

PRETORIA OR TSHWANE? THE POLITICS OF NAME CHANGES

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1. INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare once questioned the importance attached to a name because he argued that a rose with a different name would smell just as sweet. With reference to the prospective name change of Pretoria to Tshwane it is however undoubtedly true that for many this name change will be a matter of "not smelling so sweet".

The ongoing process of name changes that are taking place in South Africa is drawing strong response from many quarters. The reasons or motives behind the prospective name changes are not always evident and sometimes even shrouded in mystery. This begs the question of how one should try to understand the process.

Fundamentally the name changing endeavour corresponds substantially with the core aspect of politics. The process of name changing is basically a reallocation of scarce resources (name changing amounts to taking a resource away from one group and awarding it to another) which is fundamentally an activity that is political in nature. Therefore, in order to comprehend and contextualise the process of name changes in South Africa, an understanding of the nature of politics is of paramount importance.

The purpose of the article is to look at the reasons that underpin the envisaged name change from Pretoria to Tshwane. The argument in the article is that the empirical evidence presented by the supporters for the proposed name change is not sufficiently substantial to warrant such a change. It is therefore vital to detect the apparent reasons to comprehend the rationale for the name change, because it is located on a different level. Lurking behind the thin veil of historical evidence is the more obvious driving stimulus for the name change, namely the core of politics or power politics. Therefore, in order to fully appreciate the reasons for name changes, one has to look more at the nature of (power) politics than of history.

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This does not mean that the historical events that shaped and formed the backdrop of the place names in the Tshwane/Pretoria area are without any contextual significance. It remains important to understand the historical context in which this prospective name change will take place. However, the emphasis of the article will be to explain and to understand the core of politics and its relation to the process of name change that is currently unfolding, not only in Pretoria, but all over South Africa.

2. PRETORIA OR TSHWANE? A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Although many interpretations of the development and history of the occupants in the region of the Moot area (roughly the existing Pretoria area between the Magaliesberg range and Elandspoort) exist, a reasonably clear picture emerges from the pages of history of the activities in the area during the preceding centuries.

Unfortunately a consensus about the history of the Moot area is prevented by the lack of written accounts of the pre-1855 period. The available historical evidence of this period is limited and fragmented, which inhibits a conclusive interpretation of the historical facts. However, a sharper picture exists of the post-1855 period, which will be sketched in the subsequent discussion.

The first misinterpretation of the history of the Moot area is that it starts with the migration of the Ndebele to the Moot area or with the movement of Whites into the area. On the contrary the area between Elandspoort and the Magaliesberg is rich in argeological finds which prove that this region was inhabited as early as the Stone Age. Stone tools found near the Wonderboom High School indicate that they are 70 000 to 200 000 years old. Argeological studies in Sunnyside date stone tools of 130 000 years old (Pelser 1998:22). During the Middle Stone Period the occupants in the area were hunters who lived in the area around the Apies River. Van Vollenhoven (2000:42) also refers in his studies to stone tools that were found near the Pioniers' House, which dates back to the Middle and Late Stone Age Period.

The pre-colonial past of the Pretoria region was never doubted. In the publication that appeared during the 1955 centenary celebrations, **Pretoria 1855-1955**, a chapter was devoted to the pre-colonial history of the Pretoria region. With the exception of a few minor details, the account by the Mayoral Task Team corresponds broadly with that given by the author of the book.

It is evident that human activity had existed in the Moot area thousand of years before any of the larger groups were able to migrate to the area.

The next significant migration into the area was that of the Ndebele who moved in a southern direction. This provided the impetus for a smaller clan to detach itself from the main group and to occupy the northern section of the Moot area. Junod in Engelbrecht (1955:64) refers in his studies of the area to a chief with the name of Musi or Mnisi who, together with a smaller clan, occupied the area roughly to the north of the Magaliesberg (Pretoria-North). His two sons, who inherited the clan, subdivided it after some disagreement and the eldest son Manala settled in the Pretoria-North area, while Mdzundaza occupied the area to the north-east of the present Pretoria.

