

SOME SETSWANA POLEMICAL ANTHROPONYMS

Goabilwe N. Ramaeba¹

Abstract

This paper discusses personal polemical names which name givers use to indirectly communicate their feelings and opinions, especially in conflict-laden situations in order to avoid direct confrontations. The paper draws from the field of socio-onomastics, a recent approach that studies names within the contexts of their societies. Socio-onomastics recognises that names are not mere linguistic entities that develop and exist in isolation; they result from interactions amongst people, their languages and their communities. The paper outlines the social situations under which Setswana polemical names are used. The data comprises 47 polemically motivated names categorised into eight related themes. These names are part of the data which was collected for a PhD thesis between May and August 2016 in the villages of Mahalapye and Molepolole in Botswana. The data was collected through questionnaires and oral interviews. The study reveals that Setswana personal names can be used to perform communicative and practical pragmatic functions of indirect conversational exchanges in addition to their primary role of identification.

Keywords: Personal names, polemical names, Setswana, lexically transparent, socio-onomastics

1. Introduction

In African societies, personal names are regarded as powerful communication mediums that are generally lexically transparent. They are regarded as tools through which people relay messages, express their thoughts and feelings as well as preserve and conserve the culture and traditions of their societies. Thus, African personal names are not mere words of identification used to differentiate amongst their bearers because they do much more. Ndana and Mabuta (2007, p. 61) state that names in African societies are “highly suggestive, metaphoric and loaded with social, historical and experiential meanings.” A lot of thought is, therefore, invested in the selection of names in the African context.

This paper discusses a sub-set of personal names called polemical names in Botswana. Such names are also given to domestic animals (zoonyms), especially dogs and cattle. Usually controversial and critical in nature, polemical names are given as indirect responses to situations in which people find themselves. Batoma (2009b) calls them allusive names because name givers use them to indirectly communicate their feelings and opinions, especially in conflict-laden situations and because their content “can only be deciphered as a precise message by the individuals concerned by the said situation” (p. 223). This means that the meanings of such names cannot

¹ Department of English, University of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana. Email: ramaebagn@ub.ac.bw

be interpreted by people who are outside the social context that influenced the giving of the names. Polemical names are often vengeance-oriented because they originate from a place of anger and frustration (Batoma, 2009b). The names allow people to communicate their frustrations in a non-confrontational manner. So, they are very useful in addressing thorny issues that would otherwise bring tension into relationships. Obeng (1999) notes that such names are useful in addressing what he calls face-threatening acts (FTA) because they address situations indirectly and hence help to maintain the peace. Polemical names are mainly given for their communicative values because they are meant to perform a specific purpose.

2. Background and Review of Literature

In the African context, there is a paucity of research material on polemical names, especially in relation to anthroponyms. Koopman (1992) notes that in the Zulu society polemical names are more common with animal names, especially dog names than with names of people. He states that the Zulu society just like other African societies sees the need to bring conflicts into the open but prefer to do this through zoonyms and not anthroponyms. Animal names, like children's names, serve two critical roles: communication and identification. Batoma (2009a) states that the naming of domestic animals can be a powerful verbal tool to address conflicts within communities. He approaches the study of these names from a pragmatic point of view and regards naming as a verbal action that involves several participants.

Batoma (2009a) cites several authors who have studied zoonyms. For example, Agblemagnon (1969) and Bonvini (1985) discovered that dog names are used as instruments of verbal fights between people of unequal stature in terms of power or age. Those who are lower in status avenge themselves against those who are superior. Similar observations have been made by Shottman (1993) also cited by Batoma (2009a). The author asserts that the use of dog names helps to solve conflicts politely. Batoma further cites Turner (2000, 2001) who has observed that through the use of zoonyms frustrated individuals are able to vent their anger and relieve their frustrations without breaching the social ethics of their communities. The same sentiments are shared by Obeng (1999) who also notes that direct verbal confrontation is dangerous, as it can break an individual and cause turmoil to social harmony. The uses of zoonyms, as observed by several authors, indicate that they are generally used for communicative purposes which may differ from user to user.

