# Ethno-linguistic Analysis of Names and Naming in Northern Chasu

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## Abstract

*The current study was exploratory in design. It sought to find out the criteria of naming and the meanings of names of Chasu speaking speech community belonging to the north dialect (excluding the Gweno). It involved Suya, Sofe, Ngofi, Shana, Vungi, Mbagha, Ikamba, Kiramweni, Lacha, and Sangi clans. The study was guided by Riemer's (2010:45) Referential Theory of Meaning. The study involved 62 adults as the respondents who were purposively sampled. Structured and unstructured interviews were used during data collection. This study employed an interpretative approach for analysis of qualitative data. The data obtained were carefully studied and categorised by considering features they shared. The collected data were analysed and explained qualitatively. The findings have shown that the Northern Chasu speech community has rich and diverse criteria for giving names such as (memorable) life experience, mannerisms, birth circumstances, seasons, physical appearance, and religious/cultural beliefs. However, some names have assumed arbitrariness since the original meaning have either been completely lost or does not reflect the bearer. Also, there has been nativisation of foreign names via such morphological processes like clipping, sound insertion, substitution and invention.*

## Ikisiri

Utifiti huu taaridhi ulilenga kubaini vigezo vya utoaji wa majina na maana za majina miongoni mwa jamiilugha ya wazungumzaji wa Chasu wa lahaja ya kaskazini (isipokuwa Wagweno). Utafiti ulihusisha koo za Wasuya, Wasofe, Wangofi, Washana, Wavungi, Wambaga, Wakamba, Wakiramweni, Walacha na Wasangi. Utafiti huu uliongozwa na Nadharia ya Maana ya Reiner (2010:45). Utafiti ulihusisha watafitiwa 62 ambao ni watu wazima walioteuliwa kwa kutumia mbinu ya usampulishaji lengwa. Utafiti umetumia mahojiano rasmi na yasiyo rasmi. Data zilizopatikana zilichambuliwa kwa umakini mkubwa na kupangwa katika makundi ya kidhima na kufafanuliwa kwa mrengo usiokuwa wa kiidadi. Matokeo yameonesha kwamba wanajamiilugha wa lahaja ya Chasu cha Kaskazini wana vigezo vyenye utajiri mkubwa wa majina katika kategoria za uzoefu wa maisha, tabia, mazingira ya kuzaliwa, majira, mwonekano wa mpewa jina, na imani za kidini. Hata hivyo,

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baadhi ya majina yamekuwa ya kidhahania kwa sababu maana zake  asilia zimepotea au haziendani na tabia za mwenye jina. Halikadhalika, kumekuwa na uasilishaji wa majina ya kigeni kwa michakato mbalimabili ya kimofolojia kama vile kufupisha, kuongeza au kubadilisha sauti na kuunda.

## 1.0 Introduction

The study on naming is referred to as onomastics, which Nigro (2015) defines as the naming of all things, including place names (toponyms) and personal names (anthroponyms). Given names, often called first names, and surnames, often called last names, as well as middle names usually derive from words with distinct origins. Nigro cites the most common reasons to explore the field of personal names in onomastics as being for genealogical research and for choosing a name for a child, a view that this study also shares.

Mphande (2006) observes that, names are the most meaningful words of any language. This is because they are an important part of the language inventory as they name the environment and help in making distinctions between animals and plants. Names assist in distinguishing places, things and people.  People's identity may depend on the names they use. In many societies people bear more than a single name. People may use the first name, the second name and the third name, which have a tendency of being used as a chain to differentiate one person from another (Waziri, 2000).

According to Bölcskei (2015), proper names are not just simple labels referring to their denotation, but have a connotative meaning. The meaning of a proper name incorporates the speakers' demanding knowledge about the thing bearing the name. This understanding, elaborated mentally in various degrees of detail, are stored in cognitive domains comprising of a set of features involving the speakers perceiving, abstracting, schematising and categorising their relevant everyday experiences in linguistic structure and the semantic identification in naming people.

As for personal names, these reflect the language their bearers speak. According to Juma (2018), names given relate to the sociolinguistic behaviour, beliefs, activities carried out and life experiences surrounding the language users. However, despite the fact that naming is a natural phenomenon in all human societies, the process of naming differs from culture to culture. Names may carry denotative or connotative meanings, Helleland, Ore and Wikstrøm (2012) argue that names are of paramount important part in individual's language and personal vocabulary because of the meanings conveyed. Names are increasingly being approached from a cognitive and mental point of view. Place names contribute to the feeling of belonging to an area and to a social group within the particular area.

