

Descriptive Zulu Placenames of San Origin

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Although the meanings of Zulu placenames are important as part of the culture of the Zulu people, these meanings are frequently uncertain, and various interpretations of a name are sometimes encountered. The reason is that many names, particularly those of natural features such as watercourses and mountains, are ancient, in the present KwaZulu-Natal frequently being of Bushman (or San) origin, but subsequently adapted into the Zulu phonological and orthographic systems. Such names would tend to be primarily descriptive of the color, shape or other characteristic of the named feature, or to designate the feature itself. In some instances the meanings have been preserved as part of the oral tradition, in others recourse may be had to toponymic configurations, sometimes revealing Bushman (or San) words fossilized in the placename but otherwise not in the Zulu vocabulary or lexicon.

KEYWORDS Geographical names, San placenames, Zulu placenames, Khoisan influence on Zulu placenames

Introduction

Scholars agree that most placenames had meaning when first created (Nicolaisen, 1976: 3), that which was in the minds of the people who first gave and used the name (Sedgefield, 1969: 1, 5). The primary aim of onomastic research is to determine this meaning, so that “something which is now opaque might be made transparent again . . . without this maxim there would be no point in, and therefore no scholarly discipline of, the study of names” (Nicolaisen, 1976: 3).

The meanings of placenames are a valuable part of the cultural heritage of a people, and, in the case of preliterate peoples, are frequently preserved as part of their oral tradition. Koopman (2002: 135) states that “the meanings of Zulu place names have always had a fascination for non-Zulu visitors, and recently have become a valued part of the Zulu culture offered to tourists.” However, he notes that surprisingly little has been published on Zulu placenames, and that “Searching for the origins of Zulu place names often brings to light a number of conflicting

interpretations” (Koopman, 2002: 135). While conducting field research into Zulu placenames in the Drakensberg in the 1980s, he discovered that local Zulu-speaking residents themselves frequently did not know the origin of Zulu placenames in their own area. When he inquired from older residents how it was that a place had come to be named, he often received the reply: “*Asazi, safika likhona*” (We don’t know, it [the name] was here when we came here).

The ancestors of the Zulu migrated southwards from the Great Lakes regions of Equatorial Africa in small groups or clans (Krige, 1975: 595–596), reaching the present KwaZulu-Natal between fifteen hundred and two thousand years ago (Maggs, 1989: 29; Mazel, 1989: 13). In the process they came into contact with the Later Stone Age hunter-gatherers, who “covered the whole of southern Africa from the Zambezi Valley to the Cape” (Lee and DeVore, 1976: 5), and who inhabited the area now known as KwaZulu-Natal for between ten thousand and thirty thousand years (Mazel, 1989: 12).

These hunter-gatherers were referred to as *Bushmen* by European settlers when they confronted them in the early nineteenth century (Mazel, 1989: 22). However, the name *Bushman* is regarded by many as derogatory (Omer-Cooper, 1987: 3), and the name *San* is frequently used instead.

Both San and Zulu were preliterate, and no written records attest to the physical, social, cultural, economic and linguistic interaction that took place between them during the centuries that they inhabited the area (Duminy and Guest, 1989). Over the course of time the San completely disappeared in the area, and the unrecorded San languages became extinct (Argyle, 1986: 53).

However, traces of San languages have been discerned in Zulu. The clicks in the Nguni languages, including Zulu, were taken from the San languages (Traill, 1978: 137), and numerous Zulu words are borrowings from Khoisan (Khoikhoi or “Hottentot” and San) (Louw, 1974: 46).

The present study assumes that the San, who inhabited the area, gave names to rivers, mountains, and other features, and that at least some San names were adopted by the incoming Nguni, but adapted to the Nguni phonological system. As Pettman (1931: 10) points out,

subsequent occupants of the territory have frequently taken over the place names from those they dispossessed, but in so doing — their meaning being unknown to them — they have accommodated them in sound and form to words that were known to them; others have been translated into the language of the newcomers; others, like worn coins, have had their distinctive features so nearly effaced by phonetic abrasion that only the most patient and careful examination will serve to ascertain what those distinctive features were, while some appear to be beyond recovery.

Since placenames have a power of survival that other words do not have, due to their meaningfulness as *names* even when they have become meaningless as *words* (Nicolaisen, 1976: 4), some of the ancient San placenames have persisted, but in a form adapted to the language of the newcomers.

San tribes and languages

Bleek’s *Bushman Dictionary* (1956) includes words from twenty-nine languages and dialects. On the basis of similarities in the roots of words, in some grammatical

constructions, and so forth, these have been classified into three groups, namely the Northern, Central, and Southern Group, and reference numbers have been assigned to them e.g. S₁, S₂, S₃; C₁, C₂, C₃; N₁, N₂, N₃, etc. (Bleek, 1929: [i]).