A number of scholars have explored polemical names in Africa. For example, Batoma's (2009a) study of dog polemical names amongst the Kabrè people of Northern Togo is seminal. He termed the phenomenon "zonymic communication" (p.16). He established that from a morpho-syntactic and semantic viewpoint, dog names and personal names are similar; they only differ in relation to the motivations behind their use (2009a). Batoma further shows that because dogs are owned by humans, they have complete control

over their naming. As a result, a dog's name expresses its owner's negative feelings and grievances, desires and passions, and opinions about their community. In other words, names of dogs will often not be about the dogs, but about the dogs' owners and their relationships with the communities in which they live.

Polemical dog names are widespread, but other animals such as cattle also have zoonyms. Koopman (1992) studied the socio-cultural aspects of Zulu ox and dog names. The author observed that, like personal names, they are used as communication tools through which name givers define their often-strained relationships with other members of the society. According to the author, the majority of Zulu dog names have nothing to do with the characteristics of the dogs, but are more inclined towards indirectly addressing the community, particularly neighbours for their suspected witchcraft. Tatira (2004) explored dog naming as a communication tool amongst the Shona people of Zimbabwe. He discovered that some dog names are derived from common sources such as wild animal names, popular events or names of cars or airplane models, but that these were outnumbered by those given as a way of communicating with relatives or neighbours. He observed that such names are also given as a result of severed relationships. He then concluded that dog naming amongst the Shona is a silent dialogue characterised by accusations and counter accusations used to avoid open confrontations. Obeng (1999) has also observed that the Akan people of Ghana use dog names as a means of evading direct verbal confrontations or responding to difficult communicative situations that he calls face threatening acts (FTAs). He argues that the Akan, instead of being confrontational, direct the FTA to the dog which acts as a pseudo-epicentre of the conflict. So, if the real addressee confronts the name giver, there will be no evidence that the messages were directed at the complainant. Thus, the name giver would be absolved of any wrongdoing. This strategy is used in spite of the fact that it makes the speech acts ambiguous. Finally, Nkolola-Wakumelo (2014) explored names of cattle and the cattle naming system of the Tonga in Zambia. The study revealed that although there is communicative value placed on cattle names, they do not seem to be as polemical as those of dogs. So, generally, the polemical names are more prevalent with dog than other animal names.

Since the purpose of polemical names is to indirectly communicate some grievances, the timing of their usage is critical. This is especially so with dog names. According to Batoma (2009a), the person whom the message is intended for should be available and near enough to hear the dog name that contains the message. In other words, the dog caller should be strategic in ensuring that the message gets to the intended destination. Batoma (2009a) cites the example of a Kabré woman who used this strategy to relay her grievances to her neighbours whom she felt were mistreating her because she was a foreigner. The woman's husband who was a local had died and she felt her neighbours were taking advantage of the situation. She used her dogs' names to voice her disappointment and frustrations. She named her

dogs *Paféifééri* ‘they are shameless’ and *Malapamaté* ‘I did it to myself’. *Paféifééri* addressed her neighbours who stole her late husband’s palm nuts while *Malapamaté* was used to reveal her frustrations towards customers who bought her local beer on credit and later refused to pay for it. In her quest to ensure that the message reached the intended audience, she would wait for nightfall when the neighbourhood was quiet and peaceful and she would stand outside her house in the compound and call her two dogs, one after the other, followed by a whistling sound. In this way, she was certain her message reached the targeted audience.

Although there is a paucity of material on personal polemical names in Africa, this does not mean that anthroponyms are not used in polemical communication. Evidence of this usage is found in Batoma (2009b); the study explored, as already indicated, the indirect communicative nature of anthroponyms amongst the Kabrè people of Northern Togo. He categorises the allusive names into two groups: erotic and polemical. As Batoma (2009b) notes, erotic names are provocative and yet playful. They are used to teach and advise on matters of love and sexual relationships. The study revealed that the Kabrè use the names to communicate their feelings and opinions, as noted previously, in conflict-laden situations.

There have not been many studies on polemical anthroponyms probably because the usage is common in animal names compared to personal names. Even with animal names, the usage is more prevalent with dog names than with cattle names (Koopman, 1992). As Batoma (2009a, p.19) has noted, “The dog is something that one owns, an individual’s possession. Therefore, naming a dog is the individual’s prerogative, his own business.” This is different with children’s names because parents do not have total ownership of children like they do of their dogs. So with children names, there might be some restrictions imposed by the society. These restrictions result in controlled polemical anthroponymical naming.

