a tense suffix, and may also have conjugational prefixes, concordial affixes, pre-suffixal extensions, and post-suffixal enclitics.

All Tshivenda personal names derived from the verb include the features of tense, mood, prefix and suffix, as is demonstrated by the examples below:

(a) *Zwiḡofhela* (The bad treatment will come to an end): (*zwi + ḡo + fhela*).

The personal name *Zwiḡofhela* (they will come to an end) is formed from the subject concord (class 8) *zw*), future tense formative *ḡo*, and verb stem *-fhela*

(to come to an end). The name refers to a situation where one might be ill treated, and through this name the name-giver says that all the suffering will come to an end one day.

- (b) *Muḁanagundo* (The one who brought in victory). This type of personal name has been derived through the use of the prefix *mu-* of class 1, plus the verb stem *-ḁa* (come) plus the preposition *na* plus the deverbative *gundo*, formed from the verb stem *-kunda* (defeat). *Gundo* (victory) belongs to nouns/names of class 9/10 (*N/dzi* class). When this name was derived the following phonological process took place:  $N + K > G = gundo$  (victory).
- (c) *Rotshidziwa* (We are sanctified): (*ro* + *-tshidziwa*). This personal name may be shortened to *Rotshidzwa*. Through this personal name the name-giver conveys satisfaction with the blessing he/she has received so far.

Structurally, the name is formed from the subject concord, 1<sup>st</sup> person plural: speaker, past tense *ro* (we) and passive verb root *-tshidz-* (sanctify), passive suffix extension *-iw-* and the terminating vowel *-a*. Personal names that take this form bring an interesting interpretation to Tshivenda culture. As the Vhavenda are a patriarchal society, one would not expect a naming process that includes the father and the mother. Through personal names like this, equality between the parents is maintained.

- (d) *Riḁomushumela* (We will work/pray for him) (*ri* + *ḁo* + *mu* + *-shumela*). This personal name conveys, through the use of the future tense formative *ḁo*, the meaning of people who are committed to working for God until the end of time. This personal name is formed from the subject concord, 1<sup>st</sup> person plural:

speaker, *ri* (plural, present tense) (we), *do* (future tense formative), *mu* (object concord) and *-shumela*, “to work for someone else”, an extended verb stem. The applied extension *-el-* introduces the meaning of doing it for someone else, in this case, doing it for God. Poulos (1991:170) says the following about the extension *-el-* :

Roots that incorporate this extension indicate that the action of the verb is carried out on behalf of, for, or to the detriment of, some person, things or place.

Personal names such as *Rotshidzwa* and *Riḏomushumela* introduce an element of equality and inclusively to the roles played by parents in the family. Culturally, Vhavenda practise a patriarchal system, where the father is the only one who provides for and has authority in the family; but personal names like these indicate a shift from this system. Now the father and the mother agree on a name for the newborn. They commit themselves to working for God. Again, these types of personal names are bestowed as a result of Western education and Christianity. Instead of using English personal names, educated and Christian Vhavenda choose these types of personal names for their children.

## **5.8 PERSONAL NAMES DERIVED FROM COMPOUNDS**

Compounds are words that are formed from two or more independent word categories, such as a noun and a verb, a noun and a qualificative or a verb and a noun. Matthews (1991:15) defines a compound as a word whose parts may themselves be words in other contexts. Matthews (1991) further notes that compounding is a process by which a compound lexeme is derived from two or more simpler lexemes. Crystal (1991:70) regards a compound as:

A term used widely in descriptive linguistic studies to refer to a linguistic unit which is composed of elements that function independently in other circumstances.

Spencer (1991:309) defines compounds as the prototypical concatenation of words to form other words, while Kosch (2006:122) defines them as a syntactic combination of two or more existing (full) words to form a new compound word. In Tshivenda compounds are formed from the combination of any word categories, e.g. verb plus noun. The examples below will illustrate this.

#### 5.8.1 Personal names that are formed from a deverbative and a noun

- (a) *Mulindathavha* (One who looks after the mountain): *mu-* prefix class 1, *-linda* a verb stem, plus a noun *thavha* (mountain). *Mulinda* is a deverbative formed from the prefix *mu-* (class1) and verb stem *-linda* (meaning to look after something). A personal name like this refers to a situation in which a child born is regarded as the successor of the traditional leader of the village. The child is regarded as the protector of the village. In this situation the child given the name is the target.
- (b) *Tshiisaphungo* (One who spreads gossip), *tshi-* prefix class 7, verb stem *-isa*, plus the noun *phungo* (rumour). This personal name refers to a situation where people gossip. This personal name is also a deverbative belonging to class 1a. Normally, this name would be chosen when there is a suspicion that someone in the family is spreading misinformation about the family. Though this personal name would be bestowed on a child, the target is the suspect.

## 5.9 PERSONAL NAMES DERIVED FROM THE NEGATIVE PHRASE

Personal names that are found in this category bear a resemblance to those that are found under personal names derived from a possessive plus a noun. The messages they carry reflect mostly on social issues between the name-giver and his/her surroundings. The name-giver reminds the community about the treatment she/he received from them, particularly bad treatment. Guerini (2005:7) concurs:

Naming practices in African societies represent a form of indirect and implicit communication with the community at large, which allows the expression of potentially embarrassing surrounding feelings and thought avoiding direct confrontation, which may compromise the relationship among members in a group or in a speech community.

This emphasizes the fact that naming in Africa is another way of communication. Africans, particularly Vhavenda, use personal names to address social, religious, economic and political issues. From a morphological analysis of Tshivenda personal names and by examining the structure of different word categories used in the formation of personal names, whether negative constructions, verbs, adjectives, pronouns, or compounds, one sees a society that is in conversation with its surroundings.

When these personal names are used, the name-giver is communicating with his surroundings, i.e. his family members or the neighbours. The use of these personal names tends to neutralize the tensions that could arise from daily interactions.

Nkumane (1999: 55) agrees:

Name-giving according to this observation provides an outlet for the regulation of social relations in the communities. It allowed people to communicate their feelings indirectly, without overt confrontation and possible conflict.

The use of different Tshivenda word categories affords name-givers an opportunity to communicate deep emotions in a polite manner, as in the case of *Athilivhali* (I do not forget) and *Athifhelimbilu* (I do not worry), where the use of the negative construction allows the name-giver to tell the community that she/he will not forget what they have done or that she/he is not worried about their ill-treatment. In this way, a direct confrontation about feelings is avoided because this is a personal name, but not just a name or label; rather, a name full of meaning.

In terms of structure or form, when the negative formative *a* is used before the first person concord, *ndi*, the first person concord changes to *thi*, as Rankhododo (1999:75) notes:

If the negative morpheme *a* comes before the agreement of the first person singular *ndi*, the negative *a* influences the agreement *ndi* to become *thi*.

