

Beyond Seeing QwaQwa, “Homelands,” and “Black States”: Visual Onomastic Constructions of Bantustans in Apartheid South Africa

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Abstract: The Bantustans – separate territories created for black African occupation by the apartheid regime in South Africa were some of the most telling sites and symbols of “domestic colonialism” in South Africa. In them resided and still reside the overt and covert influences, beliefs and knowledge systems that defined and characterised the philosophy and praxis of “separate development” or apartheid as a racial, colonial, socio-political and economic system. The Bantustan exhibits many socio-economic and political realities and complexes traceable to apartheid’s defining tenets, philosophies and methods of constructing and sustaining racialized power. Names of (and in) the Bantustan are a curious case. No study has systematically explored the onomastic Bantustan, with a view to understanding how names associated with it reflect deeper processes, attitudes, instabilities and contradictions that informed apartheid separate development philosophy and praxis. This article enters the discourse on the colonial and postcolonial significance of the Bantustan from the vantage point of Bantustan cultures, specifically naming and visibility. Of major concern is how names and labels used in reference to the Bantustan frame and refract images of black physical place and spaces in ways that reflect the racial constructedness of power and the spatio-temporality of identities in processes of becoming and being a Bantustan. The article contextually analyzes the politics and aesthetics of purposefully selected names and labels ascribed to black places by the apartheid regime as part of a strategic restructuring of both the physical and political landscapes. The objective is to find out how, when analysed in the context of their usage and visual ‘effects,’ these names/labels can help us to understand the political significance of the identities of place, space and power during the apartheid era.

Key words: Bantustan; Apartheid; black space; race; hegemony

The South African Bantustan: Names, Images, (Em/disem)powerment

The Apartheid regime in South Africa used the term Bantustan to refer to territories reserved for black Africans as part of an official segregation policy of “separate development” or apartheid.¹ As a geographical space, the South African Bantustan is therefore one of the most spectacular physical remnants of apartheid.² Much has been written about the Bantustan’s symbolic significance to the history of

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Apartheid's theory and praxis, mostly from historical, socio-psychological and anthropological perspectives. In a study of the apartheid-era Ndebele radio service in the KwaNdebele Bantustan, Lekgoathi argues that, far from being a neutral informational service, the broadcasts spewed state propaganda that sought to cultivate and entrench forms of ethnic and racial awareness that synchronized with the regime's "separate but equal" mantra.³ Similarly, Chisholm observes how clandestine self-serving intentions in the education system as delivered in Bantustans and (white) South Africa promoted separate streams and systems of knowledge that naturalized political inflections placed on racial difference by the regime.⁴ For Gibbs, the Bantustan was a hegemonic divide-and-rule mechanism through which (especially in the Transkei Bantustan), "elements of Bantustan security forces operated hand-in-glove with apartheid murder squads right up until 1994."⁵ This article presents a conceptually and methodologically different perspective to reading the politics and political significance of the Bantustan. Focusing on the cultures of apartheid, particularly place naming and labelling, it seeks to show how some of apartheid's cultures of soft violence reveal the nature and method of apartheid hegemony. Perhaps before engaging the cultural yet political performances of the onomastic Bantustan, it is opportune here to explain its origins and official meanings and functions.

In 1951, the apartheid regime passed the Bantu Authorities Act which legally instituted the creation of two separate states based on race.⁶ As will become clearer in succeeding paragraphs, although the so-called "black state" was tactically splintered for hegemonic ends, the original idea propounded by the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 was *inter alia* to segregate the landscape by racializing it. Bantustan (often used interchangeably with "Homeland") was the name given to areas reserved for black occupation. Each of South Africa's native ethnicities was allocated a Bantustan which was often named according to the respective ethnicities.⁷ So the term Bantustan essentially designated a black physical space, and as shall be argued later on in the discussion, the onomastic system of this designation was not only clandestinely and sometimes persuasively hegemonic but more importantly, politically aesthetic. Focusing on visual onomastic constructions of place and place identity vis-à-vis the politics of the Bantustan, the question is how the term Bantustan visualized and conceptualized black spaces as both separate and "developed" — the defining terms that formed the superstructure of racial segregation when legally instituted as the political, economic, social and racial system of apartheid in 1948.

Many scholars have theorised the hermeneutic entanglement of place names and identity formation and (re)formation, pointing out important processes linking space, the imagination, individual and group psychology of the self to place names. Such links between place names and space identity have provided new ways of (re)thinking histories and trajectories of spatio-temporal identities and existentialities. Indeed, as various scholars illustrate in *The Postcolonial Condition of Names and Naming Practices in Southern Africa*, place names, because of their

connection to systems and cultures of personal and group identification and dis-identification, are critical cultural sites to enquire into the postcoloniality of life and the various physical, philosophical, political and economic forces that shape its structure and evolution.⁸

So the question that easily arises concerns how, as “cultural sites” that aesthetically articulate and archive temporal identities and perceptions linked to space, place names are reflexive vis-à-vis the various existential factors and forces that influence the urges to name. Our argument here is that when read in the context of the history of the colonial making of the Bantustan and its unfinished state of decolonization, names associated with the Bantustan are not merely cultural sites or manifestations. They are, in fact, cultural sites that both conjure up and cite sights in their onomastic yet politically aesthetic visuality. What we are saying here is that names associated with the Bantustan are products of colonially-informed and guided sights and senses of place that were meant to produce perceptions of space that naturalized human difference. As already hinted above, difference was the pith of colonial and indeed apartheid philosophy and practice.