There have been no studies on polemical zoonyms or anthroponyms in Botswana, the setting of the current study. Previous studies merely explored several aspects of Setswana names. Although some of the studies acknowledged that name givers may use names to express their anger and frustrations, the names were not explored from a polemical perspective. Gardner (1999) looked at the use of English and African names in Botswana to establish what motivated the giving of the English or Setswana names at the time she conducted the study. Mathangwane and Gardner (1999) investigated Botswana’s attitudes towards both English and Setswana names. Rapoo (2003) looked at naming practices and gender bias in Setswana and concluded that the naming practices favoured males. Otlogetswe (2008) gave a statistical analysis of English and Setswana names to reveal the most common and least common names in Botswana. Arua (2009) explored gender and loyalty towards first names in Botswana to establish how loyal Botswana are to their names; he concluded that majority of them are loyal to their names and would not change them, regardless of their positive or negative

meanings and the circumstances under which they were given. Ramaeba and Mathangwane (2015) analysed the semantic and morpho-syntactic structure of current Setswana names. They observed that a new cohort of names has emerged over the last two decades and that this indicates a significant shift from traditional Setswana names to new creations. None of these previous studies explored Setswana personal polemical names which is the research gap the current study bridges.

The main objective of the study is to explore the Setswana polemical anthroponyms found in the Botswana name-scape. In order to do this effectively, first, the paper highlights the existence of the names and interrogates how they are used to achieve a polemical purpose. And second, the paper establishes the thematic categories of the names and discusses how they are used pragmatically. This paper, it is hoped, will contribute to the much needed research into Botswana onomastics.

3. Theoretical Framework

This paper is situated within the recent field of socio-onomastics. According to Ainiala (2016), socio-onomastics was first coined in German (*Sozioonomastik*) by Hans Walther (1971a). Kehl (1971) is one of the first researchers to link sociolinguistics to onomastics in a study in which he explored Chinese nicknaming behaviour from a sociolinguistic perspective. Van Langendonck (1982) used the term ‘socio-onomastic’ consistently in name studies, and thus popularised the approach (Ramaeba, 2019). Socio-onomastics is, therefore, a meeting ground between sociolinguistics and onomastics. According to Ainiala (2016, p. 372), it engages sociolinguistic research methods “to explore the social, cultural and situational fields in which names are used”. Names are not only linguistic units, but they are a part of societies and cultures; therefore, their study cannot be isolated from their communities. This connection has been observed by Gardner (2000) who states that the onomastic significance of names does not come from dictionaries or biographies, but from asking the people about their names and the names of others. The central idea behind socio-onomastics is to reveal the complex relationships between names, their users and the contexts within which they exist. The sociolinguistic research methods - interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires (De Stefani, 2016) that it employs bring to the fore the communicative and pragmatic nature of the names. Thus, socio-onomastics has been identified as a relevant approach to draw upon in this study, as it reveals how names are generated from interpersonal relationships and used as practical communicative tools in pragmatic situations.

4. Data Collection and Analysis

This paper uses the names data that was collected for a PhD thesis between May and August 2016. The data was collected through a questionnaire and oral interviews in the villages of Mahalapye and Molepolole in Botswana. During this process 1,995 name tokens were collected and from this list, 47 (or

3.9%) of the total names stock was identified as being polemically motivated (Ramaeba, 2019). The current study uses both quantitative and qualitative data although the focus is on the latter, as the intention is to reveal the communicative nature of the names. Quantitative data describes situations using numerical or statistical information while qualitative data is generally descriptive as it investigates processes and interprets their meanings using words (Cresswell, 1994). Furthermore, Strauss and Corbin (1990) state that qualitative research is used mainly in fields that are concerned with issues of human behaviour and functioning. It is acknowledged that the data for this study is limited quantitatively. This is because the data derives from a previous study whose focus was not on polemical names. The quantitative deficiency is, however, validated by the rich qualitative meta-data behind each of the names which was made possible by the use of oral interviews. Oral interviews are an excellent way of capturing descriptive data which was particularly needed for this study. The descriptive data of the individual names helped to reveal the sociolinguistic factors behind them and, consequently, their pragmatic nature.