The following are the names and reference numbers of San languages and dialects from which words occur that are cognate with extinct San words adapted into Zulu and occurring as placename components, and the regions which the speakers of these San languages inhabited or still inhabit (Bleek, 1929: [i]; 1956: [iii-iv]).

Southern Group

S ₁ : /Xam	Old Cape Colony, south of Orange River
S ₂ : //ǀ !ke	Gordonia and Griqualand West
S _{2a} : #Khomani	Northern Gordonia
S _{2b} : //Kxau	Near Kimberley
S ₃ : Batwa	Lake Chrissie, Mpumalanga
S ₄ : /Auni	Between Nossob and Auob (Auhoup)
S ₅ : Sesarwa	Kakia, Southern Kalahari
S ₆ : /Nu //en	Upper Nossop and Auhoup

Northern Group

N ₁ : Auen	Northern Kalahari
N _{1a} : Nogau	Omuramba-Epikuro and Naukluft, Namibia
N ₂ : Kung	Ngami to Grootfontein to Okavango
N ₃ : !O !kuṅ	Eastern half of Central Angola

Central Group

C ₁ : Hietjware	Near Tati, Zimbabwe
C ₂ : Naron	Near Sandfontein, west of Oas
C ₃ : Hadza	At Lake Eyassi, Tanzania

Non-IPA symbols

The San languages are characterized by clicks. These have been standardized in writing as

- (a) /, the dental or alveolar fricative click, pronounced by placing the tip of the tongue against the upper front teeth or alveolus and withdrawing it rapidly;
- (b) //, the retroflex fricative click, made by spreading the tip of the tongue against the front palate and withdrawing it gently backwards, with a sucking sound; pronounced by some individuals like the Zulu lateral click, the suction taking place through the side molars, and therefore also sometimes called the lateral click;
- (c) !, the cerebral or palato-alveolar click, pronounced with the tongue-tip placed firmly on the point of division between palate and alveolus, the back of the tongue placed against the velum and the sides of the tongue against the side upper gums, and releasing the tongue-tip sharply downwards, the resulting click resembling the sound of a cork being drawn from a bottle;

- (d) \neq , the alveolar click, formerly called the palatal click, pronounced with the upper part of the tongue behind the tip pressed firmly against the gum-ridge behind the central upper teeth, the back of the tongue raised to touch the velum, and the sides of the tongue raised to complete the space of rarefaction between velum and alveolus, and bringing the front of the tongue sharply down, the resulting click resembling the sound made by a child when tasting something sweet;
- (e) the labial click, or lip click, usually represented in writing as a circle with a dot in the middle;
- (f) the retroflex click, variously represented in writing as !! or ///;
- (g) the symbol ! , indicating that the preceding vowel is “pressed;”
- (h) the symbol : , indicating that the preceding vowel is a long one.

The San languages are tonal languages. A high tone is indicated by the symbol $\bar{\text{~}}$, a low tone by the symbol $\underline{\text{~}}$, a rising tone by the symbol / and a falling tone by the symbol \ (Bleek, 1929: i; Bleek, 1956: 640; Traill, 1978: 137–138).

Relatedness of San languages

Although the San languages are many thousands of years old, “our knowledge of the languages of the Bushmen, past and present, is mostly very incomplete and is based on extremely sketchy and inadequate accounts” (Traill, 1978: 137). There is some disagreement as to whether all the San languages are cognate, descended from a common ancestor, or whether there are different San language families.

Languages are considered to be related if sufficient similarities between them can be demonstrated. The San languages have traditionally been said to be related because of “obvious resemblances: the use of clicks, grammatical similarities and a supposedly large number of cognate words” (Traill, 1978: 144). It has more recently been argued that, instead of there being a single Khoisan family of languages, incorporating Khoikhoi (“Hottentot”) and San (“Bushman”) languages, there are four “totally unrelated language groups” (Traill, 1978: 143). The issue of contention centers on the requirement of a set of rules “which could systematically convert a significant number of words in one language to comparable words in the other” (Traill, 1978: 144). No such rules have as yet been formulated, and Traill (1978: 145) concludes that “the mere lack of conversion rules is not an adequate reason for rejecting a relationship . . . no-one would wish to claim therefore that these are all separate languages; they are overwhelmingly and obviously similar.”

Although the Khoikhoi and San languages are regarded as linguistic relatives of each other (Traill, 1978: 137), the grammatical systems of these languages manifest such great linguistic diversity that “it is not possible to provide a general ‘grammar of the Bushman languages’, nor indeed is it possible to refer to ‘typical characteristics’, since they do not exist” (Traill, 1978: 139). Furthermore, it seems impossible to determine which San languages are related to which. As Bleek (1929: 6) points out,

the dividing lines are not sharp. S₅ and S₆ are much nearer N₁ and N₂ than S₁ and S₂ are, and C₁ is a veritable link between the Northern Group and C₂, which again is a step nearer Nama. And Nama becomes even more interesting by the comparison. A study of

the vocabulary shows that it shares a number of its roots with one or more of the Bushman languages. Nor is it always with the same one; though most frequently the likeness is to words in C₁ and C₂, yet sometimes one, sometimes another language shows the Nama root, even that spoken by dwellers at Lake Chrissie, who do not seem to have been in contact with them. . . . The distribution of races and the distribution of languages does not necessarily coincide.