Bulpin (1989:16) confirms these events in his depiction of the history of the area. Bulpin also adds that Musi's son, Tshwane (small ape), was born in the area and that after his death his name was immortalised when the river originating from the Fountain area was named after him.

These facts are not disputed, but the locality of the Ndebele in the Moot area cannot be proved beyond reasonable doubt. Van Vuuren in Middleton and Rassan (1995: 235) states that there exists no anthropological or archaeological evidence which proves that the Ndebele settled in the areas *south* of the Magaliesburg range. This area was traditionally a Tswana stronghold and this view is supported by oral and anthropological evidence.

In the report of the City of Tshwane Renaming Task Team the account of the development leans heavily on the views of a Peter Tshwane (Report 2005:41). In general, notwithstanding a few minor points, his account confirms the general history of Musi and Tshwane. However, a number of his claims are disputed by archaeologists, such as the claim that Chief Tshwane was buried at Wonderpoort and that the Ndebele lived in the Pretoria area when the Whites (presumably Hendrik Potgieter and two of his followers, the Bronkhorst brothers) arrived in the area. This information contradicts anthropological and archaeological evidence (Van Vuuren in Middleton and Rassan 1995:235).

The next significant development was the movement of the Bakwena tribe into the area in 1825. However, their occupancy of the area was short-lived, because a major role-player entered the scene from the east. This was Mzilikazi and his followers (Zimbabwean Ndebele are more commonly referred to as Matabele) who soon occupied the area and assimilated the Bakwena tribe in the larger Matabele kingdom.

Robert Moffat, who visited the area in 1830, found Mzilikazi on the eastern bank of the Entsobothulu River (Apies River) close to Pretoria-North. In his travelogue, Dr Andrew Smith (1834:101) also indicates the location of Mzilikazi in the area north of the Magaliesberg. Becker (1962:90) refers to the Mzilikazi location on the right (eastern) bank of the Apies River north of the Magaliesberg. The name of his settlement was enKungwini which means Place of the Mist.

It must be understood that all the smaller tribes in the area were incorporated and assimilated into the powerful Matebele kingdom, probably including the splinter group from the Ndebele under their respective leaders. Mzilikazi's dominance of the area was also rather short-lived, because Dingane was bent on retribution and his forces invaded the area and threatened the continuing existence of the Matebele who were compelled to migrate further west (Andrews and Ploeger 1989:1-3).

The first Whites who settled in the area were the Bronkhorst brothers, Gerhardus Stephanus and Lucas (Peacock 1955:14). They settled in two locations close to Elandspoort and the fountains. The rest of the history that precedes the settlement of Pretoria does not have a direct bearing on the article other than that the urge for a centrally located settlement was strongly articulated by especially Ds Dirk van der Hoff and Commandant MW Pretorius. Jointly they put pressure on the former South African Republic which eventually promulgated the settlement of Pretoria. Variations of the name Pretoria were initially used such as Pretorium and Pretoriusdorp, but soon the name of the new settlement was accepted as Pretoria (Nienaber 1971:331).

According to the 1858 Constitution Potchefstroom was the capital of the South African Republic and because of the central location of Pretoria, it was used as the seat of the Volksraad. During the British occupation of 1877-1881 Pretoria was acknowledged by Shepstone as the capital of the former Transvaal. After self-government had been reclaimed, the 1858 Constitution came into effect which meant that the status quo was restored (Peacock 1955:14).

During the pre-Union phase (1902-1910) Pretoria was de facto accepted as the capital of South Africa. However, the de jure status was confirmed in 1910, when the Union Constitution (section 18 of the Zuid-Afrika Wet) was adopted.

3. THE LEGACY OF NAME-CHANGING IN SOUTH AFRICA

It is widely known that South Africa has an unfortunate legacy of name changes. This is partly the result of short-term political opportunism of which various

examples exist in South Africa. This is one of the paramount reasons for changing names, but not the only reason.

It must be understood that name changes could also be the result of the fact that different names exist for the same area or place which is predominantly the result of different groups attaching names to basically the same area or place. In the latter case the changing of names may be a way of correcting history.