A fair amount of research has been conducted in this knowledge area in different aspects such as sociolinguistic dimension, cultural and spiritual dimension, gender dimension and linguistic analysis dimension. In the sociolinguistic aspect, Gebauer, Leary and Neberich (2012) explored whether negative first names could cause interpersonal neglect. The study 1 (N = 968) compared extremely negativelynamed online-daters with extremely positively named online-daters. The

study 2 (N = 4,070) compared less extreme groups—namely, online-daters with somewhat unattractive versus somewhat attractive first names. Study 3 (N = 6,775) compared online-daters with currently popular versus currently less popular first names, while controlling for name-popularity at birth. Across all studies, negatively named individuals were more neglected by other online-daters, as indicated by fewer first visits to their dating profiles. Koopman (2017) explored surname dynamics in avian nomenclature focusing on roles surnames play in formal scientific nomenclature where they appear both in the vernacular names and the scientific names. It was noted that in the former usage the surnames were used as a way of honouring someone in the ornithological world while the latter usage refers to the person who first identified and named a few species. Similarly, Babane and Chauke's (2017) study focused on socio-cultural aspects of Xitsonga dog names and they found that among the Vatsonga people and their customs, dog names are not just for identity but rather they have hidden meanings, including drawing attention to and addressing problems in the family or community at large. Sercombe et al. (2014), too, investigated reasons for adoption of non-heritage names among 156 Chinese students of English Linguistics majors and kinds of functions that these names among Chinese students and the kinds of functions these names are seen to play. The findings indicated that most students used non-heritage names which appeared to serve interrelated roles that could also be associated with Chinese nicknaming. Katakami (1997) explored personal names and modes of addressing among the Mbeere, describes the basic principles of naming the new-born after another person. Katakami's study explains the importance of naming a baby after its grandparents. The naming in this community is done because it is believed that persons are the same and alternate generation-sets are regarded to be in the same group. The major factors in naming a child after grandparents are its sex, its place in the birth order, and the time of parent's marriage negotiation. Swilla (2000), on her part, studied names in Chindali. She found that among the Ndali children are named alternatively after the maternal or paternal kinship members, starting with grandparents. The first child bears the name of a maternal relative, a grandmother or grandfather according to the sex of the child. The first-born (boy) is named after his maternal grandfather. The second (daughter) is named after her paternal grandmother. In similar viewpoint is the study by Manyasa (2009) on names and naming among Kisukuma language community which indicated that there are different situations for naming people which include: naming by father's or mother's first name, naming by inheriting an ancestor's name, naming by legendary personalities and naming through traditional dances.

As for the cultural and spiritual dimension of onomastics, Ngade (2012) examined the role of names in constructing identity and especially how this is achieved following the historical and cultural background of the Bakossi naming practice. The paper demonstrates how this age-old naming practice has undergone some deviation. He noted that what Bakossi names stand for is a scenario of uninterrupted succession of

family, society, natural environment (animal, plants, fields, hills), and historical events which form a relationship between culture and power. Mheta, Mangoya and Makondo (2017), on their part, made an exegesis of Shona personal names with spiritual significance. The researchers collected data from a names list found in onomastics articles and books. They analyzed the data using Halidayan systemic functional framework. The findings revealed that what are called Christian names are in some cases not Christian but rather some personal names that allude to some Shona spirituality and beliefs.

On the realm of linguistic analysis, Maimane and Mathonsi (2017) examined phonological adaptations of foreign names into Sesotho where it was noted that the natives changed the pronunciation and orthography of the names of foreign origin and thereby causing linguistic changes and shifts resulting in the new pronunciation, orthography and semantic changes.

Some scholars were concerned with the social semantics of names and naming focusing on gender. Barry (2014), for example, explored how unisex names were given to babies born in Pennsylvania in 1990 - 2010. Unisex names were divided into two types of gender preference or consistency. The study revealed that females more often than males were given a name that was consistently more popular for the opposite gender. As for Chen (2015), his analysis of names of 248 of students studying at a Taiwan University with the aim of examining choices and patterns of English names revealed that female names were significantly more likely than male names to end in one of the three vowels, a, e or o while male names were more likely to end in consonants. Furthermore, monosyllabic names were more common to both sexes while homophonization was a common phenomenon in both sexes as well. Similarly, Obasi (2016) assessed namesake patterns in rural, South-Central Nebraska by examining 841 birth announcements printed in a local newspaper during 1994-2014. They found that male babies were more likely to be named after their paternal relatives than maternal relatives. The findings suggest that namesake may be a way of preserving familiar connections within rural setting.

The scholars who made linguistic analysis of personal names were mostly delimited to phonology, morphology and semantics. For example, Raper (2017) investigated phonological and semantic processes of adaptation of Bushman toponyms by Bantu and European languages, including folk etymology and associative reinterpretation. The identified, inter alia, presence of fossilized and disguised Bushman common names embedded in the toponyms. Baitani (2010) analysed systematically the morphemes of personal names in Ruhaya with their semantic bearings. Baitani states that, names of beasts, stings of insects, flora and fauna are used when naming people even though they have negative connotations. Another study on Ruhaya is conducted by Rubanza (2000) based on the linguistic creativity of Haya personal names. Rubanza (p. 11) reports that "Haya names are typically meaningful. Such meanings surround circumstances of birth, family continuity, family friction, conflict in society in general, and in relation based on family structure".