Aspects of Zulu language

Names, in Zulu as in other languages, are nouns, and to understand Zulu placenames, it is necessary to take cognizance of the structure of nouns and the noun class system (Koopman, 2002: 267). Each noun consists of a stem and a prefix. The stem conveys the meaning of the word, while the prefix indicates number (singular or plural), concord (which set of concordial agreement should be employed for agreement with other parts of speech in a sentence), and so forth. The class prefixes in Zulu are as follows (cf. Doke and Vilakazi, 2005: xvii, and Koopman, 2002: 268):

<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>	
Class 1:	um-, umu-	class 2:	aba-
class 1a:	u-	class 2a:	o-
class 3:	umu-, um	class 4:	imi-
class 5:	i(li)	class 6:	ama-
class 7:	isi-, is-	class 8:	izi-
class 9:	im-, in- etc.	class 10:	izim-, izin-
class 11:	u(lu)-		
class 14:	ubu-		
class 15:	uku-		
[class 16:	pha-]		
[class 17:	uku-]		

Note:

- Class 10 serves as plural class for classes 9 and 11.
- Classes 12 and 13 are not found in Zulu.
- Class 16 does not form nouns in Zulu, but only locative adverbs.
- Class 17 is mainly of adverbial significance with shortened prefix ku-.

Koopman (2002: 114–115) explains that Zulu placenames, like other nouns, also have a locative inflection, typically with the prefix *e-* and one of the suffixes *-ini*, *-eni*, *-ini* or *-weni*, e.g. *eThekwini*, *Empangeni*. Some names take the prefix *o-* instead of *e-*, e.g. *oFeni*, and some have no suffix, but for the most part locatives fit the pattern of *eLangeni* and *eMthunzini*. The locative form is generally determined by the manner in which the noun or name is used in a sentence. Thus in a locative context the locative form must be used, e.g. *eMgungundlovu*, whereas in non-locative contexts the form *uMgungundlovu* is used.

In tracing San influence on Zulu placenames it can in some cases be demonstrated that Zulu prefixes and suffixes are adaptations of San demonstrative locative adverbs. However, each case must be considered individually, as the investigation of San influence on African language placenames has only recently begun and patterns may only emerge by comparison of a large number of elements.

As with peoples all over the world, the placenaming of the San began with giving names to geographical objects in the near vicinity of their living or hunting grounds which were of importance to daily life (Kadmon, 2000: 4). Pettman (1931: 10) is of the opinion that “Broadly speaking the place names of primitive peoples consist largely of word pictures descriptive of natural scenery and physical features.” Kadmon (2000: 5) agrees, stating that “In general, early names were *primary* descriptive ones expressed in local terms and language.”

Feature type

In referring to natural features, one would in some cases refer to the feature in question, for example “that hill there,” or “the cave.”

eNtubeni. This is the name of a mountain pass, and means “at the pass.” *eNtubeni* is derived from the Zulu word *intuba*, “pass” (Koopman, 2002: 114), also “opening, passage” (Doke and Vilakazi, 2005: 803), *in-* being the class suffix, *thuba* being the stem: the Zulu aspirated alveolar explosive consonant *th* becomes *nt* under the nasal influence of the homorganic *n* in the prefix. The placename *eNtubeni* is formed by the addition of the locative affixes *e-* and *-eni* to the stem *thuba*, which is cognate with the Naron (C2) word *dauba* and the Hiet[ware (C1) word *dhau* “path” (Bleek, 1929: 64): the Zulu aspirated alveolar explosive consonant *th* of *thuba* corresponds to the San alveolar explosive consonant with aspirated efflux *dh* of *dhau*. In the Zulu language no two vowels may occur together as a diphthong or vowel cluster or, as Koopman (2002: 287) puts it, “the Zulu language does not permit two vowels to come together.” In order to avoid the occurrence of two vowels alongside each other in Zulu, various devices are resorted to, such as vowel elision, coalescence, or insertion of intervocalic consonants. In the adaptation of the component *dauba* the San vowel cluster *au* is coalesced to Zulu *u* to obviate the impermissible vowel sequence *au* in Zulu. The component *ni* of the name *eNtubeni* is cognate with the Hadza (C3) demonstrative locative *ni*, an ending meaning “in,” e.g. *zaiko-ni* “in the south” (Bleek, 1956: 146). In the case of the name *eNtubeni* the recorded meaning of “pass” thus accords with that of San words cognate with the root *thuba*.