Table 1 below presents a summary of the 47 names according to 8 thematic categories:

Table 1: Thematic Analysis of Polemical Names

Thematic Category	No. of Name Tokens	% of Name Tokens
Neighbourly Disputes	13	27.7%
Childcare Evasion	9	19.1%
In-law Disputes	6	12.8%
Failed Marriages/ Relationships	5	10.6%
Parents/Children Disputes	5	10.6%
Child Paternity Issues	4	8.5%
God-directed Complaints	3	6.4%
Miscellaneous	2	4.3%
	TOTAL: 47	TOTAL: 100%

Names that seem to address a similar issue or situation are grouped and discussed together. Although the names may belong to the same category, each is uniquely motivated by the circumstances of the name giver at the time. The thematic categories are discussed as they appear in the Table. The discussion will, however, give examples of each category. The first 7 categories comprise names whose motivations are related, but the last category termed “Miscellaneous” comprises 2 names that are thematically unrelated. The names in the discussion are given in italic font and the glosses are their English literal translations. Since the main objective of this paper is to reveal how Setswana personal polemical names are used in pragmatic

communicative situations, the categories into which the names are divided are motivated by what the name givers are trying to communicate to their target audience. The 8 name categories are discussed below.

5. Discussion of Data

5.1 Neighbourly Disputes

Polemical names that address disputes between neighbours are the most prevalent at 13/47 (27.7%). This is consistent with the reviewed literature (see, for example, Koopman, 1992; Tatira, 2004) which indicates that the majority of dog polemical names are used to communicate and bring to the fore disputes between neighbours. The data also indicates that most anthroponym polemicals are also used to address issues between neighbours. As previously indicated, polemical names are mainly used to tackle thorny issues in an indirect manner to avoid direct confrontations (Batoma, 2009a). The names help to address such disputes, but, simultaneously, maintain peace and cordial relationships between those involved. The first of the four sets of names discussed in this section is found in 1:

1. *Lemphitlhets*e ‘you found me’

This name addressed a land dispute between neighbours. The name giver had settled in the area first and when her neighbours arrived, they tried to move her to a new area. She named her child *Lemphitlhets*e in response to the situation. Essentially, she believed that the new arrivals, her neighbours, had no right to force her to move to another location. The second set of two names are listed in 2:

2. *Gabalape* ‘they do not tire’ and *Tsamets*e ‘(issues) of the homes’

The two names were given to siblings to warn those who meddle in other people’s family issues. The names addressed a specific neighbour in relation to the lies that she was supposedly spreading about the name giver. The name, *Gabalape*, means that some people do not get tired of getting involved in other people’s personal affairs. The second name, *Tsamets*e, which was given to the younger sibling completes the meaning of the first name. When the two names are considered together, they literally give the expression: ‘*they do not tire of issues of (people’s) homes*’ which indicates that the name choices were deliberate. This naming technique of having names of siblings expressing the same idea, where one continues the idea started by the first name, is also evident in other Setswana names that are not polemical. Examples of such names are *Abale* ‘count them’ and *Masego* ‘blessings’; the two names yield the meaning, ‘count [your] blessings’. Giving names like these indicates that the naming process in Setswana is a thoroughly thought through process that involves a lot of creativity (Ramaeba & Mathangwane, 2015; Ramaeba, 2019). The third set has two names:

3. *Gabatladiwe* ‘they (children) are never full’ and *Kenatlhong* ‘I am not bashful’

The first name was a response to neighbours who were shaming a woman who fell pregnant at the same time as her daughter did. The neighbours felt that this was not appropriate, as the mother was too old and should not compete with her daughter. She responded to this situation by naming her child *Gabatladiwe*, thus indirectly stating that children are never enough and that she had the right to have as many as she wanted regardless of the situation. The second name, which relates to pregnancy and childbirth, is *Kenathlong* ‘I am not bashful’, a truncated form of *Gakenathlong* ‘I am not bashful’. The name giver in this case was a barren woman who was tormented by her neighbours because of her situation. Subsequently, her brother gave her his own child to raise as her own and she named the child *Kenathlong*. She used the name to inform her neighbours that she was not ashamed of raising her brother’s child as her own. The name also refers to the fact that she was not ashamed of her barrenness, as she did not bring it upon herself. The last set of three names are listed in 4:

4. *Golekwang* ‘what is being tried’, *Lekang* ‘you should try’, *Keletshabile* ‘I am afraid of you’