The studies above testify that the research on onomastics has attracted research attention widely and intensively. However, not much has been done in the Chasu speech community in this realm of names and naming save for Omary (1970) on circumstance and criteria of name meaning in Chasu, Juma (2018) who studied socio-cultural factors, reasons which influence the formation of personal names among Southern Chasu dialect, the meanings associated with those names and analysing morphological forms and patterns found in those names and Sebonde (2020) who focused on personal naming practices and modes of address in the Chasu speech community. These three studies were conducted in and on Southern Chasu dialect, popular as 'Kimpare'. The current study focussed on Northern Chasu dialect seeking to explore the interplay between criteria of naming and the meaning of the names in the light of gender and foreign influence (notably religion).

**2.0 Theoretical Framework**
The study was guided by Semantic Theory (Referential Theory of Meaning). According to Riemer (2010:45), the referential/denotation theory of meaning broke the definitional circle by emphasizing the referent side of the sense/referent pair. Another way out of the circle is to identify meanings with concepts: the metalanguage definitions of an object language meaning. Concepts can be seen as a way of talking about the basic constituents of thought. Prinz (2002: 1) reports, "without concepts, there would be no thoughts. Concepts are the basic timber of our mental lives". In this regard the concept agreed in mind simplifies the identification of names and the meanings conveyed. According to the Referential Theory of Meaning, the meaning of a word is the object it refers to in the external world. That actual object is the referent. The connection between the words or expressions and their referents is through the process of thought. The words or expressions are just symbols.

One major criticism of this theory is that, there are many words without physical objects they refer to. Such words are 'bad luck', 'selfish', 'sweet, 'love' and the like which do not have the concrete qualities of nouns or may not have referents. Again, polysemous words (i.e. words with more than one meaning) may have the additional problem of having more than one referent. Items that belong to groups may not have physical objects that are indistinguishable. Every sub-group has specific feature. Moreover, individual members of the smallest sub-groups also have their identities. Therefore, we cannot talk about absolute identification for referents. The Referential Theory may not have a way to explain the meaning of words in the categories of adjectives, adverbs, prepositions and conjunctions (Ogbulogo, 2011).

However, apart from the weaknesses raised, the theory is still relevant for this study because personal names (proper names) carry the exceptional meaning depending on the concept carried. Eckardt (2006: 64) reports that, "the world contains individuals and objects to be talked about. This seems unproblematic as it matches well with our

everyday experience". This theory enlightens that, the meaning and reasons for giving people's names depend on the belongings they refer to in the community.

## 3.0 Study Methodology
This section handles methods that were employed in the study, namely; study design, study area, sample and sampling, instrumentation and data handling.

## 3.1 Study Design
The current study was exploratory in design seeking to find out the criteria of naming and the meanings of names of Chasu speaking speech community belonging to the north dialect (excluding the Gweno given its linguistic peculiarity). The clans from whom the study was conducted are Suya, Sofe, Ngofi, Shana,Vungi, Mbaga, Ikamba, Kiramweni, Lacha, and Sangi.

## 3.2 Study Area
The study was conducted at Ngujini ward in Mwanga district, Kilimanjaro region. The ward is in the highland interior of the district and its speakers are not influenced much by other languages like Swahili and English because most of people speak Chasu as their mother tongue and their first language. The researcher used inhabitants who were born and raised within Chasu speaking community. They are 'Vaathu' (i.e. native speakers of Chasu) who were familiar with the targeted language, which helped the researcher to get the profound information.

## 3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques
The study used 62 adults as the respondents. The researcher used a purposive sampling of the people all of whom were aged over 30 since they were known to be knowledgeable enough to give the data needed. These participants were of varying educational levels though the majorities were primary school leavers who were earning their living through agro-based mini businesses within the ward. Out of 62 study participants, there were 39 males and 23 females. The informants were drawn from Ngujini and Chanjale villages, both belonging to Ngujini ward.

## 3.4 Data Collection Methods
Structured and unstructured interview were used during data collection. According to Silverman (2001), most research within the social and human sciences use interviews as the primary means of data collection. The method is neutral hence facilitating the facts and ensuring the neutrality of the interviewer. Interview also helps to explain and elaborate the questions to interviewees and answer questions that rise during the interview session.

The researcher used structured questions to 30 respondents while the rest of them participated in unstructured interview because they felt more comfortable informally listening to the researcher and orally responding to his questions.