“Domestic colonialism” and apartheid were some of the most systematic forms of capitalism that deployed onomastic visuality as both a mechanism of creating, justifying and even moralizing conquest.⁹ Among many other places that could be named as a way of marking territory and inscribing a conquered identity on place, the Bantustan reveals some of the intended and unintended aesthetics of colonial onomastic visuality. It may be opportune here, therefore, that a discussion of the interface between place names, visuality and apartheid begins with the definition of the term Bantustan, i.e. to unpack, debunk and contextualise the place label, especially in relation to thought patterns, identities, politics and political economics of apartheid spatio-temporality. In other words, critical to a fuller comprehension of the political nuances of the onomastic Bantustan is some clarity on how apartheid visual toponyms projected, described and imagined place and space in ways that refract the politics and politicization of the notion of separate development.

Perhaps there is no better name that illustrates the race of power dynamics in the Bantustan than the name itself, and its many aliases such as “Homeland,” “Native Trust land,” “Black States,” etc. Of interest is how the visual effects of sights engendered by “Bantustan” concretize the idea of a separate physical space and reveal the political interests of the logic of institutionalised racial segregation that was to become the official policy of apartheid in 1948. Bertil Egero describes the Bantustans as “the cornerstone of separate development under apartheid,” implying in the process, the ironic ambiguity of the racial conceptions of “development” by the colonial administration.¹⁰ Like any other name, Bantustan is a verbal product of a thought that overtly, covertly and sometimes abstractly, relates to a psychological and ideological pattern and/or system. In this case, the system from which the existential urge to name a place is founded not only on manufactured significances of certain human differences. In fact, that system creates, as a way of self-defence, justification and preservation, the hegemonic necessity for visual mappings of both

the supposed human differences and their significances in relation to prevailing racial power configurations.

The visuals evoked by the term Bantustan manifest layers of apartheid thought processes and systems as well as methodologies of hegemonizing place and space. The political structures of these layers are best understood by closely analysing both the semantics of the term Bantustan and its pragmatic functions as it was visually operationalized to prosecute a racially hegemonic function. In view of the visual yet political nuance and function of Bantustan, its etymology is key to realizing and understanding the semantics and pragmatics of the name in the context of its historic usage. This is mainly because etymology reveals the label's morphological make in ways that reflect the forces informing the choices of parts of the term as well as the intended meanings of the term. Yet beyond reflecting pragmatic functions of the name and some of the possible influences of its political meanings, alienating the morphological parts of "Bantustan" also helps us to locate the structure and source of the aesthetic dynamic to the name. In other words, the act of joining the "parts" has the desired and sometimes undesired effect of creating the aesthetic texture of the constructed term. Many factors inspire this aesthetic in the label, not least of which are both the spatial and temporal situations in which the necessity to join morphological parts occurs.

Understanding visuality as inherently entangled with the semantic and pragmatic functions of Bantustan, etymology—at the heart of the aesthetic performativity of the name Bantustan—suggests the regime's preoccupations with creating perceptions that are both visually perceivable and ideologically internalizable. Perhaps a better way to comprehend the visual aesthetics of the name Bantustan as influenced by its etymology is to situate its usage historically, linguistically and visually. The objective is to establish the nature of the connections of the name "Bantustan" to certain hegemonic urgencies that necessitated the onomastic visualization of the place. As hinted above, the term Bantustan and its variants occupy a politically, economically and culturally defining moment in the history of racial relations in South Africa.¹¹ The time-space of this term and its coinage is marked by the colonial regime's hegemonic rhetoric; that is, the language, grammars and discourses of self-justification, (sometimes) persuasion and, of course (often), command. Let us consider the following apologia for apartheid offered by one of its forefront promoters, the sociologist and journalist Hendrik Verwoerd:

Nobody will deny that for the Native as well as for the European complete separation would have been the ideal if it had developed that way historically. If we had had here a white South Africa in the sense in which you have a white England and a white Holland and a white France, and if there had been a Native state somewhere for the Natives, and if this white state could have developed to a self-supporting condition as those European states have developed by themselves, then we should certainly not have had the friction and the difficulties which we have today. Surely it would have been an ideal state of affairs if we had not had these problems.¹²

What is characteristic about this defence of apartheid is not only the typical alignment of its futuristic goals with those of Europe, but more importantly (given the focus here on the hegemonic function of the term Bantustan), a purported acknowledgement and desire for Africans' quest for unbridled development. An important point to take out of this ironically ambiguous concern for the African's development is the attempt by the regime to project visually the Bantustan as a necessary and genuine mechanism of attaining equal development. The onomastic visuality of the term Bantustan leads to the question as to what aspects of this linguistic ambiguity in the term Bantustan create visual impressions of apartheid that may be interpreted as aligning the otherwise mutually divergent notions of separateness and development. This goes to the heart of the method of apartheid, illuminating the rhetorical strategies reinforcing the regime's racially systematic bigotry and pretense. In this light, the etymology of Bantustan, its semantic, pragmatic and indeed visual effect should be read in the context of not only apartheid rhetoric but also the underlying urgencies necessitating colonial rhetoricity.