The name *Hakundwi* is derived from the sentence *Mudzimu u a kundiwa* (positive), God is defeated. The negative of this sentence would be: *Mudzimu ha kundwi* or *Mudzimu ha kundiwi* (God cannot be defeated).

*Athilivhali* (*a + ndi + livhal + i*) = (I do not forget)

This personal name is formed by the negative affix, *thi-*, subject concord of speaker, first person singular plus the verb root *-livhal* – (forget), plus terminating vowel *-i*. This type of name refers to a situation where the name-giver was once emotionally hurt, and when this child is born it is given this name in order to prevent this happening again.

*Athizwilondi* (*a + ndi + zwi + lond- + i*) (I do not care)

This personal name is formed from the negative formative *a*, plus *thi* negative formative, singular of *ndi*, plus *zwi* the object concord of class 7, plus *-lond-* verb root, plus a terminating vowel in the negative *-i*. Through this name, the name-giver tells the community and family that he/she does not care about all their bad treatment. The basic meaning of care is conveyed by the verb root *-lond-* (care). The improved meaning, which is the negative meaning (I do not care), is brought about by the use of other morphemes such as *a*, *thi* and the terminal suffix *-i*.

*Athivhalitshi* (I will not leave you)

This personal name is formed from the negative formative *a*, plus the subject concord of the first person singular *thi* (*ndi*), plus the object concord plural *vha* plus the verb root *-litsh-* (drop), plus the negative terminating vowel *-i*.

*Athifhelimbilu* (I do not get worried)

This personal name is formed from the negative formative *a* plus the negative subject concord *thi* (*ndi*) plus the verb root *-fhel-* (end), plus the negative terminating vowel *-i*, plus the noun *mbilu* (heart). As has been indicated above, the use of this construction gives a name-giver the opportunity to raise serious issues in a polite manner. The name-giver tells the community that she/he has tolerated their bad treatment, especially that from his/her in-laws. Now that the child has been born, the name-giver uses the naming process to inform them of this ill treatment but also to indicate that it does not really worry him/her. However, this sarcasm indicates that, in reality, the name-giver is upset, hence the name. And again, this personal name will always remind the family about what happened.

*Avhapfeledzi* (They are not satisfied)

The personal name *Avhapfeledzi* (They are not satisfied) is formed from the negative formative **a** plus the subject concord (class 2 plural) *vha*, plus the verb root *-pfeledz-* (satisfied), plus the negative terminating vowel *-i*.

This type of personal name is used in a situation where there have been many deaths; members of the same family are dying one after another, or a child is born following the deaths of several others. The name-giver is telling those behind these deaths that they should stop now and give this one a chance to survive. The use of the concord *vha* (class 2, plural) in this personal name conveys this meaning. The concord *vha* refers to witches or people behind these deaths in the family. It is an African belief that people do not die without human cause: it is assumed that when a person dies, he/she has been bewitched. Therefore, through this name, those behind these deaths are warned to stop causing them in this family. Again, this personal name will remind the family that there was a time when the family was experiencing untimely deaths. Regarding the meaning of African personal names, Nkumane (1999:54) says that many names point to various circumstances that the family has experienced.

Other examples of Tshivenda personal names that are formed from this type of construction are listed below:

*Muthuhadini* (A person is not troublesome)

*Muthu + ha + dini*

Noun + negative formative + verb stem

This personal name is bestowed on the child as a warning that a person is not troublesome; however, his actions are what is troublesome. This is derived from the Tshivenḡa saying *Muthu ha dini hu dina zwiito* (the person is not troublesome, only his deeds/actions).

*Muthuhathonwi* (A person is not provoked)

*Muthu + ha + thonwi*

This personal name is formed from noun plus negative formative **ha** plus the verb stem. The verb stem *-thonwi* (is not provoked) with the variant *-thomiwi*, negative, passive, is derived from the verb stem *-thoma* (provoke) positive. This type of personal name is used as a warning to people who undermine others. It says that if one undermines other people, one should be aware that once provoked, they could be very dangerous. Therefore, when one meets a quiet person, it should not be assumed that such a person is stupid.

*Azwhangwisi* (Things that one will not forget)

*A + zwi + hangwisi*

This name is formed from the negative formative **a** plus object concord of class 8 *zwi-*, plus verb stem *-hangwisi*. The verb stem *-hangwisi* (unforgettable) negative, is derived from the verb stem *-hangwa* (forget) positive, plus the causative extension *-is-*, (cause/made to), plus the terminative morpheme *-i*. The object concord *zwi-* refers to things, actions, manners, which are classified under class 8.

In *Azwihangwisi*, the name-giver refers to things that were done to him/her, which hurt her/him or brought joy, and which he/she will not forget. The causative extension *-is-* conveys the meaning of an action done to the name-giver.

A better understanding of the structure of personal names derived from the negative phrase would help people to spell some of these names correctly. Sometimes names like *Athiathu*, *Athilivhali*, *Athinandavha* and *Athifhelimbilu* are spelt *\*Thiathu*, *\*Thilivhali*, *\*Thinandavha* and *\*Thifhelimbilu*. It would be better to spell them *'Thiathu*, *'Thilivhali*, *'Thinandavha* and *'Thifhelimbilu*, to show that part of a personal name has been omitted for some reason.

Some personal names, such *Muthuhathoŋwi* and *Azwihangwisi*, which belong to this category, do not follow the same structure as mentioned above, and would be spelt out in full in most cases.

#### **5.10 PERSONAL NAMES DERIVED FROM THE INTERROGATIVE PHRASE**

In Tshivenda, personal names are also formed from the interrogative phrase. Interrogative phrases are used to express a question. Crystal (1991:182) defines an interrogative phrase as:

A term used in grammatical classification of sentence types, and usually seen in contrast to declarative. It refers to verb forms or sentence/clause types typically used in the expression of questions.

These are personal names such as *Ndidzulafhi* (Where do I stay?), *Ndivhudzannyi* (Who do I tell?), *Ndivhoniswani* (What do you show me?) and *Zwoḡangani* (How did they come?).

Structurally, *Ndidzulafhi* has been formed from the concord *ndi* (I), subject concord, first person singular, a verb stem *-dzula* (stay/sit), plus an interrogative formative *-fhi* (where). This personal name usually refers to a situation where there is no peace between members of the family, especially between the in-laws and the bride. In some cases a bride may ill-treat her mother- or the father-in-law; when the child is born, and they are given an opportunity to bestow a name to the child, they reveal their feelings by choosing a name such as this one.