These three names are some of those which make reference to witchcraft and suspicions of being bewitched by one’s neighbours. According to Koopman (1992) and Tatira (2004), the issue of suspected witchcraft by neighbours is widely represented by polemic dog names amongst the Shona of Zimbabwe and the Zulu of South Africa. The current data indicates that this issue can also be tackled through the use of anthroponyms. A father who suspected that his neighbours were bewitching him named his son *Golekwang*; thus, he indirectly asked them what they were trying to do. Another parent named his son *Lekang*. This was used to respond to those he suspected of bewitching him. The name givers dare their neighbours to try and bewitch them and warn them that they will regret it if they did. The name *Keletshabile* was also directed to neighbours because the name giver suspected that her misfortune was the result of her neighbours’ witchcraft. All the names here were essentially used to warn the neighbours of the misfortune that will befall them if they tried to bewitch the name givers. The names were also used to make the neighbours mindful of the fact that the name givers were aware of their evil intentions towards them. As Batoma (2009b, p. 227) puts it, “the name is a warning, even a threat uttered by the interpellator who advises his detractors to think twice before they continue their gossip or carry out their evil scheme.” The data in this section exemplifies how Setswana polemical names are used to address neighbourly disputes that cover a wide range of social situations, from land disputes, infertility to suspected witchcraft.

5.2 Childcare Evasion

Names that are directed at male partners and boyfriends for evading or ignoring their childcare responsibilities constitute the second highest category at 9/47 (19.1%). Usually, both parents should care for their children, regardless of their relationship status. However, some men evade or ignore

this responsibility, or even desert their pregnant female partners or friends. Some of the women have used polemical names to address this problem. The first set of names in this sub-section is found in 5:

5. *Bakae* ‘where are they?’ and *Kemoreng* ‘what should I do to him?’

These names were given to siblings whose father deserted their mother during her pregnancy. She named the first child *Bakae* to ask for the whereabouts of the runaway father and his family. The man resurfaced later, impregnated the woman again and disappeared before the second child was born. She named the second child *Kemoreng* which literally means ‘what should I do to him.’ The name was an indirect plea for help. It indicates that the woman did not know what to do with the man, as he kept evading the responsibility of taking care of his children. The second set of childcare evasion names is given in 6:

6. *Gabaetelwe* ‘they are not being visited’, *Kelebetse* ‘I have forgotten’ and *Kentse* ‘I am seated/relaxed’

A mother gave her three children names that addressed the father of her children this way because he also neglected his responsibilities. The first child was named *Gabaetelwe* ‘they are not being visited’ because her partner and his family neither visited nor cared for her during the pregnancy and confinement periods. In Setswana culture, the family of a man who impregnates a woman out of wedlock is supposed to visit the woman’s home to take responsibility for the pregnancy and for the child after birth (Denbow & Thebe, 2006). The woman had a second child with the same man whom she named *Kelebetse* ‘I have forgotten’. The name was also a complaint that the man did not accept his responsibilities and that he had conveniently forgotten that he had a child. The name of the third child *Kentse* ‘I am seated/relaxed’ also addressed the same issue. With the name, the mother lamented that the man was relaxed (did not care or do what was expected of him). These names were an ongoing, one-sided communication between a woman and her partner. The last set of names in this sub-section is found in 7:

7. *Gabathokomele* ‘they do not take care’ and *Baakile* ‘they have lied’

The above names were given by different grandparents. The name *Gabathokomele* ‘they do not take care’ was given by a grandfather to react to the fact that the man who impregnated his daughter evaded his responsibilities towards his daughter and grandson. The second name, *Baakile* ‘they have lied’ was also given to a grandson by a grandmother. The message was directed at the man (and his family) who had initially acknowledged the pregnancy and promised to take responsibility for it but failed to do so.

It should be noted that, of recent, pregnancy outside wedlock has become a common occurrence in Botswana. However, a man who impregnates a woman outside marriage is still expected to own up and take responsibility for the pregnancy. If the man has no intension of marrying the woman, then he has to take care of the child and pay “damages” for impregnating her

(Denbow & Thebe, 2006, p.138). When this expectation is not fulfilled, both the woman and her parents may feel wronged and may voice their displeasure through polemical names.