Itala is the name of a game reserve north of Louwsburg. Also encountered as *Ithala*, the name is said to be derived from the Zulu word *tala* (*itala*) “shelf” (Colenso, 1884: 585); *thala* (*i(li)thala*) “shelf; raised platform in a hut” (Doke and Vilakazi, 2005: 782). This meaning of *it(h)ala* is thought to be derived from the primary San meaning of “flat (object).” Viewed from a distance the mountain is seen to have a flat though slanting summit, and this characteristic was remarkable enough to have led to the name in the first place. The initial vowel *I-* of the name *Itala* is the Zulu prefix; the component *ta* is cognate with the /Xam (S1) and //ŋ !ke (S2) noun *tā*: “flat” (Bleek, 1929: 39), i.e. “the flat one;” and the component *la* is cognate with the Batwa (S3) and Sesarwa (S5) demonstrative adverb and pronoun *la* “there, that” (Bleek, 1956: 129). *Itala* is thus an adapted San name that means approximately “that flat one there.” The insertion of the aspiration in the name of the Ithala Game Reserve, formerly *Itala*, famed for its Bushman paintings, and the home of San for thousands of years, was thus a further step in the Zulu adaptation of the name.

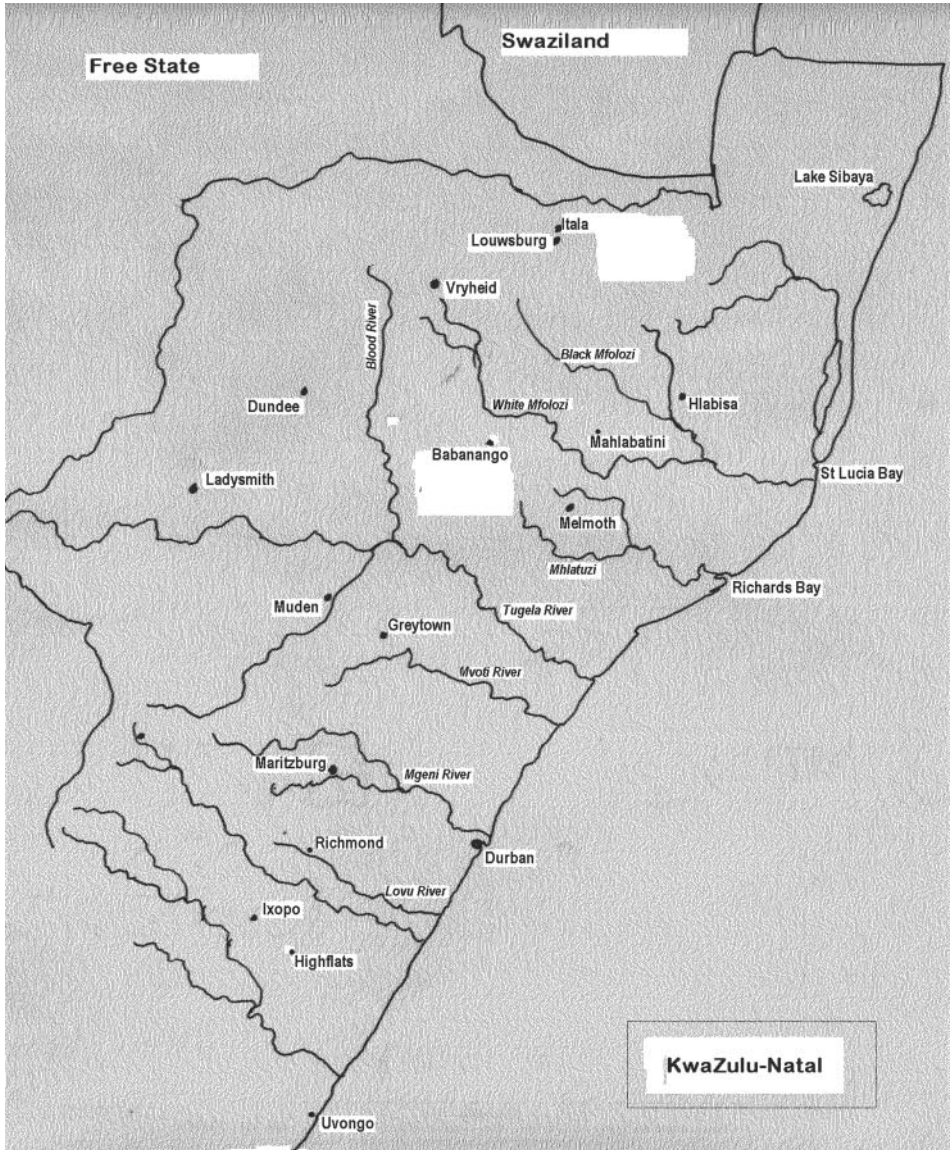


FIGURE 1 Descriptive names in KwaZulu-Natal.