The visual nuance in the name Bantustan plays a political and yet aesthetic function in the linguistic packaging and framing of the Bantustan as both a place and a concept in official notions of the desirability and practicality of separate development. Etymologically, Bantustan is derived from the joining of two distinct morphological elements—the prefix “Bantu-” and the suffix “-stan.” Both these morphological units manifest visual nuances that relate to place, space and human identity. Though generally used in reference to a unique ethnic and linguistic group of African people found mainly in central and southern Africa, Bantustan uses Bantu connotatively to designate black South Africans in general. Its usage as a prefix in the composite word Bantustan points to its capacity to engender difference—the term “Bantu” was never a reflexive term used by black Africans to identify themselves. In fact as many scholars such as Kaphagawani have argued, as an ethnic designation, the term Bantu has its origins in early twentieth century anthropological and ethnological studies that discovered commonalities in especially linguistic cultures among black people throughout Southern and Central Africa.¹³

For purposes of maintaining focus, this article does not dwell on the merits or lack thereof, of the logic behind lumping pervasively diverse linguistic and cultural groups under the umbrella designation of Bantu. The term is quite established and commonly used especially in reference to the people and languages of central and southern Africa. However, the term picked up aesthetic connotations through usage in racialized contexts in the formative years and heyday of apartheid. Kipkoech, for instance, reveals how, due to the pervasive colonial stereotyping of black Africans as inferior humans, inscribed on the essence of Bantuness, negative semantic effects that easily rubbed on to anything identified with the term Bantu.¹⁴ Kipkoech's description and explanation of the temporal semantics and pragmatics of the term Bantu in apartheid contexts is a launch pad to explaining the political function of apartheid visual onomastics. Kipkoech notes:

However, the same word (Bantu) was so abused in apartheid era South Africa that, understandably, it is still considered highly offensive. In fact *The Oxford Dictionary* has gone ahead to tag it as an “often offensive” word. The term got stigmatized partly because the successive apartheid governments had qualified any facility, though and meant to be inferior, “Bantu.” Thus we had Bantu Education, Bantu Homelands, Bantu Quarters, etc. all characterised by depravity.¹⁵

Kipkoech does not reflect on the visual nuance in why the term Bantu acquired pejorative meanings when used in political and policy discourses by the colonial regime. In other words, there is no clue in Kipkoech’s explanation as to how visual projections in the morphological unit Bantu facilitates the process of stigmatization which consequently leads to the systematic negativization of the Bantu as both a proper noun and prefix in compound terms such as Bantustan. This detail is critical, particularly when focused on the visual dynamic to the semantic and political aesthetics of the composite label Bantustan in the politics of place, space and the apartheid principle of separate development.

Wald provides a fascinatingly similar description and explanation of the negative associations of the term Bantu.¹⁶ He provides a more incisive explanation of the systematic pejorative application of the word Bantu and its connotations when used with black African references:

In this case, a term (Bantu) which originated in the linguistic literature became pejorative when it was expropriated for political purposes by the openly racist Apartheid regime in the context of the total socio-political disenfranchisement and economic exploitation of the African-origin peoples to whom this label was applied. The manner in which the term “Bantu” became tainted with racism in South Africa is clearly exemplified by comparing the South African colonialist Native Lands Act of 1913 with the Bantu Homelands Act of 1951, both extremely repressive legislative acts targeting the African-origin segments of South African society. The term “Native” for people subjected to European-origin domination throughout the world has long been recognised as pejorative, according to the attitudes reflected in its colonial and imperial uses.¹⁷

This quotation reveals two main ways in which attitudes are connected to place, place name/label and social hierarchies in apartheid South Africa. Both these ways reflect the importance of onomastic visuality in the process of framing and systematically entrenching the perception that people are worth where they stay. In this colonial set-up, where people stayed intricately connected to a place name and the perception of human worth that a name evokes. The cartographical restructuring and onomastic labelling of place in the formation of Bantustans was a direct manifestation of white agency just as the incapacity for self-inscription, ordering and naming of space was symptomatic of subjectivization. In this light, the demeaning

attachments to the term Bantu can be seen visualised in the Bantustan, which is physically, socially and economically drawn and identified (through onomastic labelling), by the regime.

Perhaps the most insightful part of Wald's explanation is his establishment of a political connection between place, placement and attitude. He argues that the term Bantu inherited the condescending textures of its predecessor "native" which was used in such racist legislation as the 1913 Native Lands Act. Clearly, the white colonial regime owned power and could not only to demarcate physical, social, economic and political cartographies of the nation but also to impose, in overt and complex ways, perceptions and identities of spaces that were in tandem with their symbolic political functions. As Egero notes, apartheid South Africa was a "property regime." Property, particularly land during colonialism, was inherently reflexive; that is, its physicality, among other things, was defined and therefore made possible by its name, refracted the identity of its owner.¹⁸ Land is an incredibly visual property, and apart from its physical spatiality, its name facilitates part of its visuality. In this view, imagined and real sights of vast white-owned tracts of land and minuscule Bantustans visually narrated the story of the physical power of colour while the visual aspects of their labels, especially Bantustan, told the story of the soft power of color.

