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A Socio-Semantic Analysis of Selected Anthroponyms in the Mambwe Language

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ABSTRACT

Names serve as fundamental markers of human identity, encapsulating a wealth of socio-cultural information. This study presents a socio-semantic analysis of selected Mambwe anthroponyms from the Mbala district in Zambia's Northern Province. Employing a qualitative methodology with purposive and snowball sampling, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with six native Mambwe speakers. The analysis, framed within a sociolinguistic perspective, reveals that Mambwe personal names are categorizable into themes such as theophoric names (alluding to God), names expressing emotions (regret, joy, hope), and those reflecting birth circumstances, time, and social commentary (gossip, peace). The findings demonstrate that these names carry both denotative and connotative meanings, deeply intertwined with the community's cultural norms and social experiences. A key finding is the central role of God as a resolver of social discord, with names often functioning as tools for moral enforcement and social mediation. The study concludes that Mambwe anthroponyms are not merely identifiers but active instruments in upholding moral principles, strengthening social bonds, and mediating relationships between the name-giver, the child, and God. They play a crucial role in shaping cultural identity and transmitting intergenerational knowledge within the Mambwe society. Future research could benefit from a larger, more diverse sample and the incorporation of discourse analysis.

Keywords: Personal Names; Mambwe; Naming System; Socio-Cultural Aspects; Semantics

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1. Introduction

The Northern Province of Zambia is home to the Mambwe ethnic and linguistic group[1, 2]. It is believed that the Mambwe originated in North East Africa, specifically southern Tanzania[3]. The Mambwe are primarily located in the districts of Mbala, Senga, and some areas of Mpulungu in Zambia. The study by Zambian Central Statistical Office[4] reveals that 327,316 people in Zambia speak Mambwe. Mambwe is classified as M15 in Guthrie's[5] classification of Bantu Languages, group 20 of Zone M. Because of their interactions with their close cousins, the Namwanga, Swahili, and Arab traders, the Mambwe are renowned for being excellent businesspeople. By prefixing the first two letters of the last name (surname) with "Si" and "Na," they can distinguish between the last names of males and females, respectively.

Numerous academics, including linguists, ethnographers, and anthropologists, have expressed interest in the study of names called onomastics[6]. The study of place names, also referred to as toponymy or topomastics, and the study of personal names, or anthropomastics, are the two primary subfields of onomastics. Therefore, this paper focuses on the anthropomastics of the Mambwe people. It is noteworthy that the study of personal names has piqued the interest of onomastic experts. The importance of personal names in various cultures and societies may be the reason why researchers are interested in studying them. Notable researchers on personal names include Obeng, Zawawi, Neethling, Agyekum, Mutunda, Ngubane, Thipa, and Olatunji et al.[7–13]. These investigations have demonstrated that names are not just indicators of identity and arbitrary but a source of a variety of information[10, 14].

The study of Mambwe names reveals the significant aspects of their identity, heritage, and societal structure. Mambwe names often carry deep meanings, reflecting personal characteristics, familial lineage, geographical origins, or cultural beliefs. For instance, names may be derived from significant events, ancestral figures, or natural elements, showcasing a connection to the environment and traditions. It can be argued that the naming practices among the Mambwe may vary based on gender, age, and social status, with specific names reserved for groups, thus reinforcing social hierarchies.

By analyzing the anthroponomastics of the Mambwe, researchers can better understand their cultural identity, the impact of external influences, and the ongoing changes within their society. This field of study not only preserves the linguistic heritage of the Mambwe but also fosters appreciation for their rich cultural tapestry. Therefore, this study problematizes a socio-semantic analysis of the anthroponomastics of the Mambwe speakers.

2. Literature Review

Social and cultural groupings are portrayed through names and naming systems. The Akan society of Ghana's personal name typologies are examined in a study by Agyekum[10]. By combining philosophical and anthropological concepts, the research provides insights into the Akan culture, philosophy, thought, environment, religion, language, and culture. According to this perspective, Akan names are sociocultural tags with sociocultural functions and meaning rather than random labels. Proper names, family names, achievement names, stool names, religious names, occupation names, insinuating and proverbial names, names of bodily structures, and kinship names are among the typologies of Akan names that the study identifies. In particular, the proverbial name typology has received equal attention. While this study focused on personal name typologies among Akan names in Ghana, the present study analyses the socio-semantics of personal names among the Mambwe in Zambia.

