

The names and the naming of Durban

Introduction

Amidst the hoo-hah that surrounds the changing of place names in South Africa (as I write, it is proposed to rename Pretoria Tshwane), with the predictable rush of (white) letter-writers to editors of newspapers complaining about the waste of money, it seems that there are always two basic assumptions.

The first assumption is that the place concerned is *changing from one name to another*. This is in most cases a faulty assumption: where the ‘official’ name has been a Euro-Western name given by colonial authority, there has in most cases been a parallel African name, invariably the name used by the majority of the population, but, being ‘unofficial’, not appearing in maps, atlases, guidebooks, and street and road signs. Examples are Bloemfontein (*Mangaung*), Grahamstown (*eRini*), Pretoria (*Tshwane*), Johannesburg (*eGoli* – and others), Estcourt (*eMtshezi*), Ladysmith (*eMnambithi*) and Durban (*eThekwini* and, indeed, others, as we shall see in the article). When a ‘name-change’ is reported, as with Pretoria-Tshwane, it is not that the city is getting a new name, but rather that an old, established name for the locality, in a language native to the area, is getting official recognition.

In the pre-1994 South Africa, only English and Afrikaans were official languages, and where English or Afrikaans names existed side by side with indigenous language names, it was in most cases the English or Afrikaans name that had the official status, as with the examples of Bloemfontein, Pretoria and Johannesburg given above. Place names in the indigenous languages were official if they were the only name for the place, for example, *eMpangeni*, *eShowe*, *Matatiele*, *Thabazimbi* and *Mafikeng*. A number of places in pre-1994 South Africa had *two* official names, such as *Oos Londen/East London*; *Cape Town /Kaapstad*, and *Grahamstown/Grahamstad*. Perhaps it would be onomastically more precise to say these places had one name, recorded officially in two languages. ‘Kaapstad’ is not really a different name for Cape Town; it is the Afrikaans version of ‘Cape Town’. The only place I can think of with two official (and different) names is the small village near the tip of Cape Agulhas called *Arniston/Waenhuiskrans*.

The second assumption is that in the phrase ‘changing from one name to another’ there are in each case two names – one a ‘colonial’ (i.e. ‘European’, ‘Western’, ‘English’, ‘Dutch/Afrikaans’, etc), while the other is African (i.e. ‘indigenous’, Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana, etc.)

The fact is that any place may have a number of names: in addition to the ‘official’ names, there may be nicknames (some of which may even be ‘official’ nicknames, occurring in municipal brochures), like *The Garden City*, *City of Gold*, *Sleepy Hollow*¹; some historical names like *Huigas* and *Cabo de Boa Esperance*², and some variations on the official names like *Joburg*, *Joeys* and *eJozini*, or *Maritzburg*, *Bloem* and *PE*.

Together these names create a palimpsest, a composite picture of a particular place, of names laid one over the other along dimensions of time, language, and degree of formality. Such is the case with Durban.

The Naming of Durban

Readers of newspapers and other documents must be forgiven if they get the impression that Durban has only two names: the ‘colonial’ *Durban*, and the Zulu name *eThekwini*. For example, the Durban Metro Tourism web site (<http://www.kwazulunatal.org/prettour/durban.html>) states:

‘The harbour, once a natural lagoon, is the largest and busiest in South Africa today. The bay also gives Durban its Zulu name, eThekwini.’

Stayt [1971: no page] explains ‘Tekweni’ [sic] as ‘... name by which Durban is known to the Zulus’, and Raper [1987:316] has ‘*Thekwini* ... Zulu name for Durban.’

This article wishes to dispute the apparent binomial status of Durban, and to present the major harbour city of South Africa as a place which, onomastically speaking, is indeed a palimpsest of names. Among other names, we will look at (see the illustration opposite), the names *eBhodwe*, *Rio de Natal*, *Port Natal*, *Durban*, *D’Urban*, *Durbs*, *eMdubane*, *iTheku*, *eThekwini*, *eMhlume*, *kwaKhangela*, *eThusini*, *eManteku*, *Kwa Malinde*, and *Bubolongo*.