However, the apartheid regime's mechanisms of valuing and devaluing human worth for hegemonic implications was not only limited to mystifications of entailments of race and property ownership (especially land). Through, *inter alia*, the racially-skewed land ownership legislation mentioned above, the colonial property regime defined and designated in visually onomastic terms, the physical yet social, economic, and political "places" of white and black people. One's identity was not merely a reflection of where they lived but more importantly, what where they lived was labelled and so visualised and perceived in public opinion. There are many studies in the psychology of place names that connect place names to social identities but also to some of the most pervasive factors and forces underlying the structure of societies horizontally and vertically.¹⁹ Consider, for instance, Guyot and Seethal's insights into the relationship between place and the identity of power in South Africa:

Place names, or toponyms, are directly related to the place of the people: place in which inhabitants are included, or from where they are excluded, as well as to "ideological and nation-building constructions" (Horsman, 2006:279). In general, individuals perceive spatial and mental places described by toponyms differently. Geographical analysis on change of place names is new in South Africa, and warrants research. This is particularly so because place naming is, from a geographic point of view, a territorialisation process that contributes to the identity of particular places, at different scales (Guillourel, 2003). This combination between place and scale creates various sets of identities. The change of

place names therefore constitutes a critical tool to analyse territorial restructuring in post-apartheid South Africa within a new nation-building context.²⁰

Although particularly focused on shifts in the ideology and practice of post-apartheid name changes, this quotation reveals the political meaning and significance of place names in the “new” South Africa in ways that refract the political meanings and significance of (re)naming places in apartheid South Africa. The key point in this quotation in relation to our discussion about the visual aesthetics of the designation Bantustan is the connection that Guyot and Seethal establish between spatiality and mentality.²¹ There are two forms of mentalities involved here. The first one is essentially colonial; it imagines place and place names/labels as constitutive aspects of the social, economic and political production of racial identity. The second form of mentality links to the first—it is a product of the probable internalization of apartheid notions of the significance of place and its onomastic designations, to determinations of the human worth of its inhabitants. The question, now, is how the label Bantustan may be read as conveniently identifying black people and spaces vis-à-vis the colonial regime’s political intentions?

Essentially, the term Bantu denotes humans in general. However, as deployed by the colonial regime in its strategic re-ordering and re-identification of space for hegemonic purposes, the prefix Bantu- in Bantustan is both a descriptor and racial concept. As hinted above, the descriptive dimension to the term connects to its visual yet racial function. This function constitutes part of colonial mechanisms of manufacturing difference—through isolating racial distinctions as well as inscribing on such distinctions, perceptions that naturalize the necessity of the racial separation of humans, their locations and development.

The suffix -stan is an “ancient Persian and/or Farsi word meaning country, nation, land, or place of, so, the country name of Afghanistan would then mean “homeland” of the Afghans, or place of the Afghans.”²² In this view, the combination of Bantu- and -stan denoted a black people’s land. However, at that point in the history of colonialism and its obsessions with inscribing value on racial difference, black (as signified by Bantu in the designation Bantustan) had long ceased to be a neutral designation of people of African descent. Black—and by implication Bantu—had in fact become a contrasting visual symbolism of all that stereotypically defined and characterized whiteness—order, rationality, progress, civility, and civilization, etc. Thus apart from imaging the colour of its inhabitants, blackness, as implied in the designation Bantustan was consciously or sub-consciously a part of the official grammars of identifying in order to naturalize the unequal status and depravity of the black space.

The colonial restructuring of land ownership and use created desirable white spaces and wretched black spaces.²³ In the broader colonial grand plan, these spaces were not the end in themselves. The desirability and depravity of such spaces

reflected what their names/labels compelled people to see. In the case of the designation Bantustan, the white superiority informing the racial land demarcations as envisioned by the Native Lands Act of 1913 and the Bantu Homelands Act of 1951, was not only a manifestation of a racist method of colonial hegemony. In fact, white superiority had become so pervasive that it naturally founded the basis upon which race-based identities of place and social groups were profiled “objectively.” Concretized and internalized through onomastic visual mappings, social identities derived from racialized place identities became sites of reference for subsequent constructions of stereotypes that defined and characterized black identity in preconceived racially crooked ways.

Effectively, the label Bantustan took on identity residues of its existential landscape. There are many narratives and scholarly inferences about how such imposed spatial and political identities inspired revolutionary mentalities and actions in variously defined Marxist-Leninist fashions. What did such forms of authority over landscapes and their identities mean for the social and indeed economic and political production of group identities for both the white oppressor and the oppressed blacks? This article has already hinted at how the strategic identification of black spaces as “Bantustans” evoked semantic associations that condemned its identity and negatively profiled its inhabitants. Ultimately, the label Bantustan became a visual cache of otherness—both of the space so designated and the people inhabiting it. Colonial mentalities thus encrusted visually upon spatialities in ways that displaced previous physical and onomastic visuals and indeed identities of the black space. Apartheid conceptions of space and the colour of agency to restructure and re-identify it, can thus be read in the visual aesthetics of the names/labels assigned to the space. The hegemony of the assigning force and the assigned identity is sustained by the extent to which this force is capacitated to forcefully and aesthetically reconfigure and naturalize perceptions and perspectives of place. Thus as a black space label, Bantustan did not only reveal what the place was called but also seen and thus identified.