*Ndivhudzannyi* is from the concord *ndi*, first person singular, plus verb stem *-vhudza* (tell), plus interrogative formative *-nnyi* (who). This name is found where the name-giver is complaining that she/he has been quiet for some time about the ill-treatment he/she has been receiving. Sometimes no one seems to take him/her seriously, and when the child is born the name-giver has the opportunity to record this disappointment.

*Ndivhoniswani* (What am I shown?) is formed using the causative extension *-is-* and the passive extension *-wa* and the interrogative suffix *-ni*. Structurally, it is derived from the subject concord, first person singular *ndi*, verb root *-vhon-*, and causative extension *-is-* and the passive extension *-w-* plus the vowel *-a* plus the interrogative suffix *-ni*. Through this personal name the name-giver asks indirectly why people are ill-treating him/her. He/she is surprised by the behaviour of people around him/her. The verbal extension *-is-* is causative, indicating that people are causing this ill-treatment.

*Zwoḡdangani* (Who brought them? Or How did they come?) is formed from the subject concord of class 8, past tense, *zwo*, (prefix *zwi-* plus the past tense formative *o* > *zwo*) plus the verb stem *-ḡa* (come/arrive), *ngani* (*ngani* is a shortened form of *nga*

*mini*) (by what/ how?) (interrogative formative/suffix). This personal name reflects a situation where people are surprised by events like death which are happening around them. When the child is born, they make use of his/her arrival to record such surprises.

## 5.11 PERSONAL NAMES THAT DENOTE GENDER

Tshivenda personal names are not always neutral in terms of gender. There are personal names that can be used for both genders, such as *Mpho* (Gift), *Takalani* (Be happy), *Rofhiwa* (Given) and *Musiiwa* (Left behind). However, there are names in Tshivenda that are gender sensitive. According to Neethling (2005:22), who studied the IsiXhosa:

Most first names in Xhosa are gender specific and often morphologically marked as such. Xhosa names are often characterized by markers, which identify a name as male or female. It is therefore very common to have female counterparts for male or vice versa. *Nyaniso* (truth) as a male name might have the female counterparts *Nonyaniso*, characterized by the marker *No-*.

Tshivenda personal names that start with the prefixes *Nya-* and *Nwa-* denote female gender, while those that start with the prefixes *Me-* and *Ra-* denote the male gender. As in the above IsiXhosa example, Tshivenda also uses a prefix to denote gender, as discussed above.

### 5.11.1 Personal names that use the prefix *Nya-*

*Nyaluvhani* (One who hero worships someone) (*nya* + *luvha* + *ni*)

The name *Nyaluvhani* is formed from the prefix *nya-*, plus verb stem *-luvha* (pay

homage to) plus the imperative suffix *-ni*. This personal name is used to refer to a situation where one pays homage to his/her seniors, either traditional leaders or any elders in the family. Though these types of personal names are given to females, they are not necessarily referring to them as people who pay homage to their traditional leaders or elders. They may also be used to refer to a man's behaviour.

In some instances, when these personal names are bestowed on a bride, it may mean that the family of the in-laws would like to name the firstborn *Luvhani* (Pay homage to). This is used as a strategy to influence the choice of the child's personal name.

There are many cases among the Vhavanḁa in which one finds that the mother of the child is called *Nyadenga*, and the child is called *Denga*, or the mother, *Nyaluvhani*, and the child, *Luvhani*. The personal name *Denga* could have been derived from the following Tshivendanḁ proverb: *Tshe wa lilela musanda wo tshi wana, ḁungu ya denga yo no vha mukuloni*, meaning "one who was causing trouble in the area, is now arrested or punished because of his/her deeds". According to one of the informants of this study, the personal name *Denga* is used mostly in royal families.

*Nyawaisedza* (One who gossips) (*nya-* + *wa* + *-isedza*). This personal name is derived from the idiomatic expression "*wa isedza muḁwe phungo na iwe i ḁo u ela-who*" (one who gossips, she/he will be talked about also).

### **5.11.2 Personal names that use the prefix *ḁwa-***

These are marriage personal names that are bestowed on brides. Unlike other African personal names, they do not have any recognizable meaning except that they

are used to identify their bearers according to where they come from. These include names such as *Ńwakhadi*, *Ńwaalilali* and *Ńwasundani*. As mentioned above, *Khadi*, *Alilali* and *Sundani* are either the brides' maiden names or their fathers' names. It should be noted that the informants agree that this type of naming process could have been borrowed from neighbouring cultures such as the Tsonga/Shangans (Vatsonga). It has been mentioned in Chapter one that Vhavenda share borders with Vatsonga/Shangans; therefore, the process of acculturation between these cultures has taken place.

#### **5.11.3 Personal names that use the prefix *Ńe-***

These personal names are formed by the prefix *Ńe-* plus place names. These types of personal names are used to refer to Vhavenda traditional leaders. They are the owners of the places/land. No one can be called by a name that starts with the prefix *Ńe-* unless they have a relationship with the royal family or unless their ancestors were dispossessed of their leadership in the past: e.g. *Ńetshimbupfe*, owner of the place called *Tshimbupfe*, *Ńelwamondo*; the owner of the place called *Lwamondo*.

#### **5.11.4 Personal names that use the prefix *Ra-***

The prefix *Ra-* means one who favours/prefers the item that the prefix *ra-* is attached to. When *ra-* is attached to a name/item, it conveys the meaning that someone favours a particular item; examples are *Rambaḁo*, *ra-* prefix, plus noun *mbaḁo* (an axe), one who prefers to fight with an axe or one who owns an axe, *Rasila*, *ra-* prefix, plus *sila* (clothing), one likes nice clothing or one who owns such clothing (tailor).

When the prefix *Ra-* is used in the formation of personal names in Tshivenda, it would be in a situation where the manner in which things are done is described. A name such as *Raulinga* reflects such circumstances. Structurally, *Raulinga* is derived from the prefix *Ra-* plus the verb *u linga* (to test), meaning one who likes to test other people. It may also mean to bewitch other people (*u linga* = to bewitch).

Personal names such as *Nndwakhulu* (Big fight), *Thavhayamipfa* (Thorny mountain) and *Thavha* (Mountain), commonly found among the Vhavenda, are bestowed only on males. It is an African tradition, patriarchal system, through which men are regarded as the providers and the custodians of peace in their communities, hence these personal names.

## **5.12 PERSONAL NAMES DERIVED FROM COPULATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS**

A copulative construction occurs when there is no realizable verb in a sentence to indicate an action. Poulos (1990:365) defines a copulative as a construction that creates a statement which has no overtly marked verb root. Most Tshivenda metaphors use this construction. For example, *Masindi ndi nguluvhe* (Masindi is a pig). This construction has a meaning; however, it does not possess a verb root, unlike other Tshivenda verb constructions. Crystal (1991:84) defines a copulative thus:

A term used in grammatical description to refer to a linking verb, i.e. a verb which has little independent meaning, and whose main function is to relate other elements of clause structure, especially subject and complement.