5.3 In-law Disputes

The third category of names is that which makes reference to disputes between in-laws, namely, mothers and their daughters-in-law or daughters-in-law and other members of their partners' families. This category is represented at 6/47 (12.8%) in the current data. The first set of names in this section is found in 8:

8. *Gaseyo* 'she is not the one' and *Gabotswegope* 'it (witch-craft) does not come from anywhere (but from evil thoughts)'

The two names in 8) were given to the same child by the paternal grandmother and the father respectively. The grandmother named her granddaughter *Gaseyo*. The name was used to voice her displeasure regarding her son's choice of a bride she did not approve of. She had wanted someone else as a daughter-in-law. The son responded by naming the same child *Gabotswegope* 'it (witchcraft) does not come from anywhere (but from evil thoughts)'. The son was indirectly accusing his mother of witchcraft which emanated from her evil thoughts of not approving of his wife. The naming of the child became a conversational exchange between mother and son, and the messages, though indirect, were effectively communicated. These kinds of exchanges have been noted to exist with polemical dog names and two or more people can be involved in the interaction. According to Tatira (2004) polemical dog names are widely used in both polygamous and monogamous marriages where the wives use dog names to communicate their grievances to their husbands and to the other wives, and the husbands can also in return answer the grievances through the use of dog names. The second group of names is indicated in 9:

9. *Kebadiretse* 'I did for them' and *Gasebonno* 'it is not a home'

A daughter-in-law who had been married for a few years was tormented by her mother-in-law for not giving her grandchildren. When she eventually had her first child, she called her *Kebadiretse*. This indicated that she was not ready to have children but did so for her mother-in-law. Newly-weds are often pressurised into having children, and when this does not happen within a reasonable period of time, it is often the woman who is blamed. Another daughter-in-law living with her husband in her mother-in-law's house was not happy with the arrangement. She expressed her frustrations by naming her child *Gasebonno*. She used the name to warn her husband that her mother-in-law's house was not her home and to inform him that she needed her own place. According to Denbow and Thebe (2006, p.181), "The Tswana, like most Southern African peoples, mark important stages in life, such as the naming and presenting of a new-born baby to the community, puberty, marriage, and death with ceremonies." It is probably the wish to hold

such ceremonies such as that of child naming and presentation (*mantsho a ngwana*) that make parents-in-law to put pressure on the newly-weds to have children, and this results in names like *Kebadiretse*. The same goes for a daughter-in-law's desire to have her own home and not to live in her mother-in-law's house. It is a matter of doing and wanting what the society expects.

5.4 Failed Marriages and Relationships

This category consists of 5 out of 47 names (10.6%). The names are used to address failed relationships and marriages. In such situations, those who are aggrieved, especially women, voice their frustrations and anger through the names they give to their children. The first set of examples in 10 is discussed below:

10. *Gaebolae* 'it (broken heart) does not kill', *Batsietsi* 'cheaters/cheats' and *Ditsapelo* '(matters) of the heart'

The name *Gaebolae* was given to a child whose father deserted the matrimonial home to live with another woman when his wife was pregnant. As a result, the wife was devastated and when the child was born, she called her *Gaebolae* to indicate to her irresponsible husband that although she was heartbroken, she would survive. The second name *Batsietsi* 'cheaters/cheats' addresses a similar issue. A mother gave the name to her child after her boyfriend who convinced her that he would marry her deserted her after she fell pregnant and bore him a child. The name indirectly calls the boyfriend a cheat. The last of the names in 10), *Ditsapelo* '(matters) of the heart', also deals with a failed relationship involving a marriage promise and a desertion. The background behind the name is that her family and friends advised her to sue him for breach of promise, but she refused because she loved him. The message of the name is that matters of the heart can only be understood by those involved; so, she was indirectly asking her family and friends not to get involved. The last name discussed in this section is 11:

11. *Mpuseng* 'take me back'

A newly married mother experiencing marital problems named her first child *Mpuseng*, an indirect plea to her in-laws to take her back to her parents' home, as she was not happy in her marriage. In the past in Botswana and some other African cultures, divorce proceedings were complicated; so, they were generally shunned and discouraged. There are usually several reconciliation attempts involving the parents of both parties. According to Denbow and Thebe (2006, p.155), divorces follow the same steps through which the marriage was contracted. The difficulty in obtaining a divorce result in unhappy marriages and the use of polemical names become an outlet for voicing frustrations. This kind of communication is illustrated by Tatira (2004) with polemical dog names amongst the Shona people of Zimbabwe. In this instance, a wife, the aggrieved party, used a dog's name to vent her frustration. Tatira (2004, p. 93) argues that "... the dog stands as a symbol of perseverance to the wife. Through its name she externalizes her feelings, and

each time she calls the dog, apart from communicating with her husband, she is communicating with her inner soul.”