The Entanglements of “Independent Homelands”: Apologetic Bantustan Labels

As used in reference to institutionally segregated black spaces, by 1994 the term Bantustan had been replaced with a few designations whose visual aesthetics indicate subtle associations with the colonial regime’s defence narrative. These labels were strategically chosen to aestheticize, by way of moralizing, the politics and attitudes behind apartheid’s separate development philosophy. Wellings and Black indicate some of these designations in their historical note on the lexical transitions of the term Bantustan:

“Bantustans” – These refer to areas designated by the South African government as “homelands” for the country’s African ethnic groups... In government circles, they are now known as “national states” or “black

states". Four of these are officially "independent" The others... have either received, or are about to receive, "self-governing status."²⁴

As is the case with the literal translation of Bantustan—black people's land--the *prima facie* impression of place engendered by the visual effects and affects of these onomastic designations of black spaces is positive. First impressions of spatial designations such as "Homeland," "Black States," "national states," and "independent states" connote black independence and sovereignty—the twin objectives of the ongoing liberation struggle. The question, again, concerns how onomastic designations that visually synchronized with the quintessential goal of the liberation struggle (black autonomy), can be read as what Biko called "[p]olitically ... the greatest single fraud ever invented by white politicians."²⁵

Perhaps the first and foremost explanation to the question above lies in the politics of name and identity ascription. So before we even consider the appropriateness or lack thereof of the various onomastic designations of the Bantustan, the crucial question of who gets to name or label who and what is of paramount importance. This is mainly because, as hinted above, names or any such onomastic designations of places are inherently reflective of power dynamics between namer and what is named. In the colonial moment overseen by a property regime, what is named (the place) is always a subject to its namer.²⁶ This means that what is named in part owes its visual significance and thus perception, identity and ultimately, being, to its namer. The absence, in black people, of the agency to name defining spaces is not merely a reflection of their political subalternity, but it is also an indication of the colonists' soft inhibitions of self-willed identities through naming. Here, the mantra "seeing is believing" best describes how visuality in onomastic designations of space excited the mental production of certain conceptions of space and its inhabitants. The mantra describes a political situation whereby naming a place is a spectacular act of exercising power through the inscription of self-serving visuals and identities of place. In light of the above, Bantustan aliases such as Homeland, Black States, national states, etc. were in fact not so ironical Freudian slips that betrayed hegemonic dimensions to both the Bantustan's physical, visual and onomastic constructedness. In this light, the designations do not conjure up visual images of homely autonomous black spaces but rather physical and ideological spaces of constrained black agency, as the following paragraphs will show.

Perhaps the biggest irony about these designations is not really that they visually image imposed notions of the black home/territory, and from it manufacture notions of homeliness based on distorted identities of the black space. The following contextual usage of some of the onomastic designations of the Bantustan provide clues vis-à-vis the hegemonic dimensions to onomastic visualization of Bantustans as desirable black spaces. In the quotation, the last president of apartheid South Africa, Frederik Willem de Klerk, invokes the Bantustan question to contend in an interview eighteen years post-Apartheid that "not all aspects of apartheid (were)

morally repugnant."²⁷ After emphasising that he had since offered an apology for the injustices of apartheid, he defends the same system by reinforcing what he perceived as the justice of apartheid's defining policy of separate development:

What I haven't apologised for is the original concept of seeking to bring justice to all South Africans through the concept of *nation states* essentially creating two separate states, one black and one white.... But the concept of giving, as the Czechs have it and the Slovaks have it, of saying that ethnic unities with one culture, with one language, can be happy and can fulfil their democratic aspirations in an own state, that is not repugnant.²⁸

A typical apartheid parallelism in this response sought to project the Bantustan as a symbolic archetype of African independence. As in apartheid defense discourses, the Bantustan, tagged here as a "nation"/"black state," is imaged as one of the two separate "states" (black and white), hence creating the illusion that it was of equal state status. The justice and morality of separation and separateness is thus leveraged on the supposed equal "stateness" of the Bantustan that is onomastically inscribed on the designations "black/nation state." The elevation of colour as the only variable in the constructedness and "development" of the black and white "states" essentially detoxifies under- and overtones of privilege, power and agency connoted by the designation white state. In effect, the so-called black state attains equal statehood and stateness on the stroke of the visual onomastic designation black state.

In the de Klerk quotation, all things being equal vis-à-vis the hegemonic intentions of the regime, visualizing the Bantustan as only a black version of the white state would identify it—not as a mere black place, but an empowered black space where black people, cultures, economy and traditions could flourish without the influences of white culture. The image of the Bantustan evoked by its onomastic designation as a black state would thus appear to moralize the notion of separateness by suppressing the material associations of blackness and promoting the immateriality of colour. In the same vein, separateness is repackaged as a virtue and even a method of enhancing the development and well-being of both the separate states and their constituent distinct races. Essentially, then, the visual effect of the designation black state as envisioned in de Klerk's usage seeks to influence people to perceive the goodness of seeing colour and not its material symbolisms.²⁹

Working at a relatively similar aesthetic plane as black state are the designations homeland and independent state. These labels foreground difference as a mark of autonomy. In these onomastic designations, racial difference disentangles from its well-established economic/political significations and becomes mystified in the apartheid narrative where it functions as a mechanism of liberation. Homeland and independent state suggest a teleological course of political becoming that leads to the desirable goal of stateness. The designations are in fact subtle defenses of the colonial model of black stateness seeking to essentially harness and concretize anti-

colonial energies and bring forward their notions of “arrival” (independence) to the now. The designations constructed figments of typical endings that both mimicked liberation struggle goals and superficially visualized the homeland and independent state as its quintessential manifestation.