Ngongoma, the name of a narrow ravine northeast of Louwsburg and one between Ixopo and Highflats, is derived from *ngongoma* (*ingongoma*) a “*hlonipha*” term for *ingozi* “severe wound, serious scar” (Botha, 1977: 176; Doke and Vilakazi, 2005: 558). *Hlonipha* or avoidance language entails “the use of regularly recognised alternative forms for certain common words” (Koopman, 2002: 18). The verb *hlonipha* means “avoid in conversation the use of words which contain the radical of the name of certain persons to whom such respect is due; substitute a fresh term for a word avoided due to respect according to Native custom” (Doke and Vilakazi, 2005: 335).

Research currently in progress into *hlonipha* terms shows that they are sometimes of San origin. Botha (1977: 176) points out that *Ngongoma* is the name of a narrow ravine, and that is what the name means, cognate with the Kung (N2) word //kōŋ-//kōnō, //kon//kōnō, //ko//konu “ravine, water running between steep banks” (Bleek, 1956: 586, 589). The Zulu velar voiced nasal compound *ng*, comprising the alveolar nasal consonant *n* plus voiced velar explosive consonant *g*, approximates the San retroflex fricative click with ejected velar nasal efflux, //k̠. The *-ma-* of the component *ngoma* is the old masculine singular ending preserved in some dialects as the voiced bilabial consonant *b(a)*. The final *a* may be the Zulu vowel ending, since Zulu words end in vowels (Koopman, 2002: 287). In this case it is likely that the *hlonipha* term’s meaning of “severe wound, serious scar” was derived from the original meaning of “narrow ravine” on the basis of its resemblance to the natural feature.

Ntunja is the Zulu name for *Gatberg*, a peak in the Drakensberg north-east of Dragon’s Back (Raper, 2004: 109). Research has shown that where a feature has more than one name, each from a different language, these names frequently have the same meaning (Nienaber and Raper, 1977: 142–144; 1980: 20–25). In the present case the name *Gatberg*, Afrikaans for “hole mountain,” is thought to have a meaning the same as, or similar to, *Ntunja*, a name derived from the Zulu noun *ntunja* (*intunja*) “small aperture, orifice, small hole; tunnel” (Doke and Vilakazi, 2005: 609). Nicolaisen (1976: 173) points out that the names of natural features, especially watercourses, are transmitted from language to language, frequently involving three or more different language strata over a long period of time. This applies equally to names of mountains, which are also often ancient. The language strata involved in the case of *Intunja* are Dutch or Afrikaans, Zulu and San. The component *In-* of *Intunja* is the Zulu prefix; the component *tu* is cognate with the /Xam (S1) and //ŋ!ke (S2) word *tu*: “hole” (Bleek, 1956: 239), and the component *nja* of the name is cognate with the Batwa (S3) demonstrative locative morpheme *nja* “that is” (Bleek, 1956: 147). It would thus seem that the stem of the word *intunja* is actually *tunja* and the prefix *in-*, and that the stem is thus not *ntunja* as given by Doke and Vilakazi (2005: 609).

Sibaya, the name of a lake in north-eastern KwaZulu-Natal, is interpreted as “the shut-in one,” “*Die Ingeslotene*” (Botha, 1977: 197), from *baya* (*isibaya*) “cattle-kraal, sheep-fold; horseshoe shape, circle (with only one opening or none at all)” (Doke and Vilakazi, 2005: 69). The reason given for the name is that the 20 mile sheet of water, which has no outlet, was reminiscent of a cattle-byre (Botha, 1977: 198). The name, however, probably pre-dates the existence of cattle-byres or sheep-folds of the incoming Zulu. A more directly descriptive explanation links the component *siba* to the Hietjware (C1) word *jiba*, *džiba* “lake, pool” (Bleek, 1956: 33), the Zulu alveolar fricative consonant *s* approximating the San alveolar affricative *dž*. If that is the case, the stem of the placename is not *baya*, and the explanation of “cattle-kraal,” etc., is a folk-etymological one, a seeking after meaning based on the appearance of the lake.

Descriptive: color

Babanango, the name of a town, a stream and a hill, is the first name that Koopman (2002: 135) chooses to illustrate the historico-cultural background of Zulu

