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The Cultural Meaning of Names among Basotho of Southern Africa: A Historical and Linguistic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

'Names' are more than a 'word' or words by which a person, animal, place or thing is known, and does not fundamentally connote designation, reputation, or identification, separation of one individual from the other per se. Among Basotho in southern Africa 'Names' and the naming process is a socio-cultural interpretation of historical events. They embody individual or group social experiences, social norms and values, status roles and authority, as well as personality and individual attributes. The discussion focuses on the cultural meaning of personal names and their relationship with historical events. It is argued that the concepts of 'person' and 'self' among southern African societies have to be understood as historical social products.

Keywords: Culture, history, teknonyms, deference, masculinity, authority

1. INTRODUCTION

Following Marcel Mauss' interpretation of the notion of "person" (personne) as a social derivation, anthropologists have espoused a theoretical interpretation of this concept in relation to the degree of institutionalisation and the nature of authority within society (La Fontaine 1980: 124); as a symbolic interpretation of the definition of 'person' (Geertz 1966: 368) as understood in specific cultural contexts; and as an internal awareness and external expression of personhood specific to defined roles and statuses (Fortes 1973: 287). Although Mauss, like Durkheim, excludes a psychological approach as irrelevant to his immediate concern (Hallowell 1955: 78), he does, however, concede the fact that the concepts of 'person' and 'self' are a historical social product.

It is, however, Hallowell (1955: 94) in his integrationists perspective between the organism and its social milieu, who invariably draws our attention to the fact that:

> Human beings maintain awareness of self-continuity and personal identity in time through the recall of past experiences that are identified with the self-image.

In line with this observation, this paper is an attempt to further historical elucidation of the concept of 'self', 'personhood' and 'individual' as portrayed in Southern Sotho society. It focuses on how names and the naming process in this society serve as socio-cultural elucidation of the concepts of 'self', 'person' and 'individual'. Particular attention is paid to the cultural meaning of personal names, teknonyms and teknonymous names and the application of names in male and female initiation rituals. It is the contention of this paper that "names" are more than a "word (or words) by which a person, animal, place or thing is known" (Oxford Dictionary 1983: 559); and does not fundamentally connote designation, reputation, or the identification, separation of one individual from the other per se, as Western thought would assume. In addition to this, "names" are also a socio-cultural interpretation of historical events and they embody individual life experiences, social norms and values, status roles and authority, as well as personality and individual attributes. It is, indeed, through the process of socialization and culture that these are inculcated to the individual. The concern here, however, is related to the question, that is, what does it mean to the individual to have a name? How far can we relate the interpretation of 'self', 'person' or 'individual' with the naming process in a given society? In response to these questions the discussion following advances our understanding on how historical processes inform the interpretive aspect of 'self', 'person' or 'individual' in a southern Sotho speaking African society.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Southern Sothos are part of the Sotho group in Southern Africa, which is conventionally divided into three main language clusters; Northern Sotho or Sepedi, spoken in the Northern and Eastern Transvaal; Tswana or Setswana, spoken in the Northern Cape, the Western Transvaal, and Botswana; and Southern Sotho or Sesotho, spoken in the Orange Free State, north-eastern parts of the Transkei, sometimes called East Qriqualand and Lesotho (Lye & Murray 1980: 11). Chief Moshoeshoe I is reputed to have been the founder of the Sotho nation, during the second half of the eighteenth century (cf. Casalis 1892, Ashton 1967, Lye & Murray 1980). Prior to the incorporation of Southern Sotho under a united political authority, they were composed by various Sotho and Nguni lineage clusters such as Batlokoa, Bafokeng, Baphuthi, Basia, Bakoena,Bahlakoana and a variety of other Nguni clans. It was, however, after the devastating wars of Difaqane (Shaka's military expansionism and nation building) that Moshoeshoe I organized the dispersed clans into what is known today as the Kingdom of Lesotho. They are also distributed between the then barren "homeland," formerly known as Basotho Qwaqwa on the northern edge of Lesotho and the "white" farming areas of the Orange Free State and Southern Transvaal.