To cite Biko, it can be argued here that one of the biggest frauds in the concept of the Bantustan as a colonial political solution was its deployment of visual onomastic designations that compelled black Africans not to (in William Shakespeare’s words) “doubt th’ equivocation of the fiend That lies like truth.”³⁰ Homeland uses the concept of home and its common inward-orientation to create and entrench innocuous notions of black stateness. In this sense, as designations that identified new landscapes, being a homeland was in fact a state and condition of arriving “home” from somewhere unhomey – the implied spatial entanglement with white South Africa. So in this light, part of what makes the homeland desirable is its difference – that which makes certain things local and homely and others alien and different. Markedly, implied in this covert onomastic persuasion to feel different yet homely in the homeland, is the imbedded oblivion to the absence of agency in subjects of the homeland, to circumscribe the terms and conditions of what is different and therefore homely in the Homeland. Visualizing “home” as a “land” and vice versa therefore involved inter alia exciting disinterest in anything existing outside manufactured spatial and imaginative margins of difference and implicitly, the homeland. Thus part of being a homeland” as enthused by the visual configurations of the designation became the ironic pride of confinement. This pride was mystified and imposed on the homeland subject as constituting virtuous difference and therefore a prerequisite to feeling and being a homeland.

What emerges out of this discussion so far is that these aliases of Bantustan were not politically uninterested designations that verbalized non-abstractive objective truths about colonial politics. Rather, the designations advertently and inadvertently entered the rhetoric of apartheid apologia and inscribed on the fulcrum of its separate development discourse, an aesthetic of place and space that created a veneer of African autonomy in their allocated Bantustans. The projected political end was convenient to the apartheid regime’s hegemonic plan as it was inconvenient to the liberation movements—it was a mirage of equality in separateness that would, in Fanonian terms, restrain the native’s envy for the “settler town” and, by the same token, confine him to the “native town” or Bantustan.³¹

The Ethnic Strand: Visualizing (to Exploit) Black Difference through Naming

A discussion on the political effects and effects of Bantustan onomastic visibility cannot overlook the specific names given to the Bantustans. In this sense, we shift focus from Bantustan labels to the names given to homelands, placing particular attention on the ethnic mappings of their onomastic connotations. Our interest in these names is on how their subtle political innuendos can be read as reflective of the names’ political usability in apartheid’s hegemonic grand plan. The ethnic dynamic

to the names can be easily discerned as inscribed on the various ethnicities used to identify the ethnic group as “independent nations,” such as Venda for the Venda ethnic group and Bophuthatswana for the Tswana people. The ethnic groups also included the “self-governing” Lebowa (Sepedi speaking groups), Gazankulu (Tsonga/Shangani speaking groups), KwaNdebele (isiNdebele speaking group), Qwaqwa (for the Southern Sotho speaking group) and KwaZulu (isiZulu speaking groups). It may be opportune here before analysing the visual propensities of the names to engage views on the political significance of the ethnic root in constructions of these black spaces.

Many scholars have pointed out the destabilizing effect, on the liberation effort, of ethnic frictions caused by Bantustans.³² Similarly, many critics have indicated the ethnic limitation to notions of liberation and independence offered by the apartheid regime. Phillips’s historical perspective on ethnic antagonisms caused by the Bantustans reveal the socio-political consequences of the Bantustans on black South African solidarity and unity of purpose vis-à-vis the ongoing liberation struggle:

The bantustans also added a particularly ethno-nationalist dimension to this.... Premised on ethnicity, the bantustans necessarily required the development of “ethnic” citizenships across South Africa. There were cases of violence breaking out in “multi-ethnic” bantustans as their leaders tried to create a “national identity.” Bophuthatswana, split into seven non-contiguous pieces of land in an attempt to absorb the full Tswana population across the country, found itself in multiple ethnic battles. Tswana speakers in Thaba Nchu, a small fragment Bophuthatswana near Bloemfontein, began demanding the removal of the large percentage of Southern Sothos from the Tswana area. In a well-publicized removal, the Sotho residents were moved off the Qwaqwa land and, with the support of Qwaqwa’s chief minister, were settled on a former white farm, Botshabelo. In Bushbuckridge, on the border of Lebowa and Gazankulu, ethnic violence sparked in the mid-1980s, as homeland leaders fought over borders.³³

Phillips’s observations suggest that despite the guise of black African freedom and autonomy attached to apartheid promotional discourses, Bantustans in fact contributed to various overt and complex curtailments that threatened both the theory and praxis of the liberation struggle. Besides the forceful capture of undocumented black trespassers in the white nation and their violent removal under the Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970, the Bantustans were also a form of soft violence—not only on black people’s minds and places, but on the roots and routes of their self-discovery and charting of alternative forms of stateness outside European and colonial models. This disruption of evolving forms of disparate precolonial nationalisms occurred in many forms of soft violence but the interest now lies in the role played by Bantustan visual onomastics.