**3.5 Data Handling**
This study employed an interpretative approach for analysis of qualitative data. The data obtained were carefully studied and categorised by considering the features they shared. After identifying and counting the names, the process of grouping was done in order to understand the reasons for awarding such names. The data were translated from Northern Chasu to English then sociolinguistic, semantic characteristics of the names were written in summary and presented in descriptive manner. The collected data were analysed and explained qualitatively. This included grouping of data thematically and coding them according to their contents. The discussion of the findings was done descriptively. The names were summarised in tabular form, whereby their meaning, the morpheme found in names and the reasons for awarding names were explained.

**4.0 Findings**
The findings are organised around five major themes or criteria: life experience, mannerisms, memorable life experience, physical appearance, nicknaming and religious beliefs. The last criterion of religious/cultural beliefs is unique in the sense that it has more diverse subthemes. In this section we examine and discuss each theme and subtheme in detail.

**4.1 Life Experience**
People start working on their names as they join a particular speech community. Therefore, our names carry within them specific, localized histories of personhood and belonging, both collective and singular. Rorty (1969) adds that human ways of life are both social and personal, and naming is one of the central aspects through which the two imply each other.

Mphande (n.d.) observes that among many African cultures, inter alia, a name tells a lot about the individual that it signifies, the language from which it is drawn, and the society that ascribes it. It also signifies the position of the name's bearer in society, and the collective history and life experiences of the people surrounding the individual. So we were interested in the life experience of some Chasu name bearers linking them to their life experience or their predecessors from whom they inherited the names.

Virtually every member of Chasu native community is part of cultural and familiar lineage and their being part of that string is by being named after a grandparent (matrilineal or patrilineal). According to Arthur (2016), in Africa, among ways to name a child is using names of senior members of the family such that they continue to live on through their grandchildren.

In the current study we gathered 36 examples of inherited names and find out their meanings as summarized in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Life Experience Names that were Inherited among the Chasu People**

| Name | Meaning | Sex | Name | Meaning | Sex |
|------|---------|-----|------|---------|-----|
| *Nanzia* | born beside a path | F | *Majani* | grass | M |
| *Chanzia* | born by wayside | M | *Makore* | logs | F |
| *Themboja* | one who plays traditional dance | M | *Mathewa* | one that gets descended on | M |
| *Champoa* | let the dawn come peacefully | | *Mbangani* | of the cave | M |
| *Kaduri* | a small medicinal plant | M | *Mbanji* | circumciser | F |
| *Kahunduka* | little one has returned | M | *Mganywa* | one that receives charity | M |
| *Kahungo* | a small leaf | M | *Mkindi* | one from Kindi (lower part of mountain top) | M |
| *Kaingwa* | one that has been given unto | M | *Mnaro* | not known | M |
| *Kashamba* | small farm | M | *Mwanambure* | a child of mbure | M |
| *Katue* | small one that has settled in | M | *Nakiete* | one born on market day | F |
| *Kavugha* | small one that has gone sterile | M | *Namdawa* | on who survives by medicine | F |
| *Kibiriti* | cigarette lighter | M | *Narindwa* | I have been protected | F |
| *Kidundi* | a pathetic little person surviving on 'idundi' | M | *Natujwa* | I have been consoled | F |
| *Kidundi* | one that survives on traditional porridge | M | *Ngumbidhi* | one who denounces locusts | F |
| *Kiende* | not known | M | *Teendwa* | one who is not wanted | M |
| *Kinangwede* | pitiful one with 'gwede' | M | *Laghara* | it has gone stale | M |
| *Kiraghenja* | one that still helps | F | *Latoa* | pathetic ugly one that was accidentally picked up | M |
| *Kithaka* | a bush | M | | | F |

Findings in Table 1 above show that there is comprehensive and highly diverse meanings of names, ranging from plant names (e.g. Kithaka, Kahungo, Majani and Makore), life survival experience (e.g. Kiraghenja, Kinangwede, Teendwa, Narindwa and Ngubidhi), foodstuff related experiences (e.g. Kidundi, Laghara, Namdawa and Mwanambure) and migrations and habitat (e.g. Katue, Mkindi and Mbangani). In short, names of ancestors that were being used to name children reflect diversity of socio-historical and cultural milieu of their day and indicated complexity of special and temporal indigenous world view.

Lévinas (1996) observes that naming systems reflect the fact that humans are called into humanity by other humans in a previously inhabited world: alterity is always anterior to identity and between the two there is no symmetry. In other words, as put by Marriott (1976), plurality is recurrent in human life; thus human singularity is never

stable, never complete, and it emerges within inter-subjectivity out of the contagion and contrast of different anterior singularities.

A similar study by Katakami (1997) noted that the Mbeere in Limpopo, South Africa, name the new-born after another person, and this reflects the person's place in the birth order. More recently, Koma (2013) analysed given and inherited names among the Northern Sotho speaking people in Moletjie and Sekhukhune and noted that names are some of the most important things in people's lives and that the people in Moletjie and Sekhukhune bestow names to people based on ancestors, totems, marriage and initiation schools.