The arrival of the missionaries, the establishment of a mission station in Morija in 1833, Boer settlers and the gradual incorporation of this society into monetary economy including migratory labour to the mine and industries in South Africa have profoundly influenced Basotho social life and their worldview. Not only were they converted to Christianity, but also to education that led to their developing a vigorous literary tradition (Lye & Murray 1980: 12) Works by Basotho writers include histories, collected proverbs, and praise-poems, as well as religious works. Because of these influences it is unlikely that one can derive any interpretation of concepts related to 'self', 'person' or 'individual' without taking into account the concomitant effects of social change upon Basotho views of themselves. As this paper illustrates, the peoples daily experiences are reflected in the language they use, and this transformation can be observed in the new words and names that are incorporated into their vocabulary, thus deriving changing cultural meanings. This is the spirit that informs the discussion in this paper.

3. BASOTHO AND INTERPRETATION OF NAMES

Naming in Sesotho is both a cultural and linguistic phenomenon (Mohome 1972: 171). The meaning attached to names by Basotho, plays a significant role in the definition of "personhood", because it is believed that a given name does not only serve 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. There is a proverb that refers to the influence of names on character: *Bitso lebe keseromo* (literally, "a bad name is ominous"). Thus the names given to individuals refer to historical events, experiences, emotions, status relations, clan and kinship relations, as well as authority. Ashton (1967: 32) has noted that among Basotho, names are seldom chosen at random and usually recall a grandfather or other important relation. Sometimes they commemorate an important or unusual event or personage.

Naming a child after kinsmen serves a religious (Monnig 1967: 338), political, and social function. Mohome posits that the system among Basotho of naming children after their paternal or maternal relatives serves to perpetuate the names of ancestors, and it brings grandparents and grandchildren closer to one another. Alternate generations of grandparents and grandchildren are linked together. 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.

Setiloane (1975: 34) notes that among Basotho "children are a gift of *badimo*" (ancestors). Failure to conceive is attributed primarily to the disfavour of *badimo*. Thus a child who has been born a long period after the mother has been married is named Mpho (gift), Keneiloe (I have been given), and Kelebogile (I am grateful). This ancestral relationship is also epitomized by such

personal names as Oatile or Oagile (the household has been firmly built). And when an elderly relative has recently died and a child of the same sex is born, it may be said Oboile mo tseleng (he has returned on the road) and is named Tebello (expectation). And a child who has been born after a long period of childless marriage or successive miscarriages, the event of a healthy birth is celebrated by names such as Rethabile (Felicity), Lesebo (a gift from ancestors), Keneuoe (for a girl).

The ideological construction of the role of Malome (Uncle) as a potential political supporter in succession disputes among Basotho-Tswana agnatic lineages is well documented in anthropology (cf. Casalis 1861, Junod 1927, Lye & Murray 1980). Junod observed, "the tendency of the Sotho system seems to be to lessen the differences existing in other tribes between the father's family and the mother's family" (quoted in Lye & Murray 1980: 116). The father's relatives and mother's relatives are often not distinguished in practice. In order to foster this affinal relationship and the obligations associated with it, siblings, junior sons and daughters may also be named after their maternal kinsmen. It should be noted, however, that not every agnatic child is named after the ancestor, nor is it implied that siblings are by rule, customarily named after their maternal kinsmen. Cross-cousin matrilateral marriages are encouraged to further galvanize the political alliance between different agnatic families (Ashton 1967: 32; Lye & Murray 1980: 119). Often an elder child is called by his/her mother's marriage name (this is discussed below).