As hinted above, the question that easily arises in discourses on the political aesthetics of Bantustan names concerns their ethnic dimension. This question is crucial not least because it compels us to reflect on the complex lures of ethnic nationalism as it manifested in the form of the Bantustan. The names given to the

various Bantustans reveal unique visual effects that illuminate deeper political urges and urgencies informing their ethnic pivots. Perhaps the most important point we have to make in relation to the ethnic dynamic to Bantustan names is that they did not just distinguish ethnic groups but more importantly, visualized as a way of dividing them. Onomastic visuality played a critical role in both processes; that is, distinguishing ethnic groups and dividing them. We can, to this end, read Bantustan names as Andrew Muldoon read colonial Britain's attempts to control the Raj in India, as "a bait and switch tactic."³⁴ Understanding this divide-and-rule strategy entails comprehending the subtle workings of onomastic visuality in facilitating ethnic-inspired ways of self-definition and spatial demarcation.

Visual effects and affects produced by Bantustan names reflect the nature and political economy of (ethnic) difference. The names are ethnic in one way or the other, referring directly refer to similarly named ethnic groups or in the case of Gazaland (named after the old Shangani/Tsonga Gaza Empire) indirectly to people of Shangani and Tsonga origins. Essentially, these names redefine blackness by subverting its "skinfolk is kinfolk" suggestiveness critical to the formation and sustenance of a broad resistance *esprit de corps*. The names thus projected ethnic difference as the fundamental component of being both a black and idyllic black nation. The same rationality of imagining nationness deployed by the colonial regime in defence of the notion of separate development (apartheid) is at play here. As was the case with racial difference, ethnic difference was projected as a virtuous and moral mechanism of preserving original identities from the influences of other ethnicities.

Yet beyond race and origins, what united people grouped into a national entity was their common privileges or lack thereof, accorded to them by the different spaces—making them both local and national.³⁵ Despite its own diverse linguistic and ethnic makeup, while the white nation avoided further ethnic fragmentations, it facilitated the splintering of the black nation into several ethnic-based entities. In effect, whites in the white nation identified as South Africans—a unifying name that visually enhanced white people's imagining of each other as a national community based on color. The name South Africa thus suppressed lingering memories of intra-white ethnic rivalries and conflicts such as the Anglo-Boer war (1899-1902). As for the black nation, though, nationality was constructed for them as something more fragmented than especially what the liberation movements through their *isizwe esimnyama* (the black nation) campaign imagined as the idyllic black nation. For a white regime that was clearly aware of the danger posed by a united resistance effort, a politically convenient site to demarcate black national communion was ethnicity. It is no wonder, then, that the regime promoted Bantustan names that imagined the prospects of black independence as bound up with black ethnic difference.

Despite the broader liberation movement's unifying self-identification as *isizwe esimnyama*, the ethnic basis upon which Bantustans were named and their citizens required to imagine themselves as what Benedict Anderson would call an imagined

(national) community, constantly visualised inert differences that could potentially stir urges of othering fellow members of the *isizwe esimnyama*.³⁶ Seeing and identifying Venda (both the people and the Bantustan), for instance, now meant visualizing difference, not only from the white nation South Africa, but also from KwaZulu, Boputhatswana, KwaNdebele, etc. and indeed people of Zulu, Tswana and Ndebele ethnic origins. Similarly, the Sotho name QwaQwa invited perceptions of the land's identity that synchronize with the language of the name by *inter alia* distinguishing and separating it from others. QwaQwa was thus reconfigured onomastically and linguistically for identification, foremost, as a Sotho place whose blackness transcended its opposition to whiteness and the white state to include its onomastic and linguistic difference from other Bantustans and their occupants.

The naming of Gazankulu promoted notions of blackness and nationness that encouraged memories of political particularism reminiscent of the Shangani/Tsonga Gaza empire. It was therefore easier for people in Gazankulu to see and identify themselves and their Bantustan not in terms of prevailing colonial curtailments, as they naturally would had they perceived themselves as the black nation. The name Gazankulu visualized a possible return to the independent Gaza state whose independence and stateness was defined by land boundaries and ethnic difference similar to those implied in the Bantustan offer by the colonial regime. Imagining the new Gazankulu was thus an emotionally guided process of recovering the old Gaza state and its inflections of independence founded on Shangani/Tsonga particularism.

The ethnic element to Bantustan names motivated visions of the ethnic self as defining a more conceivable and rewarding notion of black independence. This onomastic guidance of vision, perception and consciousness rendered the notion of *isizwe esimnyama* unnecessarily too protracted and redundant in the quest for black independence. Ways of seeing and conceptualizing difference were thus altered linguistically and onomastically in ways that could make people prioritise the black ethnic nation over the black racial nation. Thus as the white nation found strength *inter alia* through its unity of racial purpose reflected in the unifying name South Africa, ethnic Bantustan names re-routed "national" energies and urgencies from the black nation to the black ethnic Bantustan.