Scholar[11] conducted research among the Lunda people in the Northwestern Province of Zambia to offer an interpretation of the traditional Lunda personal names. The scholar observes that a person's identity among the Lunda people is based on their name. The contexts in which they are selected and their meanings imply that they are more than just linguistic phenomena or meaningless labels. Instead, they portray the Lunda people's social and cultural existence. The study shows that parents and other family members seldom give their children names at random; instead, they carefully consider the names to reflect and make clear the social context in which the child is born. The present study focuses on the socio-semantic analysis of the personal names of the Mambwe.

Another paper by Mutunda[15] concerned itself with character names as mediators of theme in Zambian Literary

works, notably, *Bitterness* by Katulwende[16], *Before Dawn* by Masiye[17], and *A Cowrie of Hope* by Sinyangwe[18]. Given the focus of the paper, these literary works were selected because they are interesting texts and artworks in different ways. All the personal names in these texts are studied and analysed using insights from literary onomastics. The above papers aimed to explore how the character names in the selected fiction serve as devices through which the social reality that the author writes about is encapsulated and analysed, and comprise a fresh way of understanding the novels. The papers conclude that character names in the texts are carefully chosen to serve particular thematic and stylistic purposes. The present study deals with the interface between sociolinguistics and semantics in the personal names of the Mambwe.

A research by Minkailou and Abdoulaye[19] on Bamanan traditional personal names in Southern Mali is an additional study in this regard. The study illustrates the cosmogonic nature of names in Mali's Babamanan society through qualitative research. By highlighting the factors that influence the context and conditions in which these names are formed, it employs philosophical and sociocultural concepts to analyze the various name typologies. The personal name typologies that are on display have to do with a variety of topics, including the passing of parents, the family's birth order, the days of the week, the months, the seasons, the locations, the flora and fauna, the name bearers' fetishes, complexion, desire for survival, promises, and social standing. This study does not deal with personal names in Zambia, specifically the Mambwe speakers.

Musonda and Simwinga[20] researched to establish the social aspects that influence the selection and bestowal of Tumbuka personal names within the Tumbuka social and cultural setting. It was conducted using the qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. From the findings, it was established that among the Tumbuka people of Lundazi District, Zambia, personal names are a reflection of various aspects of their society. Some of the messages reflected in the names analysed in this study show how Tumbuka culture and traditions influence the naming practices. Based on the findings, the study concluded that sociocultural motivation plays a critical role in the choice of personal names among the Tumbuka people. Although this study is related, it does not account for the socio-semantic analysis of Mambwe personal names.

Simungala and Banda[21] explored the clan names and praises of the Mambwe-speaking people of Northern Zambia from a social semiotics perspective. Specifically drawing on the concept of semiotic assemblages, it considers the names and praises as more than just linguistic resources but as meaning-making collections that contribute to the collective self-representation of the Mambwe people. The assembled expressions reflect their worldviews, sociocultural narratives, and identities. The study shows the interconnectedness of gender roles, bioenvironmental factors, community activities, folklore, ethnicity, and self-asserting narratives within the contexts of clan names and praises. Furthermore, it demonstrates the multi-layered meanings resulting from the emotional forces of the interactions among individuals, living and non-living objects, events, and bioenvironmental factors in time-spaces. It concludes that clan names and praises are narratives of expressions that represent the psycho-social and historical paths of the Mambwe people, and they play a crucial role in the intergenerational transfer of knowledge and culture. While this study talks about the clan names and praises among the Mambwe people and is insightful, it is at variance with the present study, which deals with the socio-semantic analysis of the personal names of the Mambwe people.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study used the sociolinguistic perspective as a theoretical footing to underpin the analysis[22]. It examines how names function within social contexts, reflecting cultural identity, social status, and community ties. This theoretical locale is suitable for the current study that analyses the socio-semantics of the Mambwe anthroponyms which the meanings of the naming system are tied to the social context, status, and culture of the community.

It is envisaged that culture and language are intertwined. Kramsch[22] advocates three ways to confirm that language and culture are related. These are: language expresses culture, language is a part of culture, and language symbolizes culture. Thus, it can be concluded that language is a cultural carrier that reflects a particular social group's cultural heritage.

According to Hudson[23], language is part of culture,

and the relationship between language and culture is that of parts and the whole. Simultaneously, culture shapes and limits language in terms of phonetics, vocabulary, and grammar. The above limitations also show themselves in language learning and usage. It can be argued that culture is pivotal in the naming system of personal names among the Mambwe people. Therefore, this framing provides valuable insights during the analysis of the socio-semantic anthroponyms among the Mambwe in Zambia.