Children can also be named after a prominent or famous person, or a neighbour, or after a midwife if the child is a girl (Mohome 1972: 172; Ashton 1967). Names of prominent persons include those of former Basotho chiefs, names such as Letsie, Seeiso, Bereng, Masopha, and Molapo. These are found mainly in the Moshoeshoe family who constitute the chieftaincy of Basotho. For instance, Masopha, the son of the king and founder of Basotho nation, Moshoeshoe, is commonly given to Basotho boys. For Basotho the name Masopha epitomised a significant historical personality, since Moshoeshoe was a daring and courageous general commanding the Basotho army against land invasion by white settlers during the latter half of the 18th century. Masopha's legend is also allegorized in songs and poetry sung and recited during male initiation rituals such as mokorotlo (initiation ritual dance).

Sometimes names are derived from non-relatives, names that are also associated with significant historical events at international and regional levels. For instance, Keisara (kaiser), Tjotje (King George), Jeremane (German), Setene (Steyn), a Boer leader during the Anglo-Boer war) Prominent British administrators such as Griffith and Lugden have been commemorated in some of Moshoeshoe's leading descendants. Some names reflect the separation of the family members from the head of the household owing to migratory labour to the South African mines. A child born during the father's absence may be named Join (father 'joined' the mine recruits"), Jubilee (named after the Diamond Jubilee of 1897 or Silver Jubilee of 1935) (Ashton, 1967). These names of prominent people and historical events were formerly used in estimating the

ages of their bearers who, in most cases, may be illiterate and without birth records. Ideally to the individual they may serve to promote a positive self-image as one was born during an important event and a critical period in Basotho history.

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 names Tsie (locust), 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. Some individuals go to the extent of asking elders about the chronicle associated with their name and compose poetic recitals around the name. This ingenious skill is well demonstrated in the compositions of initiation school poetry called Lithoko and during mokorotlo (traditional male dance) by male initiates and elders respectively. Guma held that:

> It is also true ... that individual deeds of bravery on the part of a youth, who did not yet belong to an established military regiment, could and did result in such a one composing praises for himself on the basis of his manly deeds. (1983: 152).

A classical example here is that of Lepoqo who, as a youth, defeated the elderly Ramonaheng and then praised himself as follows:

Ke nna Moshweshwe Moshwashwaila waha Kadi;
Lebeola le beotseng Ramonaheng ditedu;
Le ho hola ha di eso hole,
Di ya sala di hola maisao.

I am Moshweshwe, the barber of Kadi's house,
The barber who shaved Ramonaheng's beard.
It has not even grown yet,
It will remain growing in years to come.
(Guma 1983: 152)

It can be noted from this praise that the first thing that the reciter mentions is his name, as if introducing himself to the gathering. This name may be his real name or one that he has acquired or coined for himself on the basis of his deeds.

Guma goes on to illustrate that the name of the individual is expanded, elaborated, and interesting anecdotes about "the self" given. Through this self praise-poem the individual's entire life history is thus told in a broad outline. Those who know him may also fill in the various details about their own understanding of his personhood/personage. Here the reciter may refer, for

instance to the build and personal appearance of the individual he is praising as follows:

Kerefese ha ho motho a teng,
Le ka mahlo o ka mo thola hodimo
”Griffith is a very short person,
One can easily overlook him “ (1983: 154)

There are a series of names that also represent the socio-cultural, lived-in experience. Names may denote repeated death in the same family, especially that of children. Here the child may be presented with a name that is expected to have an opposite (meaning) result from the literal meaning of the given name. These are usually derived from nonhuman phenomena such as animals. From animals such as Polomashwashe (alligator) the name Polo for a boy may be derived, and from Moselantja (dog), Moselantja (dog's tail) is used to name a girl. This expression of lived-in experience through nature is extended to names denoting an unusual birth place; delayed birth; children born out of wedlock and those of uncertain paternity; denoting patience, endurance or perseverance; names referring to social disharmony such as in Lekgotla (court of law); problems or dissatisfaction with the bride-wealth or marriage; and those names which refer to personal qualities. These are some of the social experiences which are embedded in special names that are given to a child depending on what sex the child is.