We will start by looking at names for Durban Bay as they appeared on maps from 1763 to 1828, look at how *Port Natal* became *Durban*, shift to the name *eThekwini* and explore debates about its meaning, look at a variety of other Zulu names for Durban or parts of Durban, most of them older than the name *eThekwini*, and then end with some predictions about the future onomastic status of this city.

Early Names for the Bay of Durban

■ *Rio de Natal*

One usually thinks of Durban’s first Euro-Western name as being *Port Natal*, and one associates this name with the arrival of Fynn, Farewell, Isaacs, Gardiner and the other early settlers in the 1820s and 1830s. Bulpin, however, suggests (without giving a source) that an earlier name had been given to the bay by Portuguese explorers:



Figure 1: A palimpsest of names for Durban

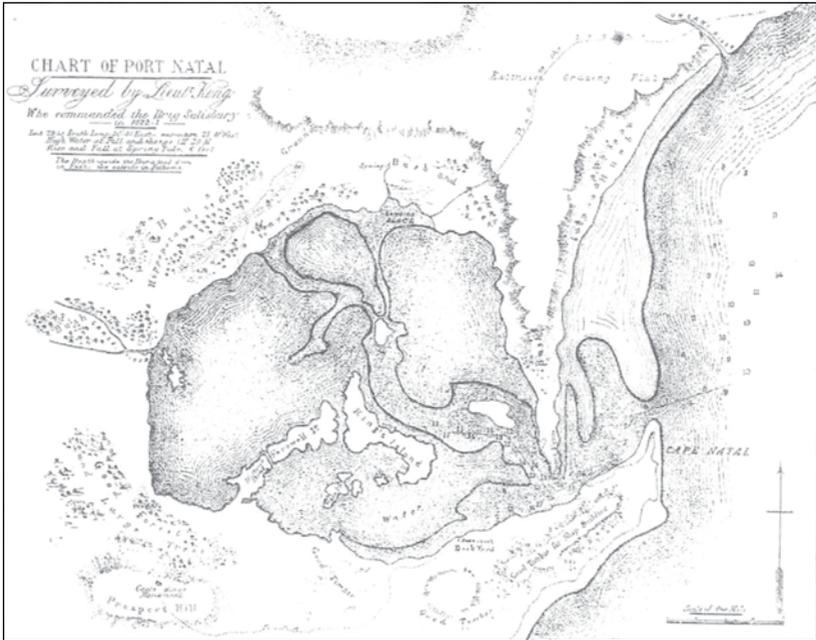


Figure 2: Lt King's chart of Durban Bay in 1822

'... that vast land-locked lagoon which the Portuguese called the *Rio de Natal*; for it seemed to them that it must be the mouth of some mighty river whose source lay far in the interior.' [1966:47]

He returns to this name later, when describing the King and Farewell expedition of 1823:

'The rest of the trading party abandoned St Lucia in disgust and sailed down the coast searching for a suitable landing-place in the various river mouths. In this way they eventually found themselves off that Rio de Natal of which rumour had whispered strange tales for the last two hundred years.' [*ibid* p. 50]

When the name 'Rio de Natal' became substituted by 'Port Natal' is not very clear, especially if one follows Bulpin:

'In May 1824 Fynn sailed up to what was now known as Port Natal.' [*ibid* p. 51]

and:

'... Farewell, with Fynn, returned [7th August 1824] joyfully to the Rio de Natal, to build their shacks and commence a trade... the foundation and beginning of the great commercial city and harbour of Durban.' [*ibid* p. 55]

We do, however, find evidence of the name Rio de Natal in Bird's *Annals of Natal* [Vol I:33]:

'Henry Witkins of Bristol sailed from the Downs on 1st May 1686 bound for the East Coast of Africa ... [they] sailed to about latitude 28½° and anchored in the bay "Piscada" [St. Lucia].