Doke and Mofokeng (1957:299), in their studies of the Southern Sotho, state that:

A copulative is a word that does work for a predicate, and which is formed directly from some other parts of speech by modification of prefix or concord, or by means of some formative addition.

They add that sometimes a copulative refers to all predicatives, except verbs, formed by inflexion from other parts of speech.

Personal names formed from copulative constructions have various forms, namely, nouns formed from the copulative formative plus the possessive pronoun, noun plus copulative formative plus a pronoun, first person singular, noun plus copulative formative plus interrogative, concord plus copulative formative plus copulative base, concord plus copulative formative plus possessive pronoun, first person plural and noun plus copulative formative plus noun (deverbative).

#### **5.12.1 Noun *plus* copulative formative *plus* possessive pronoun or construction**

*Vhutshilondihawe* (It is His (God's) life)

The personal name *Vhutshilondihawe* is derived from the noun *vhutshilo* (life), plus copulative formative *ndi*, plus possessive pronoun, *hawe* (his).

In this name the name-giver indicates that God owns people's lives. The name-giver appreciates God's protection of people through this name. The child, parents or relatives might have been experiencing health problems and through this name the name-giver expresses his/her trust in God for the survival of whoever is ill.

*Maanḡandiawe* (It is His power)

(*Maanḡa* + *ndi* + *awe*)

This name is formed from the noun *Maanḡa*, (power), plus copulative formative *ndi*, plus possessive pronoun, **awe** (His). This personal name refers to the power of God.

Through this personal name the family expresses the belief that they could not have achieved anything without the will and power of God. The name-giver is saying to the public that it is better to involve God in all the things we do, because He is the one who will allow us to achieve our goals.

#### **5.12.2 Noun *plus* copulative formative *plus* absolute pronoun, *nḡe* first person singular**

*Muthundinḡe* (I am the person)

(*Muthu* + *ndi* + *nḡe*)

The personal name *Muthundinḡe* is derived from the noun *muthu* (person), plus copulative formative *ndi* (I), plus class 1 first person singular absolute pronoun *nḡe* (me).

Here the name-giver says that he/she is better than others. Personal names among Africans and the Vhavanḡa in particular, are used to communicate the feelings of the name-giver to the community. This name-giver might be telling the community that he/she is the better person because he/she has been blessed with this child. The birth of a child in an African community affords people the opportunity to articulate their deep inner feelings. In some instances, the name-giving process is an emotional

one because one has to disclose what has been worrying one before the birth of the child in question. When an African explains the meaning of a particular name he or she may cry because the name reminds him/her of unpleasant experiences. As it has been stated above in previous sections, Africans use personal names to document their history.

### 5.12.3 Noun *plus* copulative formative *plus* interrogative

*Muthundinnyi* (Who is the person?)

(*Muthu + ndi + nnyi*)

The name *Muthundinnyi* is formed from the noun *muthu* (a person), plus copulative formative *ndi*, plus interrogative *nyyi* (who).

This type of a personal name is used sarcastically, sometimes in a situation where people behave as if they are more important than others. It may also be used where the father of the child is unknown; the name-giver wants to know who the father of this child is.

### 5.12.4 Concord *plus* copulative formative *plus* copulative base

*Arehone* (One who is there (God))

(*A + re + hone*)

This name is formed from the subject concord **a**, plus the copulative formative **re**, plus the copulative base *hone*, which is also an absolute pronoun for class 16/17/18 noun class.

Normally this type of a personal name would refer to God, meaning someone who is there although we cannot physically see Him, but through the birth of the child it means He is there for the family.

#### **5.12.5 Concord *plus* copulative formative *plus* absolute pronoun *riṅe*, first person plural**

*Unariṅe* (He (God) is with us)

(*U + na + riṅe*)

The name *Unariṅe* is formed from the copulative concord *u*, plus copulative base *na*, plus absolute pronoun, class 1 first person plural *riṅe* (we).

When a family feels sanctified through the birth of a child they give their child a name like this to show their gratitude to God. Such a family believes that they have this child through the grace of God or they use the birth of a child to thank God for all the blessings they have received. Through the use of the plural absolute pronoun, *riṅe* (we), this name conveys once again equality in the family. It includes parents, mother and father, not only the name-giver, who would usually be the father in a patriarchal society like the Vhavenda.

#### **5.12.6 Noun *plus* copulative formative *plus* noun (deverbative)**

*Mudzimundilufuno* (God is love)

(*Mudzimu + ndi + lufuno*)

This name is formed from the noun *Mudzimu*, (God), plus copulative formative *ndi* plus deverbative noun *Lufuno* (love), derived from the verb stem *-funa* (to love). The noun *lufuno* refers to inanimate objects, because it ends with the terminating vowel *o*. The personal name *Mudzimundilufuno* (God is love) is used to express the name-giver's belief in God. Personal names like this one are commonly found in Christian families.

These types of personal names reflect social issues. They are used in many situations in our daily lives. As personal names that are derived from copulatives, unlike names derived from other parts of speech in Tshivenda, these names contain a meaning though they do not possess a recognizable verb root.

Vhavenda, especially Vhavenda Christians, quite often make use of personal names that are formed from copulative constructions when referring to God. The copulative construction is very short and concise and has become the best tool with which to form personal names in Tshivenda.

### **5.13 PERSONAL NAMES FORMED FROM NATIONAL EVENTS**

As has been indicated in previous chapters, some African personal names, particularly Tshivenda personal names, reflect issues of national interest. Some people prefer to record events of national importance in the form of personal names. As noted in previous chapters, personal naming among Africans serves many purposes, in this instance that of documenting important events.

Most personal names found in this category are formed through the process of nominalization, where nouns (personal names in this instance) are formed from verb

stems through the affixation of the prefix. This process of nominalization results in nouns (personal names) which end with a vowel **o** or **e**, reflecting that this noun is impersonal, and/or **i** to show that the name is a personal one. Zungu (1999:86) concurs:

A verb stem is nominalized (or de-verbalized) by placing a noun prefix in front of it and changing the final vowel from *a* to either *-i* (personal noun) or *o* (non-personal noun).

Examples below attest to this:

*Mushavho* (*Great trek/run away*) (*mu-* + *shavha*). This name is formed from the prefix *mu-* (Class 1) and the verb stem *-shavha* (run away). This particular personal name may refer to two different situations:

Firstly, a name such as this could refer to a situation where one was born while people were fleeing a war zone. Secondly, it may also be used to refer to escaping from an abusive relationship/marriage, which in this instance is not an issue of national interest as the first meaning would be.