4. Methodology

Data were collected using the qualitative descriptive approach. Because the goals of the current study are non-statistical and are intended to comprehend, characterize, and explain the outcomes of the language phenomena used during data collection and analysis, the qualitative descriptive approach is advantageous[24].

Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used to gather data. The interview guide included open-ended questions designed to elicit information on the meanings, origins, and socio-cultural contexts of personal names. Participants were asked to recall names they were familiar with and explain the circumstances under which such names are given. Focus group discussions were facilitated using a similar guide to explore shared cultural perceptions and collective reasoning behind naming practices. Names were elicited through free recall and discussions of specific scenarios. For instance, "What name would be given if a child were born during the day?"

Six native Mambwe speakers were purposively selected to ensure deep cultural and linguistic insight. The sample consisted of three men and three women, aged between 45 and 72, all residing in the Mbala district. Their roles included grandparents, parents, and community elders, providing a multi-generational perspective. While the sample size is small, it is appropriate for an in-depth qualitative exploration of cultural knowledge, intending to reach data saturation on the core themes of naming practices rather than statistical representativeness[24].

The collected data were analyzed and validated by the same research participants. Validation was conducted through member-checking: summaries of the interpreted name meanings and categorizations were presented to participants in a follow-up session to confirm accuracy and cultural appropriateness. The authors, being native Mambwe speakers, also employed their linguistic intuitions throughout the analysis.

Thematic and content analysis were used to support the semantic goals. The results were presented and analyzed using two major themes, namely, naming practices among the Mambwe and semantics of Mambwe personal names. The second theme is subdivided into ten sub-themes, namely: individual names bringing up God, names that express regret, displeasure, and complaint, names that reflect their birth time, names that convey calm, names that convey concern and safety, and names that suggest gossip, names expressing joy, names expressing hope, names expressing forgiveness, and birth situational names.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Naming Practices among the Mambwe

In Mambwe culture, a baby is named at the ceremony, which also serves as a means of introducing them to their extended family and the wider community. But most importantly, it gives the child a name. As a baby's name affects his or her personality, the naming ceremony is one of the most significant rites of passage for the Mambwe people. For this reason, the Mambwe, like many other African societies, do not give their children names at random. Most of the time, they take into account the situation that the child's mother or the family was in before the baby was born. Thus, the children are given names like:

[1] *Chazya* 'wasted'
[2] *Mwancuzya* 'you have troubled me'
[3] *Nezya* 'I have tried'
[4] *Ntalilila* 'I will not forget'

The above examples demonstrate that name givers in the Mambwe language typically select personal names that allude to a variety of persons and events that are significant at the time of the child's birth. This result resonates with Suzman[14], who observes that the trend of naming based on the time the child is born is prevalent in many African societies.

The above results show that among the Mambwe, just like in many African cultures, naming is a crucial tool for

communicating ideas to an individual, family, or group of people. Every individual born in Mambwe is identified by one or more personal names, which are then considered their property. This analysis agrees with Kadmon [25], who asserts that a name is a personal property; in many societies, one does not lose it even when losing all other belongings. As a result, giving personal names among the Mambwe is one method of defining a person's identity since names help set members of a family, group, or community apart from one another [26].

It can be argued that the Mambwe naming customs are correlated with the social elements of the communities that give rise to anthroponyms. Names have the power to bring people together, but they can also be a divisive tool in different communities. This is the case because some names' meanings and purposes serve to divide rather than to unite people.

Therefore, one can gain knowledge of the different cultures that have coexisted in a given society and develop an appreciation for its history through names.

5.2. The Semantics of Mambwe Personal Names

Both connotative and denotative meanings apply to the Mambwe personal names. Denotation is the initial common meaning that is unaffected by the emotional undertones or context of the communication act [27]. A word's denotative meaning makes up a significant portion of the shared language system that all speakers share. Conversely, connotative meaning differs depending on one's cultural background. Leech [28] opines that connotative meanings are comparatively unstable and vary greatly depending on culture, historical period, and individual experience. He adds that just as our understanding of the universe is open-ended, so too are connotative meanings. Connotative meanings include any trait that can be objectively or subjectively identified.

According to Gebre [29], the Aari people of Ethiopia utilized names to convey their shared history, significant occasions, and connections to the environment. Therefore, this study makes it clear that names have symbolic meanings and convey the history and common experiences of the Mambwe people.

The results show that Mambwe names have dual meanings, denotative and connotative. The denotative meaning of a name is obvious, while the connotative meaning is not, so understanding and appreciating its meaning completely requires taking into account both meanings.Thus, we can conclude that a name's meaning can be unclear at times and clear at others [30].