## 4.2 Nicknaming

Nicknaming is defined by *Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1978) as giving a name to someone, especially by their friends or family, that is not their real name and is often connected with what they look like or something they have done (cited by Lakaw, 2006). Nicknames, in this study, are in the sense used by de Klerk and Bosch (1997) that they are coinages given to a bearer to serve a specific purpose and it signals the level of formality that a speaker and a hearer share and are indicative of the attitude that the speaker has towards the bearer. In the current study the names that were of this category are summarised in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Nicknaming among the Chasu People**

| Name | Meaning | Sex | Name | Meaning | Sex |
|------|---------|-----|------|---------|-----|
| *Iguranzighe* | locust catcher | M | *Kinenekejo* | one that tends to 'biker' | M |
| *Irira* | cattle pathway | M | *Kireri* | maize pollen | M |
| *Kabora* | small pretty girl | M | *Kitururu* | smoky | M |
| *Kagothwe* | small rat/mouse | M | *Kochako* | take yours | M |
| *Kajia* | small shrub for basketry | M | *Maheta* | one who likes throwing arms around | M |
| *Kambewe* | a small traditional shooting gun | F | *Maronga* | one that likes straightening things | M |
| *Kapwile* | she who walks awkwardly | M | *Mkwakwa* | one who chews loudly | M |
| *Karigo* | small banana-like tree | M | *Mnyindo* | one that uses hammer a lot | M |
| *Kashundu* | one little but blunt weeding hoe | F | *Mthami* | one that is fond of migrating | M |
| *Katema* | small one that cuts/chops | M | *Nacharo* | one who cherishes promises | F |
| *Kavugha* | kind of small grassy plant for feeding rabbits | F | *Nakuduika* | I have a malfunctioning waist | F |
| *Kiandiko* | what gets written | M | *Namaleche* | bean stalks | F |

| | on | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Kidaavuri* | one that hates vuli (short rain season) | M | *Namatha* | one who was born on litigation day | F |
| *Kidaisho* | The one which tend to detest/hate | M | *Nashera* | one that tends to sneer | M |
| *Kihara* | one that tends to scratch | M | *Thengathu* | one that enjoys going to parties | M |
| *Kimbuchule* | one that is peelable | M | *Kikuji* | one that is hard/solid | M |
| *Maheta* | one who likes throwing arms around | M | *Kilambeu* | one that eats seeds | M |

Table 2 shows that there was a wide variety of the meanings of names given to Chasu name bearers due to their mannerisms only that these were inherited names. Most dominant mannerisms are those related to emotions of the persons such as *Maheta, Nashera, Maronga* and *Kinenekejo*, followed by likes and preferences such as *Kidaisho, Kihara, Kikuji* and *Kapwile*. A third category are names were related to others' remarks of favour and/or disfavour such as *Kimbuchule, Kiandiko* and *Kilambeu*. The last group is related to outgoingness and partying e.g. *Thengathu* and *Mthami*.


Other criteria include:
- *Mode of table etiquettes*: e.g. *Maposho* ('one that loves eating many different foods') and *Machaku* ('one that chews uncouthly').
- *Social depreciation of a person's behavior*: e.g. *Chadhuka* ('a derogatively pitiful one'), *Chakubanga* ('one without prudence'), *Mbukwa* ('hard- to-bend shrub') for one hard to convince, *Lethioma* ('Never drying up') given to a person who brews and sells local brew all days of the week and 24 hours of the day, *Legwa* ('one who often stumbles and falls'-after getting drunk), *Ibau* ('a hyena') given to a person who is a suspect of witch practice'.
- *Extent of verbosity and peculiar rhetoric*: e.g. *Ibaghia* (one that is fiery in her rhetoric).
- *Preference for healing through herbal practice*: e.g. *Nakashari* (small shrub for herbal medicine), *Karamba* (small creeping plant), *Kanzoke* (little amount of honey), and Kagonji (small sheep).
- *Liking to look fat*: e.g. *Ifuta* (big fat one: i.e. one who grows fat due to liking eating animal fats); *Majithi*- 'pig pestles'- for preferring to look fat and walking springy.
- *Behaving in curious and dodgy way*: e.g. *Kanyawi*- small kitten- for their liking to eave- drop and *Nalukwi*- a kind of snake that is cunning; given to someone who is a gossiper.

- *Over preference or inclination to particular skin colour*: e.g. *Kajiru*- 'small black one'- one feeling proud of being black, and *Naijiru*- one, big black one;- given to people who born black, but also not looking handsome or beautiful.