5.5 *Parents and Children Disputes*

This category of names (5/47 or 10.6%) is similar to those in Section 5.2 that address pregnancy and childcare evasion situations that parents use to address the disputes that they have with their children. All of the names relate to having children out of wedlock. Parents were not happy that their daughters had children before they got married, and they addressed this issue through the names that they gave to their grandchildren. Ideally, parents would want their children to have children after they get married, but this is not always the case, especially in Botswana where there are many female-headed families. The first set of two names discussed in this section is in 12:

12. *Kerumotswe* ‘I have been provoked’ and *Kereeditse* ‘I am listening’

A father whose daughter fell pregnant out of wedlock and was not happy about it named his grandson *Kerumotswe*. The name was an indirect, angry response to the man who was responsible for the pregnancy. The name *Kereeditse* also addressed a similar issue. In this instance, a grandfather named his grandson *Kereeditse* because after his daughter became pregnant, the man and his family did not take responsibility for the pregnancy until the child was born. Thus, the grandfather voiced his frustrations about the situation through the name of the child. The last name to be discussed in this section is:

13. *Ontobetse* ‘she kept it (secret) from me’

The name was given by a grandmother to her granddaughter. The daughter had kept her pregnancy a secret from her mother and she only found out when her daughter gave birth to a premature child at seven months. The mother was not happy about the secret and she expressed her displeasure through the name she gave her grandchild. Generally, the names in this section highlight the dynamics of parent-child relationships, especially in relation to social issues such as pregnancies outside marriage. The fact that some of the pregnancies are concealed from parents shows that they are issues that are difficult to address; hence, they are tackled through polemical names.

5.6 *Child Paternity*

The category of names that address child paternity issues is 4/47 (8.5%) of the data. The names have been motivated by (suspicions of) infidelity in marriages or relationships. When one party, particularly the boyfriend or husband, suspects that a woman has been unfaithful and that there is a possibility that child is not theirs, they express this through the child’s name. The two names in 14 are examples:

14. *Gasenna* ‘it is not me’ and *Lesenotswe* ‘it has been revealed’

These two names were given to the same child. The first one, *Gasenna* ‘it is not me’, was given by the father because he suspected that he was not the father of the child. He used the name to indirectly make his suspicion known. The woman was not happy with the name and with the fact that she was accused of cheating. So she retaliated by naming the same child *Lesenotse* ‘it has been revealed’. The name indicated that the child looked exactly like the father; so, the woman indicated indirectly that she had been vindicated. The next set consists of one name:

15. *Osenotse* ‘he (God) has revealed’

The name was given by a mother to her son for reasons similar to the names in 14. The father was not convinced that the child was his. Like the name *Lesenotse*, the child had physical features similar to those of the father. The mother gave the name *Osenotse* to show that God had revealed the truth and that she had been vindicated. The last name discussed in this section is:

16. *Osele* ‘someone else’

Osele is also similar to all the others in this section. A father suspected that his partner was impregnated by another man. The name literally means that someone else is responsible for the pregnancy. The name was, therefore, an indirect way of revealing his suspicions to his partner. It is interesting that we only see names that highlight the suspected infidelity of women. Yet it is prevalent among men even to the extent of being institutionalised by some Setswana traditions and customs. As Denbow and Thebe (2006, p.154) put it, “adulterous actions on the part of men are still often dismissed with phrases such as a man is like an axe, he has to be borrowed from time to time”. This Setswana proverb ‘*monna selepe o a adimanwa*’ is one of those that perpetuate the gender imbalances that Rapoo (2003) made reference to. This is to say that there should be Setswana polemical names that address infidelity or suspected infidelity of men as well.