placenames. A variety of explanations of the name has been recorded, the most popular and well known being that the name means “Father, there he is!”, an exclamation evoked by the discovery of a child who had been lost in the mists on the mountain (Raper, 2004: 18). However, Botha (1977: 61) notes that the name of the mountain could have inspired the folk-tale that has been handed down from generation to generation. He also gives two other explanations of the name. The first is that the name is derived from *baba* “be acrid, pungent, bitter, disagreeably strong to the taste, salty” (Doke and Vilakazi, 2005: 57), but this explanation does not give account of the component *nango*. The second explanation, which Botha calls a somewhat isolated viewpoint, is that we have here a river-name based on *ibabanango*, the name of a tree or largish type of shrub encountered in the region through which the river flows. Botha points out, though, that existing dictionaries do not make mention of such a plant name, but of a plant name that agrees with it to some extent morphologically, namely *umbonemfana*, *ombonemfana* (< *umbone* + *mfana*, literally “see him, boy!”), a thorny shrub, *Canthium obovatum* (Doke and Vilakazi, 2005: 496). It is not immediately clear whether Botha is suggesting that *Babanango* is derived from *umbonemfana*, or whether he believes the river took its name from the thorny shrub. In April 1980 Skead (2001: 358) tape-recorded *uMbombemfene* at Highlands, near Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape, as the name of the plant *Canthium obovatum* Kretsch (Rubiaceae), and this plant species was checked at the Albany Museum Herbarium. Kropf (1915: 498, in Skead, 2001: 358) recorded “The Baboon’s Snout, a hill in the Nqamakwe district,” a placename which Skead (2001: 358) gives as *uMbombo we Mfene*. Smith (1966: 606) has *Klotzsch* instead of *Kretsch*. The different spellings and interpretations of the Zulu and Xhosa common names of the *Canthium obovatum* may be partly attributable to the Xhosa word *um-bombo* “arched nose” (McLaren, 1936: 17). The Zulu words for “nose” are *i(li)khala* and *impumulo* (Doke, Malcolm and Sikakana, 2005: 313).

Interesting though these folk-etymological interpretations may be, they do not shed light on the name *Babanango*. None of them satisfies, being morphologically unacceptable, failing to explain all components, or being of too recent a date.

Babanango is primarily the name of a natural feature, a hill or a stream, or both. Nicolaisen (1976: 173) points out that the names of natural features, especially watercourses, are transmitted from language to language, frequently involving three or more different language strata over a long period of time. In the light of these statements, and mindful of the fact that the San inhabited the region before the arrival of the Zulu, and also that language contact between the two peoples is known to have taken place, it is suspected that the name is of pre-Zulu origin, in other words that it was a San name subsequently adapted into Zulu. A clue to the meaning is given by Botha (1977: 63). While discussing *Bomvini*, “place of red ground,” so called from the red color of the ground in the vicinity, he informs us that “Nearby *Babanango* is a similarly named hillock (sometimes also called *Bomveni*)” (“*Naby Babanango is ‘n gelyknamige koppie (soms ook Bomveni genoem).*”) *Bomvini* and *Bomveni* have the same meaning “place of red ground,” from the Zulu word *ubomvu* “red ground” (Doke and Vilakazi, 2005: 82), *-eni* and *-ini* being locative suffixes used in forming locative adverbs from nouns (Doke and Vilakazi, 2005: 189, 355). Botha’s statement indicates that there is also red ground in the vicinity of *Babanango*,

something which would have been a distinguishing feature to the San. To the south-east of the mountain Babanango, and south-west of the village of the same name, is *Rooipoort*, a valley that has also given its name to a farm and a school (Transvaal Automobile Club Map 96 2D; Walton, 1984: Map 153 3A). This name, *Rooipoort*, is Afrikaans for “red gateway,” “red pass,” from *rooi* “red,” *poort* “gate, doorway; narrow pass.” The features Babanango and Rooipoort form a toponymic configuration or cluster, names apparently from Zulu and Afrikaans. It frequently proves to be the case that where features in close proximity have names in different languages, the names have the same meaning, inspired by the unique characteristic of the feature that needs to be identified and referred to uniquely and unambiguously (Raper, 1978). In this instance the component *Baba* and *Rooi* both mean “red,” *baba* cognate with *kaba*, an Old Khoikhoi word for “red” recorded in 1660 (Nienaber, 1963: 432), and a //Kxau (S2b) word *ŋ/kxaba* “red” (Bleek, 1956: 150), the alveolar click with prenasalized ejected affricative efflux, *ŋ/kx*, represented in the Zulu name by the voiced bilabial implosive consonant *b*.

In the light of recently acquired insights into the placenaming strategies of the San, the component *nango* is considered to be an adaptation of a San word cognate with the Naron (C2) demonstrative locative *ha:mko* “here” (Bleek, 1956: 57). [Babanango < *ŋ/kxaba ha:mko* “this red one here.”]

Blood River is popularly believed to have received its name from the blood that flowed as the result of the Battle of Blood River on December 16 1838. The Zulu name of the Blood River is *Ncome* (Botha, 1977: 172), a name said to be derived from Zulu *ncoma* “give a favourable report on; praise, admire, recommend” (Doke and Vilakazi, 2005: 533), and thus to mean “The Praiseworthy One ... from its pleasant water and green banks” (Bulpin, n.d.: 199, in Botha, 1977: 172), or “The Pleasant One” (Bulpin, 1952: 84). However, Botha himself (1977: 172) describes this explanation as speculative. So often has a European name proven to be a translation of an older Khoisan one (Nienaber and Raper, 1977: 132–134; 1980: 127–129) that one is tempted to investigate such a possibility here. No words for “blood” are immediately evident that would correlate with *Ncome* or a similar word, but San words for “red” include the Kung (N2) word */num* and the Naron (C2) word */nuʒa* and its synonym */noa* (Bleek, 1956: 351). The Zulu nasal form of the dental click, *nc*, correlates with the San dental click with nasal efflux */n*, while the variation of *u* and *o* in the respective San words indicates that */num* and **/nom* are cognate with *Ncom(e)*: phrased differently, */nuʒa* and */noa* are variants of the same word, the back close vowel phoneme *u* variously heard as *u* (back close) or *o* (back half-close) (Bleek, 1956: 246), so that *ncom(e)* is a permissible adaptation of */num* “red” (Bleek, 1956: 352). The final vowel *e* of the name *Ncome* is cognate with the /Xam (S1) demonstrative and relative adverbial *e* “that (red one) here” (Bleek, 1956: 36).