*Muvhuso* (*Government*) (*mu-* + *vhusa*). This name is formed from the prefix *mu-* (class 1) and the verb stem *-vhusa* (govern). Such names are found among people who were born around 1979 when the then Venda Government gained independence from the Republic of South Africa. It may also refer to a situation where a new traditional leader has been installed.

Children born immediately after the first democratic elections in South Africa, around April 1994, would be named *Mbofholowo* (Freedom). Some parents felt the

importance of this freedom and believed that it was very important to name their children after this event. This personal name encapsulates the value of the first democratic elections in 1994 when blacks in South Africa were allowed to vote for their own government for the first time. The structure of this name would be *N* (prefix of class 9) + *-vhofha* (verb stem, tie up) = *N + vh = Mb*. This name (noun) belongs to class 9. The new name is derived from the verb stem *-vhofha* (tie up), but this new name means “untied”, in other words people are no longer suffering under oppression.

*Tshixereke* (*Strike*) (*tshi-* + *-xereka*) it is formed from the prefix *tshi-*(class 7) and a verb stem *-xereka*, meaning “to strike”. The terminating suffix *-a* of the verb stem *-xereka* “to strike” has changed or been replaced by the terminating suffix *-e* in the new name *Tshixereke* (strike).

This name will always remind people of a strike that took place in the past. In these instances, the events will always be of national interest, or the name may refer to the impact of such an event on the life of the name-giver.

*Tshixanxalani* (*One born during famine*). This name is formed through the use of the prefix *tshi-* (prefix of class 7) and a verb stem *-wa*, meaning “to fall”, and a locative noun with *-ni*, *xanxalani* (time of food scarcity/hunger). The resulting personal name belongs to class 7.

The birth of people with these names will always be celebrated through the remembrance of these events. During the dark days when people could not read or write, this is how they would record things of national and personal importance. In this instance, the naming process of Africans was used as a miniature archive.

## 5.14 CONCLUSION

Tshivenda personal names are an indispensable part of the language. In order to understand their meaning, the structure of the different word categories from which they are formed and the cultural background should also be taken into consideration. The Tshivenda personal naming process cannot be divorced from the context in which these names are created: their meanings depend on the context and culture. Though personal names are used universally to label and identify people, the component of meaning cannot be ignored, particularly when one is studying African personal names.

This chapter demonstrated how the meanings in the morphological composition of personal names can convey messages from and experiences of the name-giver and the community at large. Africans, Vhavenda in particular, arrange and rearrange different morphemes from different word categories in the expression of their deepest feelings. It has been revealed that many African personal names, Tshivenda personal names in particular, point to the circumstances of the family or community at a particular time in their lives.

A study of the morphology of Tshivenda personal names reveals that the structure of a personal name and its meaning are related, i.e. when a negative construction is used in the formation of a personal name, such a personal name may refer to an unhappy experience. Vhavenda use the negative construction in names in order to be less direct when addressing serious issues and concerns. An example of such a name is *Athifhelimilu* (I do not worry), which indicates that the name-giver is angry about bad treatment he/she has received. However, through the use of this name, the name-giver appears polite and no one will take exception to this expression,

although the message is clear to those who have ill-treated him/her.

Most Tshivenda personal names are neutral and can be bestowed on both males and females. Of those that are gender specific, those which start with the prefixes *Ḷe-* and *Ra-* refer to males and those that start with the prefix *Nya-* and *Ḷwa-* refer to females. In Tshivenda, unlike in isiZulu and isiXhosa, suffixes are not used to determine gender. Personal names that refer to power, i.e. *Thavhayamipfa* (Thorny mountain), are bestowed on males only. This is a characteristic of a patriarchal society.

People use language to express themselves, and this is done through the use of words. This means that if there are no words, there can be no sentences and no meaning. Personal names are formed from words, therefore personal names, like the language, are the carriers of meaning, particularly among the Africans. African (personal) names are therefore rich in meaning.

Lastly, in this chapter it has been revealed that the orthography of some Tshivenda personal names must be reexamined because some words are constantly spelt incorrectly. As has been indicated above, when morphemes are added to the word category, a change in spelling is observed, particularly when the nasal *N/dzi-* class 9/10 is used in the formation of personal names, and when some negative personal names are formed.

## CHAPTER SIX

### GENERAL CONCLUSION

In this thesis, personal name selection, naming procedures, name-givers, meaning, Western influences and the morphological compositions of Tshivenda personal names have been investigated. The findings of this research can be helpful in understanding socio-cultural practices among the Vhavenḁa.

One conclusion is that personal names can change with circumstances and a Muvenda person is likely to have more than one name during the course of his/her life. Although the majority of Vhavenḁa people name their children soon after birth, they traditionally bestow different personal names on their children at various stages during their lifetime. There are those who choose to give their children personal names after three months or so, depending on the health of the child. A child who is ill will be named once its health has improved. The child remains nameless until such time as a name is bestowed. The Vhavenḁa can propitiate their ancestors by changing the name of the child. We have evidence of the importance of the child's name and the care that is taken to change the name and, with it, the health of the child.

It was also found that personal naming among the Vhavenḁa is used to mark the transition from one life stage to another. For instance, the individual's name will be changed on completion of a youth's initiation rites at traditional/ initiation school, when he/ she is baptized and when he/ she is registered at school for the first time.

The research has covered new areas of name-giving to mark the transitions, such as personal names that are given to Vhavenḁa traditional leaders when they ascend to

higher office in their communities. Should a Muvenda traditional leader, once, appointed as a chief, not take on a new personal name that appointment is considered illegal. Whenever a new name is given to a person, it becomes the name by which the person is known. It is regarded as a sign of insubordination and disrespect if the former personal name is used after a person has acquired a new one.

It can be seen that Western civilization has played a significant role in the eradication of the use of African personal names. For instance, there is evidence that, in the past, people received their “new” names from employers who, for a variety of reasons, were not prepared to learn to pronounce African personal names or were too lazy to do so, or so dehumanized the African that they felt that any name, usually, “John”, would suffice. Another example is that, when Africans applied for identification documents, they were forced to take on European names on the pretext that they needed a “Christian” name, rather than a first name. Africans found themselves with no choice but to look down upon their meaningful personal names, rich as they are in messages, unlike their imposed, and often arbitrary, European personal names.