Conceptions of the Bantustan informed by ethnic difference thus created what Marxists would call a "false consciousness" of being a black nation. We are loosely citing this Marxist term here for its fascinating probing of the ways in which one condition and state of being (false consciousness) can be viewed as at once a catalyst of (and an impediment to) achieving the black nation. False consciousness is a product of a systematic conditioning of perception that not only naturalizes easy options but also suspects the necessity of protracted, difficult ones. In this view, Bantustan names reconfigured the ethnic to constitute the national in ways that rendered ideas of black stateness beyond the ethnic group gratuitously redundant. Seeing, perceiving and conceptualizing the Bantustan KwaZulu, for instance, meant, among other things, defining the self in terms of ethnic apartness. Becoming and being apart are a processes and condition that stem from consciousness. In this

sense, ethnicized Bantustan names such as Boputhatswana re-conceptualized seeing the self as essentially unseeing the other. Thus part of being the Bantustan Boputhatswana was also *not* being KwaZulu or Venda. More importantly, being Boputhatswana was the consciousness that seeing KwaZulu and Venda, for instance, would be possible only at the expense of seeing and being Boputhatswana.

Conclusion: Hegemonized Toponyms

This discussion engaged with some of the ways in which seemingly inconsequential socio-cultural yet political practices, particularly names and labels of black places, could become part of a hegemonic grammar that aesthetically conjured up favourable visions of the apartheid regime. Placing special focus on the visual effects and affects of names associated with the Bantustan, the discussion revealed how place names easily became part of a surreptitious method of politically conditioning Africans' minds to limit their rational comprehension of the hegemonic effects of Bantustans. Beginning with the term Bantustan itself and ending with particular Bantustan names, the article noted how place names associated with the Bantustan reveal a complex connection between place names and racial cartographies of both land and power. Yet beyond the segregative textures of labels such as Bantustan, Native Land, Black States etc. were the ethnic visibility of names of particular Bantustans, shown above to facilitate aesthetically an illusion of the Bantustan as the archetype of the free black nation. The visual effect of the name and the identity of place it created strategically synchronized with the immediate and most pressing aspiration of the African people; that is, self-governance and autonomy. Bantustan names visualized the ethnic facet to African being as critical to the process of expediting the attainment of self-determination. Independence and nationness thus inscribed aesthetically onto ethnicity in a persuasive way that created the impression that Bantustans were the teleological ends of the liberation journey.

In some cases such as the name Gazankulu, the ethnic aspect resuscitated memories of the precolonial independent state that was mostly ethnically imagined and constituted, thus creating a tantalizing vision of a superficial return to the old, nostalgic ethnic state. Among many other fundamental elisions, the superficiality of this vision was in its onomastic visualization of an old ethnic state minus its old markers and paraphernalia of stateness—especially its precolonial cartographical boundaries. It is important to note that although much of the old markers of segregated territories such as cartographic boundaries have since been dismantled, “durable legacies of the Bantustan” persist in various forms in post-1994 South Africa. These forms, including visual onomastics, reflect the extent to which, as a hegemonic mechanism, apartheid's visual onomastic practices targeted the psychology of its victims through, among other ways, politicizing their sense of difference informed by spatially-mapped ethnic boundaries. In this light, the endurance of Bantustan names such as KwaZulu, QwaQwa, Venda, etcetera does reflect the value of ethnic exceptionalism in identity formation and a lingering desire

for a return a precolonial ethnic sense of group identity which was defined by known marks of territory. However, beyond reflecting the mnemonic function of the onomastic designations, the endurance of Bantustan names and labels and their visually aesthetic political mappings also reveals the complexity and difficulty of negotiating (to unlearn) imposed notions of naming, perceiving, relating to, and knowing forcefully named, labelled and identified places.

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Notes

- 1 Ramutsindela 2001.
- 2 Campbell 1999.
- 3 Lekgoathi 2017.
- 4 Chisholm 2017.
- 5 Gibbs 2014, p. 6.
- 6 Mabin 1991.
- 7 Jones 1999.
- 8 Nyambi, Mangena and Pfukwa 2016.
- 9 Carter et al. 1967.
- 10 Egero 1991, p. 7.
- 11 Drummond 1991.
- 12 Cited in Schwerin 2001, p. 3.
- 13 Kaphagawani 2012.
- 14 Kipkoech 2015, p. 14.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Wald 2018.
- 17 Ibid., p. 60.
- 18 Egero, p. 1991, p. 37.
- 19 See, for example Clark et al. 2014.
- 20 Guyot and Seethal 2007, pp. 2-3.
- 21 Ibid., p. 3.
- 22 See the Web link: <https://www.worldatlas.com/aatlas/infopage/stan.htm>
- 23 Hanlon 1986.
- 24 Cited in Egero 1991, p. 6.
- 25 Cited in Ally and Lissoni 2012, p. 1.
- 26 Egero 1991, p. 37.
- 27 Laing 2012.

28 Ibid.

29 See, for example, Westaway 2012.

30 Shakespeare 2008, p. 246.

31 Fanon 1963, p. 89. We are using the masculine pronoun here to emphasise (as did Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*) the masculinization of both colonial power and the natives' reactions to it. This is certainly not to imply that African women were not part of the colonial design nor that they were not affected by colonialism. Our intention is to highlight the colonist's greatest fears (the native invasion of the "settler town") and where that fear resided – the native man who, in Fanon's critique of what he calls the "native's look of envy", is enchanted by the prospects of not only sleeping in the settler's house but also with the settler's wife.

32 See, for example, Southall 1982; Khunou 2009; Ramutsindela 2007.

33 Phillips 2017, p. 8.

34 Muldoon 2009, p. 7.

35 Pickles and Weiner 1991.

36 Anderson 1990.

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