The naming of twins falls also under this category. Twins are usually called by the same name, which in most cases reflects the cause of joy and anxiety (Ashton 1967: 33; Mohome 1972: 178). They are regarded as a special gift from the ancestors. The birth of twins is believed to be an indication of fortune and blessings endowed by ancestors upon the parents. On the other hand, twins are believed to be delicate and this results in anxiety among parents, as they are not expected to reach adult age without one or the other dying. To insure their survival, rituals, taboos are held and observed respectively. Not only is the mother looked after by the father and next of kin, it is also customary to do everything twofold to insure that the life of the twins will be sustained. For identical twins, the name of the twin delivered last is always in the diminutive form: names such as Mosemodi-Mosemotsane (legendary, meaning obscure) for girls or Masilo-Masilonyane (legendary in folktales, meaning obscure). Among fraternal twins, names indicate the sex rather than order of birth. Here we find names such as Tabo (joy) a boy, and Thabang (be happy) for a girl; Tshepo (trust, hope) boy and Tshepiso (promise) for the girl, among others.

The arrival of missionaries during the 1800s in Basutoland led to fundamental transformations in Basotho social life and worldview. The primary objective of the missionaries was to convert Basotho to Christianity. The number of chiefs who were converted at the time could evaluate an assessment of the impact of missionaries; the introduction of formal education; and by the number of publications and literary accounts by indigenous Sotho writers whose

works are still read today. Concomitant to conversion was the introduction of "Christian" names among those who were baptised in the church and to pupils attending missionary schools. 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. They eventually adopted English names as second names in order to avoid the derogatory modes of address so often used by Europeans at the time such as "Sixpence" "Jim" or "Mary" (Ashton 1967).

The adoption of English names as consistent with Christianity was another ploy by which missionaries divided Basotho society between "Converts" and "Non-Converts" (Majake le Majakane). The sons of those chiefs who accepted conversion were baptised with names such as "Nehemiah", "Jeremiah" among others. There was, of course resistance from other Chiefs who refused to be converted and were against the use of English names arguing that these names were associated with foreign domination and submission to a European god (cf. Setiloane 1976: 130). 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 (Ashton 1967: 32; Guma 1983: 185). Alongside Christianity, the adoption of European names by Basotho entrenched European cultural hegemony, further subordinating their cultural traditions to that of Europeans.

4. TEKNONYMS AND TLHOMPHO CUSTOM

The use of teknonymous names and the Tlhompho custom are associated with the marriage institution in Sotho society. Kunene (1958: 159) holds that "the expression ho Tlhompho includes among its meanings, "to respect, to honour". It is often used to refer to a custom whereby respect is shown in a conventional manner to elders, authorities, senior relatives, in-laws, senior clan members among others, in the social life of Southern Sotho. But more specifically Tlhompho refers to particular forms of behaviour in which a newly wed is expected "to avoid certain words" pertaining to the in-laws' household. 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. Thus she must respect and avoid (Tlhompho) the personal name of her father-in-law and of his kinsmen in that category or status authority and must call him by a special name (Ashton 1967: 76). In brief, teknonymous names and the Tlhompho customary names serve to address or refer to a person by using the name of his or her child; they establish avoidance rules between affinal relationships by substituting the personal name with a given name or kin term. Finally, they serve to avoid certain words that are related or associated with the father-in-law's personal name and types of enjoined behaviour.

Among Basotho, marriage gives both men and women a new status in society with concomitant rights and privileges (Ashton 1967). Added to this is the new relationship that incorporates both the couple and their families. Within this relationship, a new bride is usually given a teknonymous name so that the in-laws avoid addressing her or referring to her by her maiden name (Mohome 1972: 181). The husband is expected to call her by this name particularly among kin members or in public. Sometimes the name becomes permanent as her firstborn is usually given a name that will match her teknonymous name. If, for example, she is named Mmatshepo, her child, if it is a boy, may be named Tshepo (trust). For a girl the name is dropped for one that is suitable for a girl such as Tshepiso (promise). Since Basotho are a patrilineal society, the majority of teknonymous names given to new brides are based on boy's names.