This Western hegemony has been undermined as the South African Constitution guarantees that every individual is entitled to his/ her own culture and name. From 1994, most South Africans began to realize the importance of using their own African personal names. The majority of children born after 1994 were given African personal names. Children are no longer forced to take a European personal name at school as a sign of civilization. Children are enrolled with their African personal names. People are employed and addressed by their African personal names. Africans apply for identification documents using their African names. The use of these names makes

Africans feel honoured and their dignity is restored: this brings a sense of emancipation to Africans, because many associate the use of European personal names with slavery. Currently, then, parents and grandparents are being made conscious of the value of upholding their cultural values, including the conservation of the personal naming processes. Many people are reverting to their roots, reclaiming their African personal names and using them with pride. This analysis has also revealed that many influential political leaders now use their African personal names, which has led to many ordinary South Africans using theirs as well. However, people might still give their children Western names from choice. The difference is that they are doing that of their own free will and nobody forced them to use these names. The wind of anti-colonialism is blowing strongly in favour of the use of the African personal names in South Africa.

Less obvious Western influences have crept in as well. For instance, the Vhavanḁa used to follow a patriarchal system but the new generation bestows personal names inclusive of everyone in the family. In personal names such as *Rofhiwa* "Gift" and *Riḁomushumela* "We will work for Him", the intentions and wishes of both parents, father and the mother, are included. In the past, names *Ndofhiwa* (I am given) and *Ndiḁomushumela* (I will work for Him) would have been given. Today, both male and female have equal status regarding the bestowal of personal names among the Africans, and Vhavanḁa in particular.

The study has also shown that there are many other instances where names are changed. An example is the naming of brides among sections of the Vhavanḁa. For example the prefix *Ḥwa-*, would be affixed to the names *Sundani* and *Khadi*, and they will change to *Ḥwasundani*, *Ḥwakhadi*. Another instance is where the brides' personal names are changed to the name by which the firstborn will be called. These are mostly names that start with the prefix *Nya-*, such as *Nyadenga*. The first child born

to this bride would be called *Denga*.

As has already been discussed, this practice is also found among the AmaXhosa, where personal names such as *Noxolo* and *Nokhaya* are given to brides. The AmaZulu use the bride's maiden clan names such as *MaKhumalo* or *MaNdlovu* if they are from the Khumalo or Ndlovu families respectively. These types of personal names are given mostly by the mother-in-law.

The research has revealed that the Vhavenda also practice so-called teknonymy: that is, parents and grandparents are known by the names of their children and grandchildren respectively. This practice means that personal names of some parents and grandparents are not known in the community. Parents are known as the mother of, father of or grandparent of the child. In some instances this situation is encouraged because it brings with it issues of procreation. Africans, Vhavenda in particular, see the purpose of marriage as procreation, to the extent that, if a woman is infertile, she may be returned to her home, or another woman may be taken in marriage to bear the children. It has been found that parents and grandparents feel much honored when they are addressed by the names of their children and grandchildren respectively. They feel more respected than when their names are used as a form of address.

This research has also shown that in traditional Vhavenda society, grandparents, especially male grandparents, would be the preferred candidates for bestowing names on children, as the Vhavenda practice follows a patriarchal system. However, the whole ceremony of name-giving is overseen by a female traditional doctor. In some instances, a male traditional doctor may officiate at the ceremony, but he will probably be accompanied by a female assistant.

It can be concluded that the naming of an individual plays an important and defining part in the oral history of the Vhavenḁa and is a method by which the genealogy of the families in the clan is recorded. Personal names that are chosen and bestowed on children have a meaning. These names may mean anything from a wish, warning, emotions, to commemoration, political or historical. Personal names are used as a means of communication and as an archive of important events that happen during the person's life. Personal names are used to document all the experiences of a family or community or of the name-giver himself or herself. Though personal names are used to identify people, they play a greater role than that, in that they are rich in meaning and tacit communication.

The following are some concluding remarks about the influence and role of grammar in naming. The morphological analysis of the Tshivenḁa personal names revealed that the Vhavenḁa derive their names from different types of word categories. There are Tshivenḁa personal names that are derived from verb stems, copulatives, adjectives, interrogatives and possessive phrases. Various morphemes are employed in the process of name formation. Without these morphemes, these names would have no meaning. The study has shown that morphology must be understood in context, in that the meaning of these personal names depends on the situation surrounding the birth of a child or the situation during which a name is bestowed on a child. The meaning of the personal name is embodied in the grouping/arrangement of the morphemes. No morpheme, no meaning. Prefixes play a role in differentiating Tshivenḁa personal names in terms of gender. The prefixes *Ra-* and *Ne-* denote the masculine, while the prefixes *Nya-*, *Nwa-* (Tshivenḁa), *No-* (IsiXhosa/IsiZulu), *Ma-* and *Ka-* (IsiZulu) denote the feminine.

However, this study is only a beginning and much still remains to be done in this field. Research still needs to be made into some of the current Tshivenda surnames and on the origin of Tshivenda nicknames. Phonological processes in the formation of personal names from the various word categories also require further investigation. Further research should also be conducted into the syntax of these personal names. It has been indicated that some personal names are formed from a combination of more than one word categories. This needs to be thoroughly investigated. Some personal names were derived from Tshivenda phrases, shortened into personal names, and these phrases require a syntactic analysis. Further research is also required to determine the influence of cross-cultural marriages on the choice of personal names and their meaning.

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<http://www.netcare.co.za>

ANNEXURE

A.

INSTITUUT VIR EIETDSE GESKIEDENIS  
Die Universiteit van die Oranje-Vrystaat

page



Bron nr 0 2 1 3	Datum 97 04 29 11 19	Onderwerp 5	Knipset 3/4/1
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The Star

Jg..... Nr..... P 8 Dat. 29. 4. 1997

# So, what's in a name? Plenty, I say

By FIKIL-NTSIKELELO MOYA

Thank God for the Reverend Makhenkesi "Arnold" Stofile - I may at last be able to stop using my double-barrelled name.

Like the good reverend who said recently: "I have been called so many names in my life, it does not make any difference what people call me now", I have also been using a simplified name all my life.

Stofile, the premier of Eastern Cape province, recently announced that he wanted his hitherto-unknown birth name, "Makhenkesi", to enjoy at least equal status to his widely known Christian name, "Arnold".

His dilemma epitomises what many Africans have been through in the apartheid era when indigenous names were widely disregarded on the grounds that they were too "complicated", "foreign" or "heathen". Like him, many Africans were given a "Christian" name because their African names were "difficult" for missionaries or Bantu Affairs officials.

An unwritten rule about such names was that they had to be of some biblical figure - usually Old Testament - or had to remind the "man at Bantu Affairs" office of the English royal family "back home".

"Makhenkesi is the name first



Arnold (just call me Makhenkesi) Stofile, the Eastern Cape premier

given to me when I was born. Arnold was given to me at baptism by the late Rev John Black. Nobody ever uses the second name Arnold in the family," Stofile said.

His spokesman, Manelisi Wolela, said the premier continued to use all his names but it was up to the media to decide which name they preferred. "It's like giving the names an equal opportunity," said Wolela.