Table 1 shows the meanings of common Mambwe personal names that have been presented thematically by the researchers. For clarity, a summary table is provided, followed by the detailed discussion.

Table 1. Categorized Mambwe personal names with meanings and context.

Category	Name	Literal Meaning	Context/Connotative Meaning
Theophoric Names	*Aliko*	'God is there'	Gratitude for the gift of a child.
	Alinani	'He is with me'	Child born after mother was mistreated; God's presence affirmed.
	Wimula	'bestowed'	God has granted a child.
	Luswepo	'light/sunshine'	Child's birth ends familial discord or 'darkness'.
	Twalola	'We have seen'	Child is a surprise, a testament to God's grace after lost hope.
	Wantula	'God has helped me'	A child born after resolving major family problems.
	Wanziko	'a plan'	Childbearing is part of God's plan.
	Wila	'Gift'	A child is a gift from God, often an only child.
	Yande	'thank you'	Gratitude to God for the child.
	Kiusha	'one who remembers'	A reminder that God remembers the family.
Regret/Complaint	*Chazya*	'wasted'	After multiple pregnancy losses, a complaint about wasted resources.
	Machuzi	'struggles'	Reflects various struggles before the child's birth.
	Nezya	'I have tried'	Given after enduring difficult circumstances (e.g., marital strife).
	Ntalilila	'I will not forget'	To remember a wrong (e.g., a death, a new wife) or a kindness.
Birth Time	*Katondo*	'in the morning'	A child born in the morning.
	Musanya	'day/afternoon'	A child born during the day implies an easier birth with community support.
	Manguzi	'in the evening'	Child born in the cool of the evening.
	Chausiku	'night'	Child born late at night.
Peace	*Mutende*	'peace'	To foster harmony after family conflict.
	Tuvwane	'to live in harmony'	A child represents peace after parental disagreements.
Care/Safety	*Ntenda*	'take care'	The child is frequently ill and requires extra care.
	Mundele	'take good care of me'	Plea for care, often if a parent died before the birth.

Table 1. *Cont.*

Category	Name	Literal Meaning	Context/Connotative Meaning
Gossip	*Mwambe*	'gossip'	Mother is aware she is the subject of gossip.
	Chisoswa	'cooking stones'	Like unmoved stones, the mother will not react to gossip.
Joy	*Kutemwa*	'Happy'	A child born during a happy period for the family.
	Niza	'I have come'	The long-awaited child has finally arrived.
	Twavula	'we have increased'	A new child replaces a deceased family member.
	Wanzana	'You have found me'	Grandparents' joy that the child found them alive, or born when a parent was ill.
	Chinvya	'Triumph'	After overcoming challenges like miscarriages.
Hope	*Teza*	'be afraid'	Hope a child survives after a previous loss.
	Kwelezya	'to try'	Hoping a child survives after previous miscarriages.
	Kantendele	'small'	Hope that a premature or underweight child will survive and grow.
	Chilazipa	'It will be fine'	Hope that a difficult situation will improve.
Forgiveness	*Ntiusha*	'do not remember'	Encouragement to forgive and forget past wrongs.
	Visule	'forgive'	Plea for forgiveness, e.g., after a man takes a second wife.
	Musinge	'forget'	Encouragement to move on from an offense (e.g., paternity denial).
Birth Situation	*Chilombo*	'birth complications'	The mother experienced challenges during pregnancy or birth.
	Mafwa	'leaves'	Herbs (leaves) were used by the mother to conceive.

The results in **Table 1** are discussed under the sub-themes below.

5.2.1. Individual Names Bringing up God

This category features Mambwe personal names that demonstrate how the Mambwe thank God for their children. In this category, fourteen personal names are presented below.

[5] *Aliko* 'God is there'

The above name reveals that in the Mambwe culture, naming a child after God is a way to express gratitude for their gift. It can be argued that personal names in the Mambwe culture are attributed to appreciating the deity who is the giver of all good things.

[6] *Alinani* or *Alinaswe* 'He is with me or us'
[7] *Wimula* or *Imula* 'bestowed'
[8] *Luswepo* 'light' or 'sunshine'
[9] *Twalola* or *Mwalola* 'to see'
[10] *Mwine* 'Owner'
[11] *Utailo* or *Taila* 'Faith'

In example 6, *Alinani* 'God is with me' and *Alinaswe* 'God is with us' are the literal meanings of the aforementioned names. The study shows that most children receive these names, particularly if their in-laws or family mistreated their mother while she was pregnant. As one elder participant explained:

> *If a woman is neglected during pregnancy, the name Alinani is a statement that even if people fail you, God is your companion*.