Similarly, when the woman gives birth to her first child, she is now referred to as "Mother of so-and-so", as in Mme wa Pule, and her husband "Father of so-and-so", as in Ntate wa Pule (literally father of Pule). The other construction in which the prefix=s Ra- and Mma- are affixed to the name of the child, for example Rapule or Mmapule have no equivalent in English, though Mohome (1972: 181) suggests that the similarity could be derived from Irish names such as McCarthy, McKinney, among others. It can also be added that there are also abbreviated forms of linguistic constructions by which the woman and her husband are addressed, such as ntat'a Pule instead of Ntate wa Pule or Mm'a Pule, instead of Mma wa Pule.

It is indeed within this sociolinguistic phenomenon that the presentation of "self", personhood" and individuality can be discerned in the use of teknonymous names in Sotho society. Not only are these linguistic terms associated with the substitution of names and the enjoined behaviour at an adult level, but also children are expected to use the long form of teknonymous labels. For children to use the short form is regarded as a sign of disrespect for an adult. Children may use teknonymous names only by further adding classificatory kin terms to them (Mohome 1972: 182). A Mosotho child will therefore address or refer to Rapule as ntate Rapule ('Father Rapule' or literally 'Father Father of Pule'). Thus it can be argued that teknonyms among Basotho have an added function "the inculcation of respect for authority" (La Fontaine 1977: 432), although it simultaneously distinguishes the individual in what Fortes (1973: 315) refers to as "a place in a system of social relations".

There is also attendant behaviour that is associated with the adoption of teknonymous names between the daughter-in-law and her father-in-law including her husband’s elder brother. About her behaviour toward the in-laws Ashton notes that:

> A daughter-in-law should always be decorous and modest in the presence of her father-in-law. She should keep her body covered and should not suckle her baby or dance the mokhibo in his presence. Nor should she remain in a room alone with him, sit near him, eat out of the same pot, shake hands with him or in any way touch him. She may cook for him and even spread his sleeping mats but should not wash his clothes to

> touch his intimate property, such as saddle or gun. These rules are strictly observed early in marriage, but are gradually relaxed as time goes on. (1967: 77).

In addition to this behaviour she must avoid all words that are related to the father-in-law's personal name. There are however, some variations among the clans as to a strict adherence to this taboo. Among BaKoena and BaPhuthi, it hardly extends beyond the father-in-law and his brothers, whereas among BaTlokoa it includes more distant relations as well as words occurring in the names of these relatives (Ashton 1967). As a result newly weds have to learn a long list of substitute words that invariably form a 'sub-cultural' language. Her personhood, among other things, is determined by her sincerity in learning these words and applying them in her daily language within and outside the household. Although there are no standard Tlhompho terms, there are some universally recognized ones. The observance of this custom among Southern Sotho is interpreted as a sign of good upbringing (Kunene 1958: 165). The woman's in-laws feel disgraced if she does not show her respect for them in the socially approved manner. It becomes a problem, though, when, for instance, at a government office or Post Office when officials are to ascertain the name of an individual who may be a pensioner and the person they are dealing with is not supposed to pronounce such name. Ideally the use of teknonymous names by the woman, which, of course, is associated with deference toward senior men and womenfolk, serves as one of a number of social sanctions by which individual personhood is evaluated and invariably approved.