Dakana, the name of a stream some 20 miles east-north-east of Hlabisa, is said to mean “the little muddy stream,” “*Die Klein Modderspruit*” (Botha, 1977: 70), from *udaka*, “mud,” *umdarka*, “dark brown, muddy colored object” (Doke and Vilakazi, 2005: 136). The stem *daka* is cognate with the /Xam (S1) word */hoaka* “dark, black, used for any dark colors” (Bleek, 1956: 289), the Zulu voiced alveolar or dental consonant *d* approximating the San alveolar or dental click with aspirated efflux */h*,

the San vowel cluster or diphthong *oa* coalesced to Zulu *a* in order to obviate impermissible juxtaposed vowels in Zulu (Argyle, 1986: 57). The component *-na* of *Dakana* is perhaps a Zulu diminutive suffix, as presumed by Botha, but it may well be a San demonstrative locative adverbial morpheme cognate with the /Xam (S1) and //η !ke (S2) word //na “here, there, in, at, with, or simply for emphasis” (Bleek, 1956: 611).

Mhlopeni is the name of a tributary of the Mooi River between Greytown and Muden. It means “White stream,” “Wit(-spruit)” (Botha, 1977: 136), from *mblope* “white, clean, pure” (Colenso, 1884: 326). The name refers to white cliffs at the place White Cliff, where the river rises. We may assume that we are dealing with an old name, of San origin. The Zulu word *mblop(e)*, the //η !ke (S2) word /o:w(a) and the /Xam (S1) word /ko:w(a) “white” (Bleek, 1929: 91) are phonologically and semantically comparable, the Zulu alveolar fricative *hl* corresponding to the San alveolar fricative click /; *p* and *w* being bilabial consonants. An increasingly prominent pattern being discerned in San names is the occurrence of a demonstrative locative morpheme, and the component *ni* in this instance is cognate with the Hadza (C3) demonstrative locative *ni*, an ending meaning “in,” e.g. *zaiko-ni* “in the south” (Bleek, 1956: 146), or with the !O !kuη (N3) demonstrative pronoun and adverb *n* and its synonym *η* “this one here” (Bleek, 1956: 141), *η* being the symbol of the International Phonetic Association for the sound *ng*, and also corresponding with the Tswana locative termination *ng* “place of” (Werner, 1925: 56).

Shape

The shape and form of natural features such as mountains, rocks, valleys, ravines and the like, differing from entity to entity and thus enabling one topographic feature to be distinguished from another, would have been toponymically productive. Indeed, in referring to such features, the most natural way of doing so would be to say “the pointed one,” “that flat rock there,” “the deep ravine,” etc.

Table Mountain, east of Pietermaritzburg, was obviously so named because of its resemblance to a flat-topped table. The Zulu name for this mountain is *EMkhambathini*, according to Doke and Vilakazi (2005: 377) “so called from its flat top resembling the top of the Camel-thorn.” *EMkhambathini* is the locative form of the noun *umkhambathi*, referring, according to Koopman (2002: 140), not to the Camel-thorn, but to *Acacia sieberiana* or “Paperbark Acacia,” the dominant acacia in the area, given as *umkhambe* and “Flat-topped thorn” by Watt and Breyer-Brandwijk (1962: 1349). The concept of “flat” seems to be basic to the name of the mountain and that of the tree, the component *kham* adapted from a word cognate with Khoikhoi *≠ham* “flat” (“*platt (niedrig)*”) (Rust, 1960: 48), *khamba* being cognate with the Naron (C2) word /ka:ba “flat (noun)” (Bleek, 1929: 39). The component *-thi* of *umkhambathi* means “tree,” also “wood” (Doke and Vilakazi, 2005: 794), cognate with Xhosa *um-ti* “tree, wood, timber” (McLaren, 1926: 237), and with the Old Khoikhoi word 'e “wood,” recorded in an Eastern Khoikhoi dialect in 1775–1776, the apostrophe representing a click (Nienaber, 1963: 313). The component *ni* of the name *Emkhambathini* is the Zulu locative suffix, cognate with the !O !kuη (N3)

demonstrative pronoun and adverb *n* and its synonym *ŋ* “this one here” (Bleek, 1956: 141), *ŋ* being the symbol of the International Phonetic Association for the sound *ng*, and also corresponding with the Tswana locative termination *ng* “place of” (Werner, 1925: 56).