It can be argued that such a personal name is meant to reprimand the family members who mistreat the mother of the child during pregnancy and call for reformation. It can further be argued that the personal name exhausts God as the absolute, even in times of neglect. In 7, the names indicate that He (God) has bestowed a child upon me or us. In some cultures, a child's name is given to them at birth, or if a couple waits to have children. It can be argued that the personal noun conveys a message of appreciation to the Living God for granting the family a child.

In Mambwe, the anthroponym *Luswepo* 'light or sunshine' in example 8 is given to show that God has made one's home lighter. This personal name shows that there was darkness in the family, but the birth of that child has brought light. It can be argued that darkness in this case is symbolic of differences, neglect, or allegations of barrenness and impotence that blackmail the reasoning of family members, thereby propagating hatred and disunity. Therefore, the birth of the child who is given this personal name is a power of reconciliation, cooperation, and unity among family members as opposed to the situation before the couple had a child. In short, the birth of the child makes what was invisible, visible.

Both personal names in 9 mean "to see," that is, God's grace. *Mwalola* 'You have seen' and *Twalola* 'We have seen' refer to being witnesses. By giving this personal name to a child, parents or the family announce that they never ex-

pected to have that child, but the child has come forth by the Grace of the living God. It can be argued that the family had lost hope about childbearing, and the child came as a surprise.

The personal name in 10 translates to "owner." Its sole purpose is to convey to a child that God is the owner of everything, including children. Therefore, God is the true parent of the child that has been given to the couple. The personal names in 11 are provided only as evidence that the couple believed they would become parents. After having three male children, one of the respondents informed the researcher that she named her only daughter "Taila." She went on to say that she believed God would bless her with a girl child one day. Thus, the child was given the name *Taila* 'Faith'.

Examples 6–11 of anthroponyms show that the Mambwe prioritize God above all else and think that he is the only one who can give birth to children and other things, as evidenced by the above personal names that include references to God. The results of this study conflict with those of Lungu[31] who studied the personal names of the Namwanga people in the Muchinga Province of Zambia and found that the religious names of the Namwanga people have values that serve as a reminder that God is always there for them in times of need and that they turn to Him for guidance, comfort, hope, faith, happiness, and other things.

The other category of personal names under this subtheme is presented below.

[12] *Taizya* 'gratitude'
[13] *Tupilwe* 'we are given'
[14] *Wantula* 'God has helped me'
[15] *Wanziko* 'a plan'
[16] *Wila* 'Gift'
[17] *Yande* 'thank you'
[18] *Kiusha* 'one who remembers'

The name in 12, which translates to "gratitude," is given to a child merely as a token of gratitude to God for the child. It can be argued that the majority of first-born children in Mambwe receive this name. This shows that the personal name is not given anyhow. The firstborns are given this personal name because they are the first fruits of the womb in various families.

In 13, the verb *pela* (give) is the source of this name. *Tupilwe* thus signifies that we have been bestowed. All it means is that God has given us a child. It can be argued that the personal name is an appreciation to God that He has blessed the family with a child.

In example 14, the verb *ntula* 'help' is the source of the above personal name in Mambwe. Therefore, it makes sense if the couple had numerous issues, challenges, or differences in the past that they no longer have. This couple, therefore, thinks that God is the one who has assisted them in resolving such problems. As a result, when the couple bears a child, that child is called *Wantula* 'God has helped me'. In 15, the verb *anzika* 'make a plan' is the source of the name *Wanziko* 'a plan'. In Mambwe culture, a child is given this name to indicate that it is God's will for us to have this child. It can be argued that the personal name shows that childbearing is solely God's plan.

The name *Wila* in 16 means 'Gift'. It can be argued that the personal name implies that the child is a gift from God. However, the study shows that the personal name is given, particularly if the couple only has one child. Therefore, the parents demonstrate to the world that this is the only gift from God by naming such as child *Wila* 'Gift'. Denotatively speaking, the name *Yande* 'thank you' in 17, is thus given to a child as a means of expressing gratitude to God for the child. In contrast, the name is traditionally given to a child born to a couple who did not anticipate having a girl or a boy. This occurs when a couple receives children of the same sex, and then another child is born.

In example 18, the verb *iusha* 'to remember' is the root of the name "Kiusha." Kiusha thus means "one who remembers." A child is given this name as a simple reminder that God sees us in everything. Conversely, the Mambwe people also name children using negation in *Ntiusha* 'I should not remember'. Denotatively, the parents are reminded not to look to the troubles they used to experience before God remembered them by giving the couple a child.