5.7 God Directed Complaints

Batswana generally believe that a child is a gift from a higher power. So, in addition to biblically derived names, they use God-related names to communicate with their God. Name givers use the names to praise, appreciate and acknowledge God in their lives. Examples of such names are, *Aobakwe* ‘let him (God) be praised’, *Goitsemodimo* ‘God knows’ and *Gaolatlhe* ‘He (God) never forsakes’ (Gardener, 1999; Mathangwane & Gardner, 1999). There is, however, another cohort of names that still addresses God, but may sound negative because name givers use them to express their anger and frustration towards God when they believe that He has been unfair to them. The frustrations can be expressed through names like *Gaobonale* ‘He (God) is not visible’ or *Ontebetse* ‘He (God) has forgotten me’ or *Gaongalelwe* ‘You do not get angry with him (God)’. Previous studies such as Mathangwane and Gardner (1999) have made references to such names although they were not labelled as polemic.

The current data presents 3/47 (6.4%) of these names, two of which are discussed below:

17. *Kesentseng* ‘what wrong have I committed?’ and *Kedirileng* ‘what have I done?’

Parents who gave the two names to their children were complaining that God did not give them male children. Both parents had daughters only and were hoping for sons, but instead they got more daughters. Through these names, the parents were asking God what wrong they had committed against him. The parents felt that they were being punished for some unspecified offence. These names indicate that name givers can use the naming process to communicate their displeasure or disgruntlement towards God, as much as they can use it to appreciate and glorify Him.

5.8 Miscellaneous Names

The last category of names is termed miscellaneous. The names in the category are unrelated and do not belong to any of the categories discussed above. There are 2/47 (4.3%) of them and they are discussed below:

18. *Gaomodimo* ‘you are not God’

The respondent who gave this name stated that several of her children died immediately after birth. She believed that there was some evil force that was killing them. The name was therefore directed towards that force. However, the name giver takes solace in the fact that there is no power greater than that of God. Although the targeted audience of this name is unknown, the name giver feels the need to voice her frustrations with the hope that the evil force responsible for the situation will relent or that God will intervene to remedy the situation. The last name to be discussed in this paper is:

19. *Kesekang* ‘what am I on trial for?’

This name was directed at the brother of the name giver as a response to the conflict they were involved in. The brother did not approve of her sister’s marriage and stopped her from taking her children born out of wedlock to her matrimonial home. When the woman had another child with her husband, she named him *Kesekang* ‘what am I on trial for?’ The name was an indirect question to her brother because she was not happy about the whole situation. Although not labelled polemical, similar names are mentioned in Gardner (1999) and Mathangwane and Gardner (1999).

6. Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the existence of Setswana polemical anthroponyms within the Botswana personal names stock. It has also revealed the social situations under which such names are used. It is now clear that Setswana personal names function at two levels. Firstly, they denote or identify their bearers. Secondly, they perform communicative and practical pragmatic functions of indirect conversational exchanges. The paper has indicated

that the polemical names can be used to perform pragmatic communicative functions such as complaining, quarrelling and requesting.

Onomastics is a rich field that can highlight the culture and traditions of a society. The way polemical names are used in the Botswana society reveals that Batswana are peace loving people who do not like confrontations which are likely to disrupt the status quo. A child's name becomes the vessel through which uncomfortable issues are communicated to avoid deliberate, direct confrontations. Although communication through polemical names is performed indirectly, it is critical because it brings to light issues about which people are unhappy. This helps to ignite conversations around such issues.

This paper has clearly indicated that the naming process in the Setswana culture like in many African cultures goes beyond choosing words from the language to use as names. It deals with interpersonal relationships. The field of socio-onomastics has thus propelled the investigation of names from individual linguistic entities to broader bodies that encompass the relationships, cultures and traditions of those involved. The conclusions on Setswana polemical names mirror those of previous studies on polemical names in other African languages (Koopman, 1992; Tatira, 2004; Batoma, 2009a).

This paper has also reiterated the fact that the literal meaning of a Setswana name is not its entire meaning as it comprises several layers. It has a lexical meaning which is accessible to all speakers of the language and a deeper, motivation derived meaning which can only be interpreted and appreciated by those who are contextually close to the name giver and the name bearer. This is in line with the principles of socio-onomastics; that the study of names should not be isolated from the inter-personal relationships of their givers and users. In future, it will be necessary to conduct a larger study on Setswana polemical anthroponyms to see the direction they have taken and, hopefully, to reveal other social themes that are not represented in the current data.

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