On the other hand, a man's relationship with his in-laws is not as complex as that of his wife. The man does not often come into contact with his in-laws, but between him and his mother-in-law similar 'avoidance' behaviour as that of a man and his daughter-in-law prevails. Before a man begets a child, his mother-in-law addresses him by his kin term Mokgwenyana (son-in-law), while she is addressed and referred to as Mme (mother) by him. The teknonymy "father of so-and-so" will be the form of address by the mother-in-law as soon as the son-in-law has a child. Sons-in-law also refer to their in-laws by using the kin terms such as Mohwe, (father-in-law) and Mohwehadi (mother-in-law). Similarly, a man is supposed to address or refer to his son-in-law by the term Mokgwenyana (son-in-law) or teknonymy and not his name, the same applies to his daughter-in-law who is addressed or referred to a Ngwetsi (daughter-in-law) or mother of so-and-so. His in-laws do not give the son-in-law a teknonymous name, as it is with the daughter-in-law. There are also kin terms by which the son-in-law addresses his wife's brothers and sisters so are (brother-in-law).

Finally we will consider the use of names as presentation of 'self', 'personhood' and 'individual' in adolescent male and female initiation rituals to adulthood in Basotho society. The notion of 'personhood', 'self' and 'individual' during initiation rituals is epitomized by the various name categories that are assigned to the individual initiates and those that the adult participants give themselves. Names in this context are classified according to status,

genealogical seniority, clan-name (among the Sotho clans), natural and behavioural characteristics, personality attributes and by praise-poems (lithoko). The names given to the individuals should reflect a combination of these qualities and their life histories. Here we get both private and public names, that is, those names which are regarded as a secret of the initiation school exclusively and those which can be known by women and children and other people at large through the recital of praise-poems at home.

Prior to the incorporation of Basotho to industrialization (monetary economy) initiation names of the sons of chiefs transcended the confines of initiation school. They were also used for naming age-group regiments. All those who were initiated with him identified themselves as belonging to Chief so-and-so son's regiment and were called by his name, and "it was regarded as a great honour to be initiated with a Chief's son" (Kunene 1958: 184). Because of the status factor associated with the Chief's son's regiment name, older boys would sometimes wait to be circumcised with a chief's son.

For girl-initiates, names are formulated by attaching a prefix ra to nouns or verbs as in the case of teknonymous names of parents. However, here the name does not have the same meaning such as "father of so-and-so". Here what is conveyed are the qualities such as adeptness, speed, skilfulness, dexterity among others. For instance, a girl initiate by the name of 'Ralebelo' (lebelo means speed) is given this name because she is "the one of speed". Another feature of girls' initiate-names is that a majority of their names are formed by adding the prefix 'ra' to her maternal uncle's name. Mohome speculates that this custom may be to honour the mother's brother who invariably plays a vital role in the life of his sister's children. Some of the names given to girls during initiation include the following:

Ratsebo (Tsebo - knowledge)
Ramatla (Matla - strength)
Ramona (Mona - selfishness)
Ramatjato (Matjato - agility) (1958: 184).

It should be noted that prior to initiation boys and girls are not regarded as accomplished 'persons' yet. They are addressed in derogatory terms, and called *mushimane* (boy), *ntja* (dog) *leqai* and girls or *lethisa* (brother-in-law of a polecat), they are said to smell like billy-goats and a pig with litter of piglets respectively. By being at the initiation school the initiate is no longer regarded as a 'sub-human' or nonhuman being. Initiation is a transitional stage in his or her life that qualifies the initiate to be approved and accepted as a human being in the society. It is against this backdrop that the naming of initiates can be understood.

In addition to personal names Basotho have clan-names and surnames. During initiation rites the most important name is the clan-name, which invariably clarifies the status hierarchy of the individual among other initiates. Whereas the clan-name determines the position of the initiate, initiation names

serve as 'personhood' identifications and as passwords to enter the following initiation lodge without hindrance. Among Basotho uninitiated persons are not allowed to visit the lodge. Thus names that are given at initiation schools 'remain behind' and are used by those who are involved in the initiation rites. Following is an example of this practice in one of the Basotho groups.