Stofile is one of many Africans who are increasingly assuming their "rightful" names and using them in public.

Former ANC MP and now Transnet head Sakumzi Macozoma

who used to go by the name "Saki" is another prominent figure of the "mini African renaissance".

Another is Gauteng local government MEC Siculo Shiceka, who recently applauded a white master of ceremonies at the opening of a fire station in Orange Farm who pronounced his name properly.

"I am sure you practised hard and I applaud you," he said to the blushing official.

Other prominent Africans who no longer use their "school or Christian" names include Jomo Cosmos boss Matsilele "Jomo" Sono who hardly ever uses his other name, "Ephraim".

Radio and TV personality Kgotmotso, formerly "Bob", Mabena is another example of the renaissance. PAC general secretary, Ngila Muedane used to be called "Mike" in a radio programme he hosts.

To those who have a problem with my double-barrelled name I will quote Stofile: "Pick your choice".

And my double-barrelled name?

"Ifikil'ntsikelelo", meaning "blessings have arrived", my birth name, was divided in two to make it easier to handle.

From now on, do not be surprised if I use the whole unedited name.

And proudly too.

TREFWOORDE

- 1 Stofile
- 2 A
- 3 Oos -
- 4 Kaapland
- 5 eise
- 6 naam -
- 7 kende
- 8 afrika
- 9 veelholke
- 10 onwilleke
- 11 impkemen
- 12 tnyg
- 13 christen
- 14 dom
- 15 bybels

# True Love, 1998, November By Karen Makgatho

Trends

The buzz word these days is Africanism. You can see it in the explosion of African music, art, dress, food, and last but not least, getting rid of Christian names and reverting to black names.

"Black people have gone through a period when it didn't matter how old you were, you were always a 'boy' and you were only referred to by your Christian name," says Mzilikazi Khumalo, retired professor of African languages and expert on African culture.

"Taking on your African name is about a return to 'black is beautiful'. It's a return to Africanism and an appreciation of your roots."

Although black South Africans have been ditching their Christian names and taking on their African ones since the '60s and the rise of the black consciousness movement, increasing numbers of people have gone back to their African names since the April 1994 election. Benny Alexander, former leader of the Pan Africanist Congress, led the recent trend when he became !Khoisan X.

"I was inspired to change my name after reading the autobiography *Up from Slavery* by the American civil rights leader Booker T Washington," says Khoisan X.

His family name, he says, "was imposed on my family by the London Missionary Society and showed a total disregard by the missionaries for African culture and was a badge of slavery. The more philosophical reason for changing my name is that in the African Renaissance, our Africanity must be at the centre of our thinking and being".

His mother was from a Griqua tribe, the biggest !Khoi tribe, and his father was a descendant of the San tribe and so he became !Khoisan X.

Colonialism, and the missionaries that were part and parcel of the movement, imposed Western names on black people in South Africa, as well as many other countries in Africa.

"The priests, who most of the time were white, insisted that when a child was baptised it had to have a Christian name. That's why many people here have a Christian name and a home name and that was when it started," says Khumalo.

"After a while people began to question the trend and not giving prominence to one's black name. They felt it was part of the colonisation of South Africa."

Khumalo ditched his Christian names, James Steven, when he left school in the '60s.

"Right through school, my father, who was a priest, called me James Steven. Yet my given name was Mzilikazi, which is such an important name in Zulu culture. It comes from the clan of the Khumalos and one of the great clan leaders was Mzilikazi, and it was after that man that my father named me, and yet my name was not used.

"This 'jim' business indicates you're just a boy, no matter how old you are. It became clear to me that there was everything wrong with this and I returned to my Zulu name."

Many other prominent South Africans have followed suit, including trade unionist Sam Shilowa, who is now known as Mbhadzima.

SABC2 newsreader Nthabiseng Mokote used to be known as Desiree. She grew up with her Christian name, used it when she was an English news anchor but switched when she became the Sotho news anchor.

"It made sense to start using my other name, Nthabiseng, because I was reading news in an African language," she says. ▷



C.

2

Bron nr. 1, 4, 0, 6

Datum 9, 9, 11, 06, 31 P

Onderwerp nr. 30

Knipsel nr. 979

a

Saturday Star Jg..... Nr..... P. 8 Dat. 6 NOV 1999

# African names order of the day for new leaders

page no.

By AURELIA DYANTYI and MTHOBELI MXOTWA

What's in a name? A number of people - especially politicians - seem to be taking their names seriously and are changing them to fit with the new era.

Patrick "Terror" Lekota - a former activist - has vanished, to be replaced by Mosiua Lekota, now defence minister. Sam Shilowa - fiery trade unionist - has given way to Mbhazima Shilowa, Gauteng premier. Shepherd Mdladlana, the first president of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union, is now Membathisi Mdladlana, minister of labour - and former United Democratic Front Eastern Cape activist Arnold Stofile is now Makhenkesi Stofile, premier of the Eastern Cape.

And do you remember popular Radio Metro disc jockey Bob Mabena and the academic who caused trouble at Wits University. William Makgoba? They have also undergone a metamorphosis. Bob is now Kgomotso and William is Magalepuru.

It seems that if you're part of a team headed by a president who has only indigenous names - Thabo Mvuyelwa Mbeki - and believes in the African Renaissance, you have to prove your loyalty by reclaiming your African name.

It was inevitable that

black people would sooner or later shed their foreign names and opt for their meaningful indigenous names, says Stofile.

Stofile, who is a qualified religious minister, says that in the old days, English names were forced upon blacks by European missionaries. When a child was baptised, the English priest would give the child an English name.

Stofile believes most of the people who recently changed their names might have been influenced either by Black Consciousness or by the new African Renaissance, advocated by Mbeki. He says the practice of giving newborn children English names is fast becoming a thing of the past, and none of his three children have such a name.

Shilowa says he never liked the name Sam, although it was given to him by his parents. However, Mbhazima was his "personal choice".

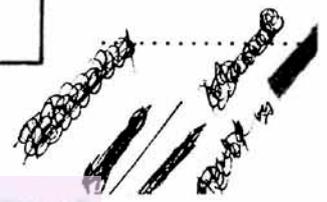
Mdladlana claims he has always used all his names, but people usually called him Shepherd.

"My names are Membathisi Mphumzi Shepherd and I'm proud of all of them because they have a meaning. But I felt that I should stick to my first name only."