The findings above are suggestive to which members of Chasu speech community are highly creative and dynamic in nicknaming their members depending on various modes of behaviour. Some studies elsewhere are in line with the current findings. For example, de Klerk and Bosch (1997) studied nicknames of English-speaking adolescents in South Africa focussing their origins and analyzing them in terms of the conditions under which they were coined and used. They found that English adolescents have a very sensitive understanding of the complex and shifting set of social relationships underlying the choice and use of nicknames and that the nicknames offer up-to-date insights into social relationships which are not so evident in the more static, permanent aspects of language. So, one sees that for one to be nicknamed, one has to behave in a manner that is peculiar or eccentric beyond the normal world view of the speech community.

Another study was by Mambwe and Da Costa (2016) who examined nicknames of selected national football teams in Southern Africa in terms of their connotative meanings, their derivation and how they reflect a relationship between society and the world in which they are found. They found that most of the nicknames considered suggest desired characteristics that connote certain qualities about a team. However, these nicknames did not always reflect the performance of the teams in question but rather merely expressed the desires of the fans. The nicknames also reveal the deep rooted passion for the game of football in Africa and its unifying effect. Furthermore, the nicknames seemed to be used in order to bond fans with respective teams which in turn are used to express the pride and patriotism that fans associate with their respective nations. As for Sobane (2009), he studied nicknames students gave to their lecturer using a total of 32 nicknames in which 17 of the names were borne by males while 15 were borne by females. He noted that all the nicknames served a referential function. The nicknames were also divisible into two categories depending on their communicative purpose. 28 of the nicknames were found to have negative connotations while only four were found to have neutral connotations.

## 4.3 Memorable Life Experience
Life experience is yet another signpost for names and naming. According to Agyekum (2006), names frequently describe the characteristics of the named individual, which explains why people are able to acquire new names, appellations and by-names based on their personal achievements. These may also relate to the places of birth, period or time, festivals or sacred days, manner of birth, etc. According to Blum (1997), these names are viewed as governing the child's fate in some ways, they should harmonise

with the time and often place of the child's birth. These are categorised into the following:

### 4.3.1 Seasons and Events

Names, as observed by Ansu-Kyereme (2000) reflect the cultural, social, ideological, and ethnic backgrounds of the bearer and the society at large, personal names can reflect on the events and circumstances experienced in people's lives and tell stories of historic significance. Additionally, the type of a name can be motivated by the situations and conditions connected with the birth of a new-born.

The names in this study that are associated with seasons and events are: *Thembua* (for males) and *Nambua* (for females), born during rainy season, *Theishika* (for males) and *Naishika* (for females), born during long rainy season, and *Thevuri* (for males) and *Navuri* (for females) who were born during short rainy season. As for events of hunger, there is *Thenzota* (for males) and *Nzota* (for females) meaning 'hunger'.

Elsewhere, Chauke (2015) studied names and naming practices among the Tsonga people in South Africa. He asserts that names are not only labels but give more insights into important social, cultural and political events at the time of birth. Similarly, Aljourour and Al-Haq's (2019) study of female names of Beni Sakhr tribe in Jordan revealed that some names were derived from the severe weather conditions; i.e. the tough climate conditions experienced by the dwellers of desert regions constituted a rich source of naming among this name category. Their analysis of Bedouin–exclusive names revealed that 20 (9.6 %) of them originate from such conditions. For example: /thlayjah/ (the female diminutive form of "snow"), /shatwah/ (of or relating to a case of rainfall), /mteyrah/ (synonym for /shtayah/ mentioned above) and /meznah/ (a piece of rain cloud).

### 4.3.2 Circumstances of Birth

This category is in concurrence with observation by Agyekum (2006) that circumstances and social contexts during the birth of a child may prompt the parents to give a name X but not Y. Thus, the meaning of one's proper name evolves through a life history imbued with a lot of transformations and may be intimately linked with the "identity concerns" of an individual or society (Goodenough, 1965: 265; Rymes, 1996: 238). Examples include, *Naisae* (born beside a shrub), *Nakio* (born at night), *Namagheri* (one born at the late hour/sunset) *Nankondo* (female) born during war time and *Senkondo* (male) one also born during war time and *Kithakeni* (one born in the bush).

The names relating to birth circumstances were also found among the Akan people, as revealed by Agyekum (2006) that such names are referred to as kradin (lit.) 'souls name' and they believe that this is a name that a person's soul offers him/her. It is the soul of the person that decides when to allow the unborn child to enter this world. It is believed that this particular day may affect his/her behaviour, fate and future. The names of the days were derived from names of deities and their particular days of

worshipping. Akan names of the days of the week show a regular pattern: name of a deity + -(a)da 'day' e.g. Kwasi-ada, Dwo-ada, Memene-ada.