Among Batlokoa, the Chief's sons Ba-lefe are preceded by a Tebele (Ndebele) of the Sekhosana clan. Ashton (1967) and Allenberger (1969) maintain that this is done so that the *letebele* may shield his seniors from harm and draw upon himself the sorcery of their enemies. Not only is their geneological and clan seniority observed, but also the initiation names reflect this relationship. The first initiate in the line is named *kokoptshe* (the first one), Moswephe (the last one) and intervening names such as Okantshufala (the black one), Okapota (the round one), Shohlo lamisitshi (lady's underwear). The latter one is usually given to an initiate who used to be always in the company of girls prior to initiation. Initiates are not supposed to refer to or call one another by their personal names that are used at home. Should one forget another's initiate name, the initiate refers to the other as *mphato* or *thaka* (fellow initiate or age mate) and it is through this teknonymous name that a bond of solidarity is developed among initiates.

What is of primary importance, however, is the adoption of songs (*koma*) and praise-poems (*lithoko*) as a medium to represent the 'self', while elders on the other hand communicate to the initiates what it is to be a Mosotho person. The *koma* as embody the 'truth' during initiation by which the 'boy' is expected to acquire manhood and masculinity as against the normative childhood association with 'womanhood' formalises this notion of Mosotho manhood and personhood. Only when this association is severed by being incorporated into the 'manhood' status will the boy be regarded as mature enough to bear responsibility. Some of the knowledge contained in these songs is presented as follows:

Modimo wa rona	Our God
M*odino wa borare*	God of our fathers,
O a utlwa: ...	Thou hearest: ...
Thaka tsa me	My friends
Hale nkutlwa na?	Don't you hear me?
Ke le Ruta thuto tsa molao	I teach you lessons of the law
Mo lao keo neheloe	From my forebears
Ba itseng ho nna:	Who said to me:
Hlokomela dikgomo	Respect the Chiefs
Esita la e tla ba teng	Even those still to be born
E, metswalle yaka	Yes, my friends,
Le ya mosallanyana	Even the last remaining one
O tla ba le sekgotho	You will have a son
Ha o ena le sekgotho	When you have a son

E tla ba sa motse oona ona	He will belong to this very same village. (Guma 1983: 119).

Dithoko (praises), on the contrary, fall into three categories, those of boy initiates (*Makolwame*), animals (*diphofolo*) and divine bones (*ditaola*), as well as those of kings (*Marena*) and warriors (*diroki*). For the purpose of this discussion the focus will be on boy initiates' praise poems (*dithoko tsamakolwane*). These are primarily individual initiate's compositions, which are praises for themselves and about themselves. Every initiate has to give himself a new name that he will be publicly known as *lekolwane* (young initiated man) (Guma 1983: 136) when he recites his praises. Like the names given to female initiates, boy initiates' names refer to qualities such as strength, skillfulness among others. Each *lekolwane* begins his praises with his new name.

In his composition, the reciter may attribute admirable qualities unto himself, identify himself with ferocious animals, describe his imaginary build and facial features putting himself in the best possible light. The reciter may also draw from prevailing prejudices in society much as between traditionalists and converts (Majakane). Individual life histories are also recited through this medium of praise-poems. Sometimes they show familiarity with birds and cattle and reveal their experiences as workers in European concerns. Below are some of the names adopted by Makolwane to identify themselves during recitals:

ho hana (to refuse) - Lehana (one-who-refuses)
he nepa (to hit on the target)- Lenepa (one who hits the target)
ho tlama (to bind) - Letlama (one who unites)
(Kunene 1958: 184).

Sometimes such names become so popular that they supersede the real ones. This was the case with Lepoqo who became Letlama after initiation and later Moshweshwe (the founder of the Sotho nation). His age group regiment was known as Amatlama. The following praise-poems serve as examples of the nature by which the 'self' or individual is represented or portrayed through initiation rituals in Basotho society:

Mohlankana e Motshwana Lefeta
Mme mmangwane mosadi wa batho,
O tiise pelo s se ole moholo
Ditsietsi ha di maktse mosadi
Mosala le dikgutsana ha a hloname;
Ha hlonama di ya hodiswa ke mang?
Lefu le manyala nthong tsa batho
La nka ntate la ntshiya Shalabeng.