He says it is a shame that people feel belittled when they use their African names. "There was a time when people were convinced that in order to be smart one had to use an English name, and if you insisted on

### TREFWOORDE

- 1 Bespiegeling
- 2 Naamkund
- 3 Oorspronk
- 4 Verandering
- 5 Naamlyste
- 6 Kommentaar
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10



INSTITUUT VIR EIETDSE GESKIEDENIS

Die Universiteit van die Oranje-Vrystaat



Bron nr. 1406

Datum 9.9.11.06.3.10

Onderwerp nr. 30

Knipstel nr. 1996

Saturday Star Jg. .... Nr. .... P. 8 Dat. -6 NOV 1999

your indigenous name, you would be called a *moegoe*, meaning stupid. "There are still parliamentarians who become angry when they're addressed by their indigenous names, and that is a shame."

Mdladlana's children have only one African name. He says the time has come for people to be proud of their languages and names.

Xolela Mangcu, a political analyst, dismisses the whole idea as a belated Africanist fad. Mangcu says he decided early in his life not to use his English name and also gave his two children Xhosa names.

"If we want to get it right, the names of places, streets and airports need to be changed too.

"I believe that the African Renaissance is a good thing but ordinary people need to be part of it. Steve Biko was able to spread the Black Consciousness concept to ordinary people and they related to it. If the African Renaissance is dealt with in the same manner, people on the streets will be able to relate to it," says Mangcu.

Desree Makote, a television and radio newsreader, insists that her change to Nthabiseng was a business decision and had nothing with being politically correct. "I was born Desree Nthabiseng Makote, but everyone called me Desree. Initially I read English news on TV, but when I changed to presenting in South Sotho, I decided to use my Sotho name instead."

Mabena says both his names have a special meaning to him. He introduced Kgomotso about two years ago when he moved to Highveld Stereo, which is perceived to be a white station, so that he could keep his "black identity".

Makgoba claims he uses both his names and always has. "I respect both my names because my parents made a conscious decision. People use whichever name they're comfortable with."

TREFWOORDE

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10 .....

From: 24/05/2005 08:35 #007 P.003

ATT: MANDENDE T.P. Gondokhe thwe Christian School

D.

Admission No	Surname	First Name	Grade	BOYS OR GIRLS: 8:45														
				7:00-8:30														
				Week ending		Week ending		Week ending										
				M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F
1	Kwangale	Edzame																
2	Makdumela	Masa co																
3	Maphumalo	Muthelo																
4	Makhethe	Muthale																
5	Makhothla	Muthale																
6	Makhothla	Muthale																
7	Makhothla	Muthale																
8	Makhothla	Muthale																
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37																		
38																		
39																		
40																		
Total actual number of attendances																		
Total number of absences																		
Total possible number of attendances																		
Number of school days																		

### CHILD INFORMATION

(Please provide your child's information)

Name and Surname:	_____
Year of birth:	_____
Place of birth:	_____
Village/Region:	_____
Gender:	_____

1. Infancy/Birth name:	_____	
2. Why did you choose this name:		
3. Did you perform name-giving ceremony/function or the ritual ("U thusa nwana") when giving the name? Why?		
4. Name giver	5. Position/status of name giver in the family, i.e. mother or father or 'malume' or 'makhadzi', etc.	
6. Approximately, after how many days/months is the name given?		
6.1 Give a reason(s) why you preferred to name the child after the period you mentioned above.		
7. Christian/School name:	_____	
8. Initiation School name:	_____	

8.1 Who is the name giver?			
8.2 Give reason(s) for the choice of the name			
9. By which name is the child called now?		9.1 If the child is called by a different name from the infancy/birth name, give reason(s):	
10. Parents names (all names)		9.1 Father	
		9.2 Mother	
11. Grandparents' names (All names)	Maternal (Vha ha mme)	11.1 Grandmother	
		11.2 Grandfather	
	Paternal (Vha ha khotsi)	11.3 Grandmother	
		11.4 Grandfather	

- N.B 1. Please do not fill-in nicknames.  
2. Please fill-in all the spaces provided.



## U THUSA NWANA

### QUESTIONNAIRE

Dzina la maine:

Datumu:

Muvhundu:

1. Nwana u ri u begwa, a thuswa nga murahu tshifhinga tshi ngafhani?
2. Ndi ngani a tshi thuswa nga murahu ha tshifhinga itsho?
3. Ndi ngani nwana a tshi tea u thuswa?
4. A sa thuswa hu itea mini?
5. Siani la thusa, mushumo uyu itwa nga maine wa tshinnani kana wa tshisadzini? Ndi ngani zwi tshi ralo?
6. Mushumo wa u thusa nwana u itwa nga tshifhinga-de? (Nga matsheloni, Masiari, Madekwana). Ndi ngani u tshi itwa nga tshifhinga tshenetsho?
7. Nwana u rinwa/newa dzina lini?
8. Ndi nnyi ane a tea u rina/nea nwana dzina?
9. Ndi ngani zwi tshi tea u itwa ngauralo?
10. Maine u a tendelwa u rina/nea dzina?
11. Ndi ngani a tshi tendelwa kana a sa tendelwi?
12. Musi nwana a tshi rinwa dzina hu sedzwa mini nga avho vhane vha rina dzina?
13. Maduvhaano zwi kha di itwa ngauralo? Ndi ngani zwi tshi ralo.

14. Kha vha ri vhudze zwinwe zwa ndeme zwine vha zwi divha zwi songo katelwaho nga mbudziso dzi re afho ntha siani la thuswa ha nwana. (Zwa Tshivenda-venda).

F.

## TSHIKEVHA CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

1998		GRADE 2 C		MRS O. MULAUDZI					
B = 15 G = 15 T = 30									
<i>Surname</i>	<i>First Name</i>								
KAHERU	TUMWESIGE	G							
KONE	MUDINDIVHATHU	B							
MABUNDA	KHANYISA	G							
MAGIDI	MASHUDU	G							
MAGWIRA	CHIKONDI	G							
MAKHADO	THABELO	B							
MASHAU	PHATHUTSHEDZO	G							
MASIA	IPFI	B							
MATSHATSHE	SHUDUFHADZO	G							
MUDAU	JOSEPH	B							
MUGVHI	MATAMELA	B							
MUKOSI	KENNETH	B							
MUKWEVHO	LUTENDO	G							
MULOVHEDZI	TONDANI	G							
MUSYOKI	ALLAN	B							
NEMBILWI	PFARELO	B							
NEMUKONGWE	KHUTHADZO	G							
NEPHALAMA	KHULISO	B							
NETSHIKWETA	LIVHUWANI	G							
NYAMBENI	ROFHIWA	B							
PATEL	AKRAM	B							
RAMATE	BUSISIWE	G							
RAMBUDA	LUCKY	B							
RATSHITANGA	PHUMUDZO	G							
RAVHENGANI	RATSHILELE	B							
SIGUDU	PHUMUDZO	G							
SIGWAVHULIMO	TSHILDZI	G							
TSHIBALO	MURENDENI	G							
TSHIFARO	DEMBE	B							
TSHIKOVHI	RINAE	B							