## 4.4 Physical Appearance

The naming according to physical appearance is partly nicknaming but not related to name bearer's mannerisms (which is usually a volitional act). Rather it has to do with one's external physique which is either inborn or caused by such environmental factors as accident, and medical conditions. A total of 42 names were identified to belong to this category as summarised in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Chasu Names According to Physical Appearance**

| Name | Meaning | Sex | Name | Meaning | Sex |
|------|---------|-----|------|---------|-----|
| *Ibura* | ugly wild shrub | M | *Ibumbutu* | one that is plump | F |
| *Ithagha* | big brew-pot | M | *Ifuta* | big fat | M |
| *Kaboru* | small ripe banana | M | *Kabala* | a small deer | M |
| *Kajana* | little one/baby | M | *Kabau* | a small fox | M |
| *Kakore* | small piece of dry log | M | *Kachuchu* | not known | M |
| *Kalambo* | not known | M | *Kadori* | smallish one | M |
| *Kileghe* | one that is sluggish | M | *Kaguu* | small-legged | M |
| *Kilongo* | bottle top | M | *Kajiru* | small black | M |
| *Kinyongo* | an earthworm | M | *Kakono* | with a little maimed hand | M |
| *Nakadori* | Small/little one | F | *Kanyawi* | small kitten | M |
| *Nakajiru* | little black one | F | *Majithi* | big pestles | M |
| *Nakangundu* | little red one | F | *Ngodeka* | one that is tall and slender | M |
| *Namdori* | one that is smallish | F | *Mdengelu* | one that walks drunkenly | M |
| *Naijiru* | ugly black thing | M | *Mdhambwe* | one that walks as if overburdened by his body | M |

As data testify there are various examples of physical appearance such as big, unproportioned physique resembling a big traditional brew pot (e.g. *Ibura*), or bottle-top- like head appearance (e.g. *Kilongo*) and *Kakore* (one whose health makes them appear thin and dry like a small dry log). Other examples included: *Kaguu* (person so named because of one of the legs being shorter than the other), *Makusanya* (a person who loves gathering or collecting used items, even useless ones), *Mkarungu* (one with a small club- referring to a soldier or someone behaving soldierly), *Kaboru* (one who is like 'small ripe banana' in being thin and sloppy), *Mdengelu* (one who walks 'drunkenly' given to all, slender man whose walking is like someone drunk), *Ibumbutu*

(one that is plump; a name given to one that is virtually out of natural shape for overweight), *Kakono* (one that has one small, maimed hand) and *Ngodeka* (one who is tall and slender).

This group of names are so named due to:
- Liking to look fat; for example *Ifuta* (big fat one:- i.e. one who grows fat due to liking eating animal fats), *Majithi* ('pig pestles'- for preferring to look fat and walking springily).
- Behaving in curious and dodgy way; examples being; e.g. *Kanyawi* (small kitten- for their liking to eave- drop) and *Nalukwi* (a kind of snake that is cunning; given to someone who is a gossiper).
- Over preference or inclination to particular skin colour. Examples being *Kajiru* ('small black one'- one feeling proud of being black), *Mchin*a (one who tend to like Chinese foodstuffs and other material culture) and *Naijiru* (one, big black one;- given to people who born black

## 4.5  Adaptations from Foreign Religious Names

There are situation where, as Maimane and Mathensi (2017) observe, the names already exist, but in a language different from that of the native/target language (TL) speakers, the latter are sometimes confronted with some pronunciation hurdles in using some of these names. In cases like these, native/TL speakers tend to translate the names into their native language by localising the pronunciation and the orthography of the problematic names.

There were 30 names from Christianity and 3 from Islam, as summarized in Table 4 below. These are names, popular as first names, given to those who got baptised into Western religion (Christianity) or Eastern one (Islam).

**Table 4: Foreign Religious Based Names Nativised into Chasu**

| i) Adapted from Christianity | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Name** | **Meaning** | **Sex** |
| *Deme* | adapted from Christian name 'Demetria' | F |
| *Thalu* | adapted from Christian name 'Salustia' | F |
| *Theburo* | adapted from Christian name 'Febronia' | F |
| *Niendiwe* | I was (once) wanted | F |
| *Afuge x* | nobility | F |
| *Amoshi* | adapted from Christian name 'Amos' | M |
| *Anzeti* | religious name 'Anicet' | M |
| *Aribo* | adapted from religion 'Arbogast' | M |
| *Avi* | ancestral (family name of a Roman family) | M |
| *Burahimu* | religious name 'Ibrahim' | M |
| *Dhuhura* | Venus/ star | F |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Erathimi* | religious name 'Erasmus' | M |
| *Gorigori x* | religious name 'Gregory' | M |
| *Gudila x* | religious name 'Goodluck' | M |
| *Joythi* | religious name 'Joyce' | F |
| *Kathupari* | religious name 'Gasper' | M |
| *Makulata* | religious name Immaculate' Free from spot or stain | F |
| *Manzweti* | adapted from religion 'mansuetus' | M |
| *Mbonea* | one that gives mercy | M |
| *Ngude x* | (From Gundelina) she who helps in battle | F |
| *Rotha* | religious name 'Rose' | F |
| *Thabathi* | restoration | M |
| *Thidori* | adapted from religion 'Isidor' | M |
| *Thimpilithi* | Last name/surname | M |
| *Tirifo* | fun | F |
| *Todori* | adapted from religion 'Theodor' | M |
| *Vendethilathi* | adapted from religion 'Wenseslaus' | M |
| *Viridi* | adapted from religion 'Verdiana' | F |
| *Romwa* | Adapted from 'Romuald' (i.e. Having authority, potency) | M |
| **ii) Adapted from Islam** | | |
| **Name** | **Meaning** | **Sex** |
| *Adhidi* | adapted from Islam name 'Azidiheri' | M |
| *Thalimu* | adapted from Islam name 'Salim' | M |
| *Thalehe* | adapted from religion 'Saleh' | M |