Name changes could also take place because the previous domestic names were corrupted. This process also happened in Zimbabwe where local names had been corrupted and then corrected to its original form. For example, Ikwelo to Gwelo and then back to Ikwelo, Mutare to Umtali and back to Mutare, and Amatobos to Matopos and back to Mutare again (Fuller 2003:105).

It is important to distinguish between the different processes; the one is a legitimate reason to correct incorrect place names, while the other is an opportunistic reason aimed at political gain.

There exist many examples of double names for the same area or place. To illustrate this, black people will refer to the area on the banks of the Valsch River as Maokeng (the place of the Acacia trees) while white inhabitants will refer to it as the settlement Kroonstad (Serfontein 1980:25). Is it really a matter of two names for the same place, or is it rather a matter of one name for an area and the other a name for the settlement (in that area)? This initial explanation could be superimposed on the Tshwane/Pretoria situation because this could also be a matter of Tshwane (an area) and Pretoria (a place). This aspect will be dealt with in more detail in the concluding section of the article.

South Africa has an unhappy legacy of political name changes which unfortunately seems to be duplicated by the ANC-controlled national, provincial and local governments since the National Party government lost control of political power in the country.

The wave of Afrikaner nationalism that swept through South Africa during the symbolic 1938 Ossewa trek was accompanied by the changing of street names to celebrate the occasion. Afterwards almost every little town and city on the route was able to boast with a Voortrekker Street. (See **Gedenkboek van die ossewaens op die pad van Suid-Afrika** by Dirk Mostert.) Historical events that predate the original name(s), were swept of the chart. This undermines the permanency of the original name.

Many such examples exist all over South Africa, for example, some of the first streets in Bloemfontein were named John, Elizabeth and Henry after the children of the first Resident of the town, major HD Warden. John Street was a historical street that bisects Bloemfontein from east to west and was in existence for almost a hundred years, before it was enthusiastically replaced in 1938 by the almost generic name of Voortrekker Street (Schoeman 1980:278).

Poor judgement in name changes can result in a lot of friction between culture groups and this was undoubtedly illustrated by various examples from the 1938 era. One such an example was when General Kemp, without any prior indication or pre-warning, decided to change the name Roberts Heights to Voortrekkerhoogte (Ligthelm and Barnard 2004:78-91). This hampered the relationship between the different culture groups, particularly the Afrikaans and English communities, and did nothing to narrow the gap between them or to contribute to the process of nation-building.

4. THE RATIONALE FOR CHANGING THE NAME OF PRETORIA

The thrust of the argument for the name change to Tshwane is that the intention is to correct a historical inaccuracy, because the name Tshwane has historical legitimacy over the name Pretoria.

However, the counter argument which the article supports, is that the name-changing process is not a historical, but rather a political process. The motive for the name change lies in the nature of politics and not in the correction of a historical inaccuracy or in historical legitimacy. The argument is therefore that the rationale for the name change should be exposed for what it is: the application of power politics.

The inconclusiveness of proving historically that a place, and not an area, was named Tshwane is apparent from the lack of sufficient hard evidence. If one adopts the historical approach and tries to legitimise the name change deductively, the result will be seriously compromised. The cold fact is that the history of the area before 1855 is inconclusive and not sufficient to support a name change.

It is conceivable that a broad consensus exists on a few historical aspects. Firstly, it seems probable that a Chief Tshwane with his followers had settled for a period of time in the Moot area. But it must be emphasised that this is a reference to an area, and not a place as a substantial settlement like a village or a town.

Secondly, it must also be acknowledged that in 1855 there was an undisputed juristic act to found a town which was called Pretoria. From this juristic act specific rights and duties could naturally be deferred. This aspect was accepted de jure and de facto nationally as well as internationally over decades and centuries.

It is accepted that arguments will be levelled that the name Tshwane should prevail because it historically pre-dates the name Pretoria. (In the journal **Pretoriana**, July 1955, the point was made that although the Europeans commemorate Andries and MW Pretorius by calling the city Pretoria, the Bantu (sic) refer to the Pretoria area as Tshwane.)