Therefore, the denotative-connotative duality in Mambwe theophoric names in examples 12–18 reflects Leech[28] theory of unstable connotative meanings shaped by cultural experience. This analysis aligns with Gebre[29] work on Ethiopian Aari names, where names transmit collective history and cosmology. Unlike Lungu's[31] study of Namwanga religious names, which emphasizes divine presence in adversity, Mambwe names in the above examples

symbolize reconciliation and divine intervention in familial discord, showcasing a distinct semantic emphasis on God as a resolver of social ruptures.

5.2.2. Names that Express Regret, Displeasure, and Complaint

These are names that parents typically give their kids as a result of unpleasant events they had; by doing this, they subtly voice their complaints, annoyance, and regrets about how unfair the circumstances were for them. This category discusses four names.

[19] *Chazya* 'wasted'
[20] *Machuzi* or *Kuchula* 'struggle'
[21] *Nezya* 'I have tried'
[22] *Ntalilila* 'I will not forget'

The name *Chazya* in 19 means 'wasted.' When a lady has multiple pregnancies but suffers from frequent miscarriages or gives birth to children who all pass away, the child is given this name. As a result, the child will be given a name along with a complaint that they will die, suggesting that the couple is wasting their time and resources by having these kids. Nonetheless, a respondent informed the researcher that the majority of children given the name *Chazya* 'wasted' go on to survive.

In 20, the verb *chula* 'struggle' is the source of the names *Kuchula* and *Machuzi* 'struggles'. The child's parents gave him both names to show their opinions about a variety of issues that bothered them before the child was born. In 21, the name *Nezya* 'I have tried' comes from the verb *ezya*, which means 'to try.' A child is given this name under many conditions. It could be a spouse who has made an effort to live in harmony with the other but has not seen any progress.

In 22, the negative form of the verb *ilila* 'forget' is this personal name. Thus, *Ntalilila* translates to 'I will not forget.' The researchers noted that the name is given to the child if a family member passes away or if the husband remarries another woman. On the other hand, the study shows that the same name is also given to the child as a token of appreciation for something that person has done for you.

Therefore, examples 19–22 represent names conveying regrets, which is in tandem with Agyekum's study[10], which deals with "insinuating and proverbial names" typology. Such names function as sociocultural commentary, akin to[19] documentation of Bamanan names reflecting hardship. The practice of attributing names to maternal mistreatment underscores Mutunda's[11] finding, which argues that names encapsulate, lived social realities.

5.2.3. Names that Reflect the Birth Time

In this category, names are assigned based on the child's birth time. This category contains four examples of names as shown below.

[23] *Katondo* 'in the morning'
[24] *Musanya* 'day'
[25] *Manguzi* 'evening'
[26] *Chausiku* 'night'

The common noun *tondo* in 23, which means 'morning', is the source of the name *Katondo* 'in the morning'. A responder informed the researcher that a child delivered in the morning was given the name. In 24, the common noun *sanya* 'day/afternoon' is the source of this name. Consequently, a child delivered in the afternoon or throughout the day is called *Musanya* 'during the day/in the afternoon'. It can be argued that children who are born during the day when there is enough light give fewer challenges to their parents during their birth. In addition, the person's name signifies that the mother did not struggle alone during birth, as opposed to giving birth during the night, because all the people are awake and eager to provide the needed help during labour.

In 25, the term *nguzi* 'evening' is where the personal name *Manguzi* 'in the evening' originates. It was established that the name signifies the cool of the day. Denotatively, the personal name is given to children who are born in the evening when the heat of the sun is cooling down. In 26, the term *usiku* 'night' is the source of this name. This implies that only children who are born very late at night are given this name. It can be argued that labour pains start during the day and end at night. Therefore, the personal name *Chausiku* 'night' is given to such children.

Thus, examples 23–26 show that the Mambwe people name their children based on the time of birth. This result is consistent with Minkailou and Abdoulaye's[19] study on Bamanan traditional personal names in Southern Mali, which found that names are given based on the time of birth, such as days of the week, months, and seasons.

5.2.4. Names that Convey Calm

The names in this category are given to children to foster peace and harmony among family members. This category contains two examples of names as shown below.

[27] *Mutende* 'peace'
[28] *Tuvwane* 'to live in harmony'

The common noun *ntende* 'peace' is the source of the name *Mutende* 'peace' in 27. The child is given this name to foster peace among family members. It can be argued that the personal name is given to children born when there are conflicts in the family. Therefore, the name is a plea for peace among family members. In 28, the verb *vwana* 'live in harmony' is the source of this name. The child is given this name to foster peace between the parents. It can be argued that the personal name is given to children born when there are disagreements between the parents.