It should be emphasized that about 98% of area of the study is populated by Christians. Most names, though maintaining the original meaning of the name, became morpho-phonologically adapted to behave like Chasu words. These are done via various ways; such as:

- *Clipping;* Where first syllable or two are dropped in favour of the latter ones, e.g. *Deme* for Demetria, *Avi* for Avitus, *Era* for Erasmus, *Gunde* for Gundelina and *Romwa* for Romuald.
- *Sound insertion* to break up consonantal clusters; e.g. *Thaluthitia* for Salustia, *Theburo* for Febronia, *Anzeti* for Aniset, *Kathupari* for Gasparius, *Vendethilathi* for Wenseslaus, *Anoshi* for Amos, and *Gorigori* for Gregory.
- *Substitution*; e.g. *Thabathi* for Sabas, *Pathiani* for Pousian, *Joithi* for Joyce and *Manzweti* for Mansuetus.

- *Invention*: This is the formation of new words or broadening the meaning of some common national nouns to carry theological meaning or attribution, e.g. Mbonea - one that gives mercy, Niendiwe - I was searched for, and Nakundwa - I am loved.

As for Islamic names, these were also adapted mainly, through substitution as in *Thalimu* for Salimu, *Adhidi* for Azidiheri and *Thalehe* for Salleh.

These names as suggested by one of my reviewers, that Chasu people are not living in an island. So, they intermingle with other societies. When different societies live together, even languages can intermingle. Therefore, not all names used in Chasu society are Chasu by origin but from other societies. However, the 'chasunisation' through various morph-phonological processes, make then unique to Chasu.

In a study by Maimane and Mathensi (2017) it was established that Sethoto native speakers tend to translate or interpret meanings of names which are in English and Afrikaner origin. Ohso, in Mathonsi (1994: 70), describes this situation of pronunciation changes, and observes that "[l]oan words bring into the language new sounds or new sequences of sounds, but in many cases foreign sounds are changed to conform to the native phonological system". As Nkabinde (1968: 5) points out, languages have their own individual patterns of permissible sound sequences, therefore foreign words are subjected to the phonological rule in order to harmonise the foreign syllables which are not permissible in Sesotho with their Sesotho counterparts so that they fit into the structure of Sesotho. Swilla (2000), in her study of names in Chindali, found that, inter alia, contact with other languages - Kinyakyusa, English, Swahili - and the migration of Chindali speakers to Rungwe and Mbozi districts had had impacts on naming practices in which Chindali speakers have borrowed foreign names and nativized them and speakers of other languages have modified Chindali names. Similarly, Lusekelo and Mtenga (2020) observe that the personal names of the Rombo-Chagga people reveal the strands of religious (formal) names and foreign (English or Kiswahili) names, e.g. Barakaeli "God-bless".

**5.0 Conclusion**
The findings have shown that the Northern Chasu speech communities have rich and diverse criteria for giving names such as life experience, mannerisms, memorable life experience, birth circumstances, seasons, physical appearance, and religious/cultural beliefs. However, some names have assumed arbitrariness since the original meaning have either been completely lost or does not reflect the bearer. Also, three has been nativisation of foreign names via such morphological processes like clipping, sound insertion, substitution and invention.

Therefore, names are entwined with the languages and cultures from which they emanate, providing useful starting points for ethnographic exploration. The findings have testified on the multi-facedness of Chasu names at historical, linguistic and symbolic facets. At historical level, the conjunction of time and space is sanctioned by humans through the giving of a name which functions as a verbal picture of the event.

There are many ways in which an event is sanctioned through a name: names can index the place or location of the event, the agents, collective or individual, behind the occurrence of an event, the time period during which an event took place, or a semiotic string symbolizing a slogan or a statement for instance. In the linguistic facet, names are given in particular languages whose morphology, syntax and semantics inform their meaning to a great extent. This meaning is the linguistic meaning of names, also known as literal or motivated meaning. At the symbolic level, names constitute a cluster of signs used by community members to engage in verbal acts such as (de)nomination, invocation, evocation and commemoration.

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