“A dark-complexioned young man, Lefeta
Mother dear, thou poor little woman

The one who remains with orphans, never sulks,
If she sulks, who will bring them up?
Death is evil in human affairs,
It took my father and left me very far."
(Guma 1983: 142).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Although in this discussion names pertaining to totemic relations and surnames have not been defined, the socio-cultural element embedded in Sotho names as a definition of 'self', 'person' or 'individual' can be discerned. We can also decipher the various categories upon which names are applied in relation to how Basotho experience their social life. Here individuals have childhood names (non-personhood) which include person names (denoting historical cultural and family experiences); clan-names and "school" names; status names which are related to defined social roles, such as initiation school names, Christian, teknonymous names which invariably influence the individual to appropriate to himself the socially defined roles of personhood.

I am illuminating article on Tallensi, Fortes (1973: 287) draws attention to the notion of public and private names and how these provide indices of how individual and society are interconnected in mutual regulation. The thrust of Fortes' thesis is that the name serves "as an important cultural device ... for the internal awareness and the external expression of personhood". This I find to be the same among Southern Sotho. But Fortes (1973: 289) emphasizes that:

> …no matter how loved and admired an individual may be, if he or she fails to fulfil the ideal pattern of life and leaves no children, then full personhood has not been attained.

The observation is implicitly related to Geertz' (1966: 376) contention that in Balinese society teknonyms are confirmed by procreation, not the act of marriage and this idea is extended to the participation of single men in political affairs, a phenomenon I find to be at variance with Southern Sotho practice. Here teknonymous names and kinship terms are essentially associated with the institution of marriage in terms of deference, humility, respect, and avoidance taboos by which the individual's sense of belonging and personhood is confirmed. Similarly, initiation rituals, among other things, confirm adulthood and thus personhood upon the individual, who in turn, has social approval to participate fully in political and in religious affairs. Although marriage is appreciated, it is not a precondition; neither does procreation determine the political status of the individual. This brings us to the notion of public and private names among Basotho.

To be a Mosotho person, as this study shows, means to have a name that is associated with the 'self' as a form of identification with one's family, lineage

group, or clan; as an individual who has reached adulthood through initiation and marriage (especially for women), which invariably define your status in the society. Although initiation as a precondition to adulthood and personhood was changed with the arrival of missionaries and by conversion to Christianity, Christian names in this context elevate one's status as a convert. Baptism served as the ritual for the qualification to this status. Traditionalists who adhered to initiation rituals were no longer regarded as persons by the converted group and vice versa. Indigenous names were associated with 'paganism', whilst English names were identified with Christianity and as being the "proper" thing to do.

On the contrary, it can also be argued that missionaries found a "ready made seed bed"; the social institutions of Basotho society when they introduced conversion to Christianity, easily germinated within the already existing socially defined concepts of sacred and profane, person and non-person, private and public names. Private names as used in initiation school rituals did not only serve to define the individual initiate's genealogical seniority, but also inculcated respect for authority and hierarchy, but most of all to perpetuate the ideals of the society to future generations. Thus individuals become dedicated to their private names since these names tend to embody shared and idealised social experiences, particularly those that are associated with initiation to adulthood. This is an intimate experience that cannot be shared with anyone else except those who have gone through it. Indeed initiation school names are never made public except for those with which the initiate identifies himself during the recitals of praise-poems at the returning home ceremony.

More than the analysis and interpretation of names as the socio-cultural presentation of 'self', 'person' or 'individual', this paper has introduced a new dimension in the cultural meaning of names; i.e. the historical context within which the naming process in Africa is embedded. Society is never a static whole, changes come from both inside and outside and when combined give rise to a new synthesis which is invariably reflected in the daily lives of human beings, and in how they perceive themselves through the naming process. A historically informed social analysis perspective will enrich the study of names and the naming of place names in Africa.

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