Therefore, examples 27 and 28 show that the Mambwe people name their children to foster peace and harmony among family members. This result is consistent with the study by Agyekum[10] on the Akan society of Ghana, which found that names are given to foster peace and harmony among family members.

5.2.5. Names that Convey Concern and Safety

The names in this category are given to children to express concern and safety. This category contains two examples of names as shown below.

[29] *Ntenda* 'take care'
[30] *Mundele* 'take good care of me'

The verb *tenda* 'take care' is the source of the name *Ntenda* 'take care' in 29. The child is given this name if they are frequently ill. It can be argued that the personal name is a plea to the family members to take good care of the child. In 30, the verb *ndele* 'take good care of me' is the source of this name. The child is given this name if the father or mother dies before the child is born. It can be argued that the personal name is a plea to the family members to take good care of the child.

Therefore, examples 29 and 30 show that the Mambwe people name their children to express concern and safety. This result is consistent with the study by Mutunda[11] on the Lunda people in the Northwestern Province of Zambia, which found that names are given to express concern and safety.

5.2.6. Names that Suggest Gossip

The names in this category are given to children to suggest gossip. This category contains two examples of names as shown below:

[31] *Mwambe* 'gossip'
[32] *Chisoswa* 'cooking stones'

The common noun *mwambe* 'gossip' is the source of the name *Mwambe* 'gossip' in 31. The child is given this name if the mother is aware that she is the subject of gossip. It can be argued that the personal name is a way of shaming the gossipers. In 32, the common noun *soswa* 'cooking stones' is the source of this name. The child is given this name if the mother is aware that she is the subject of gossip. It can be argued that the personal name is a way of shaming the gossipers. A participant elaborated on the name *Chisoswa*, stating:

> *It means the mother is like the stones in a cooking fire—unmoved and unbothered by the hot words of others.*

Therefore, examples 32 and 32 show that the Mambwe people name their children to suggest gossip. This result is consistent with the work by Agyekum[10] on the Akan society of Ghana, which found that names are given to suggest gossip.

5.2.7. Names Expressing Joy

The names in this category are given to children to express joy. This category contains five examples of names as shown below.

[33] *Kutemwa* 'Happy'
[34] *Niza* 'I have come'
[35] *Twavula* 'we have increased'
[36] *Wanzana* 'you have found me'
[37] *Chinvya* 'Triumph'

The verb *temwa* 'happy' is the source of the name *Kutemwa* 'Happy' in 33. The child is given this name if the family is happy. It can be argued that the personal name is a way of expressing joy. In 34, the verb *iza* 'come' is the source of this name. The child is given this name if the family has been waiting for a child for a long time. It can be argued that the personal name is a way of expressing joy that

the child has finally come. In 35, the verb *vula* 'increase' is the source of this name. The child is given this name if the family has lost a member. It can be argued that the personal name is a way of expressing joy that the family has increased. In 36, the verb *nzana* 'find' is the source of this name. The child is given this name if the grandparents are still alive. It can be argued that the personal name is a way of expressing joy that the child has found the grandparents alive. Alternatively, the name can also be given if a child is born when the father was critically ill, as explained by a respondent: "It means the child found the parent alive against the odds."

In 37, the verb *invya* 'triumph' is the source of this name. The child is given this name if the mother has had multiple miscarriages. It can be argued that the personal name is a way of expressing joy that the mother has finally triumphed over the miscarriages.

Therefore, examples 33–37 show that the Mambwe people name their children to express joy. This result is consistent with the work by Mutunda[11] on the Lunda people in the Northwestern Province of Zambia, which found that names are given to express joy.

5.2.8. Names Expressing Hope

The names in this category are given to children to express hope. This category contains four examples of names as shown below.

[38] *Teza* 'be afraid'
[39] *Kwelezya* 'to try'
[40] *Kantendele* 'small'
[41] *Chilazipa* 'it will be fine'

The verb *teza* 'be afraid' is the source of the name *Teza* 'be afraid' in 38. The child is given this name if the family has lost a child before. It can be argued that the personal name is a way of expressing hope that the child will survive. In 39, the verb *ezya* 'to try' is the source of this name. The child is given this name if the mother has had multiple miscarriages. It can be argued that the personal name is a way of expressing hope that the child will survive. In 40, the common noun *ntendele* 'small' is the source of this name. The child is given this name if the child is born prematurely. It can be argued that the personal name is a way of expressing hope that the child will survive and grow. In 41, the verb *lazipa* 'it will be fine' is the source of this name. The child is given this name if the family is going through a difficult time. It can be argued that the personal name is a way of expressing hope that the situation will improve.