Pate, a tributary of the White Mfolozi, Mtonjaneni, has a name said to mean “the hollow,” from Zulu *patha* (*u(lu)phatha*) “object with a hollow side, top or bottom” (Doke and Vilakazi, 2005: 649), taken from the shape of the ravine through which the river flows (Botha, 1977: 194). *Phathe* is given by Doke and Vilakazi (2005: 649) as the “Name of a ravine in Zululand into which Bongoza treacherously led the Boers; an ambush.” Considering that names of natural features such as ravines might pre-date the Zulu, and that *Pate* is an adaptation of an old descriptive San name, the stem *patha* is cognate with the San word *//kbata* “hollow” (Bleek, 1956: 725), the aspirated unvoiced bilabial explosive consonant *p(h)* a replacement of the San unvoiced retroflex fricative click with aspirated ejected efflux, *//k*. The meaning of “hollow” corresponds to Botha’s explanation of the meaning of the river-name.

Nsonge, the name of a tributary of the Mooi River, is explained as “*Kronkel(-spruit)*,” (“the winding (stream)”) (Botha, 1977: 188), said to be derived from the Zulu word (*in*)*songe* “curve, bend, curl, winding, < *songa* fold, roll up,” etc. (Doke and Vilakazi, 2005: 765). Bryant (761 in Botha, 1977: 188) gives the name as *enTsonge*, thus with the affricative *Ts* instead of the fricative *s* in the stem. This older spelling is closer to the original pronunciation of the name, opening the possibility of a link between *Tson(ge)* and the Hiet[ware] (C1) word *tson(oo)* “to twist” (Bleek, 1929: 88). The component *ge* of the name is a locative morpheme cognate with the /Xam (S1) word *ke:* and the /Auni (S4) word *ke:* or *ke* “that, there” (Bleek, 1956: 85). *Tsonge* thus means “that winding one there.”

Nsonti is a river 8 miles to the south-west of Vryheid. This name, meaning “the twisting one” (Botha, 1977: 89), is derived from the Zulu idiophone *sonti* “of sudden warping, twisting, wringing,” *sonta* “to twist,” (*in*)*sonte* “anything twisted,” *insonto* “rope of twisted calf-skin” (Doke and Vilakazi, 2005: 766). The Zulu compound *ns* is the alveolar nasal plus ejective alveolar affricative (*nts*) (Doke and Vilakazi, 2005: 597), the San *ts* also the alveolar affricative, the root *Nson* thus reminiscent of the Hiet[ware] (C1) word *tsonoo* “to twist” (Bleek, 1929: 88). The component *ti* is a demonstrative locative morpheme cognate with the *//ŋ* !*ke* (S2), /Auni (S4) and Sesarwa (S5) word *ti* “this (one) there” or “that (one) there” (Bleek, 1956: 202).

Vungu, also encountered as *iVungu* and *Uvongo*, means “the growling one,” “*Die Grommende*” (Botha, 1977: 208), from the Zulu idiophone *vungu* “of wind blowing; of swelling and subsiding sound” (Doke and Vilakazi, 2005: 844), said by some to refer to the sound of the wind through the ravine through which the river flows, by others to the sound of the waterfall near the mouth of the river. The component *vung* is an adaptation of a San word cognate with the Kung (N2) word *!!guŋ* “roar,” “roaring of wild beasts” (Bleek, 1956: 506, 749), *!!g*, the voiced form of the retroflex click *!!*, which “lies between the palato-alveolar and retroflex fricative clicks and is more hollow than *!!*” (Bleek, 1956: 505), reflected by the voiced denti-labial fricative consonant *v*, *ŋ* the International Phonetic Association symbol for *ng*. The second

component of the variant *Uvongo*, namely (*n*)go, is reminiscent of the Khoikhoi word //no “*Kluft*,” “ravine” (Rust, 1960: 35), or the Nogau (N!a) word *ʔnõ* “river” (Bleek, 1956: 672).

Conclusions

Many words of San origin, subsequently adapted into Zulu, are descriptive, referring to the color of the soil, to the shape and form of natural features such as mountains and valleys, and designating the features themselves. In addition to the preservation of the lexical meanings of names in oral tradition and the determination thereof by studying allonyms, the original meanings of names may be traced by studying toponymic clusters. This method has the advantage of regarding as accurate the toponymic motivation determining the name, as opposed to folk-etymological interpretations based on the sound of the name alone. An analysis of sufficient instances of click replacement may in due course reveal regular sound-shifts as opposed to borrowings. A study of the San languages and dialects cognate with the words or name components preserved in Zulu adaptations may also shed light on earlier contacts or settlement patterns, and on Zulu dialects that may be closer in some respects to the original San roots.

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