However, there is an important difference between a locality/area and a specific place such as a town or a city. This distinction must be integral to any approach to name changes.

The mayoral task team's report on the historical merits of a name change is sketchy. Despite the fact that the task team indicates (Report 2005:39) that oral evidence should be supported and complemented by other sources, strong reliance is placed on the evidence of Peter Tshwane. His claim of Ndebele settlements south of the Magaliesberg range is being disputed by anthropologists who did extensive research on this aspect. At issue is his claim that the Ndebele already had settlements in the area when the Whites arrived. Mzilikazi and his followers absorbed all the smaller clans in the area and those who stayed were assimilated by the Matabeles. Various accounts to verify this exist in written records from historians such as Peter Becker, missionaries (Moffat) and travellers (Andrew Smith).

To compound the legitimacy of the name Tshwane for the area, many uncertainties exist, not only about the usage of the name Tshwane, but also the meaning of the name and in connection to which locality it was used. The popular belief is that Tshwane is the Tswana name for a small ape and this explains why the name "Apies River" is used to refer to the river that originates in the Fountains area and drains into the Bon Accord dam. However, this is disputed by language experts in an article in **Nomina Africana** 1994. They explained that there is no linguistic evidence to support this and that the word Tshwane refers in fact rather to a black cow. This is supported by Ellenberger (1937:1-72) who also indicates that various localities in the old Transvaal possessed the name Tshwane. Dr Jan Boeyens, an anthropologist, also published a study on place names and stated that in the 1950s Roosspruit (Elands River) was referred to as Tswane or Tshwane.

It is obvious that it will be impossible to prove conclusively that a "city" with the name Tshwane existed historically in the pre-historical period in the Moot area.

If there is insufficient evidence to support a name change for Pretoria and also other name changes in South Africa, what then is the compelling reason for changing the names of towns and cities?

The reason for the name change is located in the nature of power politics, rather than within the ambit of correcting historical inaccuracies.

The classic definition of the concept of politics by Harold Laswell is that politics always concerns "who gets what, when and how" in society (Laswell 1936:115). A second definition with a similar perspective is the one by David Easton who sees politics as the "authoritative allocation of values" (Easton 1965:50).

The values that Easton had in mind are not moral abstract ideals but (material) benefits and opportunities which people desire. The reason why politics is all-pervasive in societies is that resources (for distribution) are limited. Commodities such as wealth, comfort and status are invariably scarce and unevenly distributed (Jackson and Jackson 1997:7). It is therefore inevitable that conflicts will arise between individuals and groups as they attempt to satisfy their desire for attaining these scarce values.

Power is the fundamental aspect of politics or, as Jackson and Jackson (1997:9) put it, power permeates politics. Used in the context of power politics it is an approach to politics based on the assumption that the pursuit of power is the principal human goal (Heywood 2000:142).

To obtain power is the ultimate achievement in a political system because this enables the bearer of power to have the monopoly to decide who gets what when and how, or the right to decide about how to authoritatively distribute scarce values to society.

The central aspect of power politics which the article wants to apply to the process of name change is that the bearer of power is in a position to make decisions about the allocation or re-allocation of scarce values in society. Jackson and Jackson (1997:7) state: "Those who control penalties and rewards are best equipped to allocate resources in competitive circumstances."

In the struggle for democracy in South Africa many aspiring people made a number of sacrifices in the process of liberation. When the leader's cadre is elected and elevated to important positions in society an obligation is created between the leader and his or her followers.

In official terminology this is known as clientelism; a special relation which was created between unequals. According to Thompson (2000:111) this is a mutually beneficial association between the powerful leader(s) and the weak. The patron can extend a variety of resources to the "clients" who supported him like public office (salary, access to the state) and monetary means. In return the client offers support and deference to help legitimise the patron's elevated position. This relationship of clientelism, in other words, is a form of a political contract which creates mutual responsibilities and duties.