Therefore, examples 38–41 show that the Mambwe people name their children to express hope. This result is consistent with the study by Agyekum[10] on the Akan society of Ghana, which found that names are given to express hope.

5.2.9. Names Expressing Forgiveness

The names in this category are given to children to express forgiveness. This category contains three examples of names as shown below:

[42] *Ntiusha* 'do not remember'
[43] *Visule* 'forgive'
[44] *Musinge* 'forget'

The negative form of the verb *iusha* 'remember' is the source of the name *Ntiusha* 'do not remember' in 42. The child is given this name if the family has been wronged. It can be argued that the personal name is a way of expressing forgiveness. In 43, the verb *sule* 'forgive' is
the source of this name. The child is given this name if the husband has taken a second wife. It can be argued that the personal name is a way of expressing forgiveness. In 44, the verb *singe* 'forget' is the source of this name. The child is given this name if the husband has denied paternity. It can be argued that the personal name is a way of expressing forgiveness.

Therefore, examples 42–44 show that the Mambwe people name their children to express forgiveness. This result is consistent with the study by Mutunda[11] on the Lunda people in the Northwestern Province of Zambia, which found that names are given to express forgiveness.

5.2.10. Birth Situational Names

The names in this category are given to children based on the situation at birth. This category contains two examples of names as shown below:

[45] *Chilombo* 'birth complications'
[46] *Mafwa* 'leaves'

The common noun *lombo* 'birth complications' is the source of the name *Chilombo* 'birth complications' in 45. The child is given this name if the mother had complications during pregnancy or birth. It can be argued that the per-

sonal name is a way of expressing the difficulties the mother went through. In 46, the common noun *mafwa* 'leaves' is the source of this name. The child is given this name if the mother used herbs to conceive. It can be argued that the personal name is a way of expressing the use of herbs to conceive.

Therefore, examples 45 and 46 show that the Mambwe people name their children based on the situation at birth. This result is consistent with the work by Minkailou and Abdoulaye[19] on Bamanan traditional personal names in Southern Mali, which found that names are given based on the situation at birth.

6. Conclusions

This study has provided a socio-semantic analysis of selected Mambwe anthroponyms. The findings reveal that Mambwe personal names are not mere labels but are deeply embedded in the socio-cultural fabric of the community. They serve as a medium for expressing a wide range of emotions, beliefs, and social commentaries. The analysis has demonstrated that these names carry both denotative and connotative meanings, which are crucial for understanding their full significance.

The study identified several thematic categories of names, including theophoric names, names expressing regret and complaint, names based on birth time, names conveying peace and safety, names suggesting gossip, and names expressing joy, hope, and forgiveness. Each category reflects specific aspects of Mambwe life and worldview, highlighting the community's values, struggles, and aspirations. The central role of God as a resolver of social discord and the use of names as tools for social commentary and moral enforcement are key findings. For instance, names like *Alinani* and *Luswepo* illustrate how divine presence is invoked in times of social strife, while names like *Mwambe* and *Chisoswa* function to shame gossipers and uphold community norms.

The study concludes that Mambwe anthroponyms are active instruments in upholding moral principles, strengthening social bonds, and mediating relationships between the name-giver, the child, and God. They play a crucial role in shaping cultural identity and transmitting intergenerational knowledge within the Mambwe society. Future research could benefit from a larger, more demographically diverse sample and the incorporation of discourse analysis to examine the actual use of these names in conversational contexts, further exploring their performative and indexical functions.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, P.S.; methodology, M.M.; validation, K.N.K.; formal analysis, P.S.; investigation, M.M.; resources, M.M.; data curation, P.S.; writing—original draft preparation, P.S.; writing—review and editing, P.S.; visualization, M.M.; supervision, P.S.; project administration, P.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

The study did not require ethical approval from the university because the data do not involve humans or animals, but the socio-semantics of anthroponyms (Mambwe personal names).

Informed Consent Statement

The section is not applicable because the study did not concern humans or animals, but the socio-semantics of personal names of the Mambwe language. In addition, the study has not captured any names of the respondents. Furthermore, the study focused on the meaning that is attached to the naming practices as well as the societal factors that influence such kind of naming practices.

Data Availability Statement

Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflict of interest in this study.

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