Thompson (2000:112) reiterates the importance of clientelism because it provides political channels between the leadership and the base which represents a limited form of political exchange and also to a small degree brings civil society back in the arena. He describes the process as the "trickle down" effect which ensures that his patronage permeates the whole of the society. The more people (of his or her support group) feel that they benefit from the (new) political system, the more legitimacy and support the regime will receive (Thompson 2000:115).

Chabal (1999:452) refers to the same relationship, but coins it neo-patrimonialism and defines the process as the redistribution of resources from patrons to their clients. Chabal (1999:452) explains how politics (the state) in Africa diverges from the West. Politics is basically about the control of resources. He argues that political élites behave according to the norms of political legitimation and representation inherent in the neo-patrimonial system. According to Chabal (1999:452) the leadership use their official position to fulfil their (unofficial) obligations to the clients who elected them. It is also a way of meeting the demands on which their power and standing as rulers rest.

Applied to the process of the name change of Pretoria it is obvious that it is similar to the control and the distribution of resources from political élites to their respective clients and power base. In a way it is strikingly similar to the distribution or the redistribution of resources. Some of the resources are material in nature such as positions in the bureaucracy, while others are more symbolic in nature such as name changes.

Naturally certain symbolic values are attached to names and if names are transferred from one group to another it alienates the values of one group and rewards the other group.

If it is then a political choice, people should be informed accordingly. Political leaders who want to change place names should explain their *modus operandi*. They should indicate that the name change is the result of the allocation of resources to their followers or a way to reward their supporters. To try to manipulate history to substantiate name changes is counter-productive and strikes at the heart of nation-building.

The process of changing the name of Pretoria is radically different from the way the Mpumalanga Geographic Names Committee approached the matter (**Star**: 15 August 2005). According to the MEC for Arts and Culture for the province, Me Nomsa Mtsweni, the new name for Witbank will be Emalaheni (isiZulu), the place of Coal. Mtsweni does not beat around the bush why the name change is necessary: "The process of name changes is about rewriting our history and preserving our heritage ... it is about reclaiming and restoring our dignity" (**Star**: 15 August 2005).

The Mpumalanga Geographic Names Committee, unlike the Tshwane Metro Council, did not employ any historians, anthropologists or archaeologists to substantiate historical arguments for the proposed changes (**Star**: 15 August 2005). It is a matter of a political process as explained above and not history.

5. NATION-BUILDING OR A PROCESS OF NATIONALISING? - THE EFFECT OF NAME CHANGE

In a country where transformation is taking place national identity and group identities are always contentious issues. Symbols and names have specific meaning and value to different groups and tampering with that which they hold dear is not without certain consequences. Any enforcement of the majority's symbols and names may amount to a process of nationalisation.

In transforming a society such as that of South Africa the question could rightfully be asked whether the political élites are conducting a process of nationalisation or a process of nation-building.

Liz and Stephan (1996:95) characterise nationalising policies as follows:

- Restrictions are placed on the non-official languages in civil education and the mass media.

- Citizenship laws are exclusive leading to the over-domination of the titular nation in political office.
- Members of the non-titular nation are gradually forced out of the state bureaucracy due to the extended usage of the official language.
- Ethnic factors are influential in the economy.
- The legal system favours the customs practices and institutions of the titular nation.

In other words, the majority group is favoured and the minority groups are forced into the larger community by a process of enforced nationalisation. A state is non-nationalising if it adopts multicultural policies which are the opposite of nationalising.

6. CONCLUSION

The article discussed the reasons for possible name changes in South Africa. It is evident that two broad reasons exist. The first of these reasons is to correct the corruption of names and if there is compelling historical evidence of a name that precedes the existing name, which should then be changed. The second reason is part of the fundamental nature of (power) politics and that is to change names, because the bearer of power has the authority to do it.

The envisaged name change from Pretoria to Tshwane, by the Tshwane Metro council, is an example of the latter reason. The proposed name change is a permutation of power politics. It was further alleged in the article that this strategy will be detrimental to the ongoing process of nation-building in South Africa and will further alienate minority groups.

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