...after staying there three days ..[we] proceeded to *Rio de Natal* [my emphasis] ...and there fell in with the five sailors of the ship the "Good Hope", which had

been wrecked there on 17th May 1685.’

The same page, telling of the wrecking of the *Good Hope*, also uses the name Rio de Natal, and implies that it was a name already well known:

‘Jan Kingston, a sailor in the English ship the “Good Hope” ... says that on 24th November 1684 ... he sailed from Gravesend ... [having] passed within sight of the Cape of Good Hope, they stood direct for *Rio de Natal* [my emphasis] where they arrived on 9th May 1685 ... [their ship was driven onto the shore] .. and seeing no chance of getting her off, they erected a hut on the south shore.’

Some four years later the name ‘Bay of Natal’ appears to be in use:

‘The “Noord” having laid up at De la Goa until the 29th December [1688] ... proceeded to examine the coast and the *Bay of Natal* [my emphasis] where they anchored on the 5th January [1689] ... and there found Adrian Jans ... and Jan Pieters ... both of the wrecked ship “Stavenisse”. Having surveyed that bay, they sailed on the 23rd ...’ [ibid p.45]

■ Bay of Natal and Port Natal

The name *Rio de Natal* is not marked on any of the early maps that I have seen, but from the 1760s the name *Bay of Natal* (or variants such as *Baai van Natal* – Dutch map, or *B di Natal* – Italian map) starts appearing on maps (Norwich, 1983). Gradually, over a period of fifty years, *Bay of Natal* or its variations is replaced by *Port Natal*, as we see in Figure 2 opposite. The name ‘Bay of Natal’ lingers on, though. The map of Durban in Map Studio’s 1994 edition of the South African Road Atlas gives Durban harbour as *Bay of Natal/Natalbaai*.

It is interesting – indeed intriguing – that the name *Port Natal* first appears on a French map in 1782, a good forty years before the arrival of King, Farewell, Fynn and associates in 1824, and again on Italian, German and American maps before that year.

A search through collections of old maps of the east coast of southern Africa reveals more than just the various names given to the lagoon which the Zulu people called *eThekwini*. Such maps also throw up the names of explorers and cartographers whose names do not always make it into the standard history books. Such a one is *Louis Almore Pisani*, the ‘Burger Commandant and Ingezeetenen der Colonie Swellendam’, who in the years 1781 to 1793 undertook an exploration (‘landtogt’) from Swellendam to the ‘Bay of Lourenza Marques’, subsequently producing a detailed map of the eastern coast,

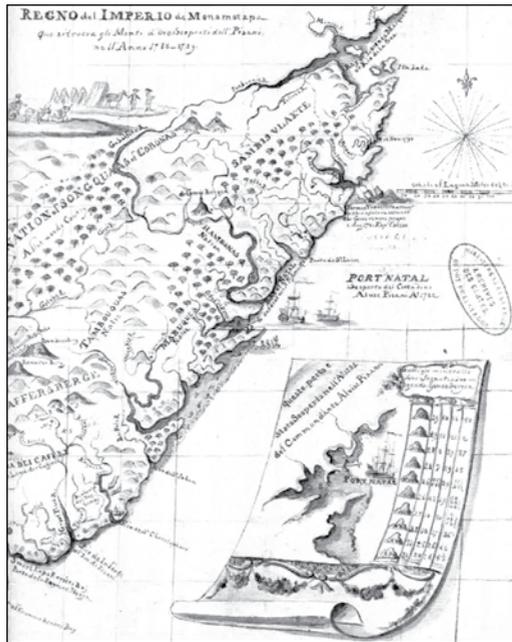


Figure 3: Detail from Pisani’s map of 1781–1793: Norwich, 1983: Map 183

with an inset map of the harbour named Port Natal, with a remarkably wide entrance. A portion of his map is reproduced in Figure 3.

■ *Port Natal ... D'Urban ... Durban*

Bird's *Annals* [Vol I: 307ff] gives the full details of a meeting held on 23 June 1835. The document, headed 'Port Natal' states that a meeting of the residents of Port Natal [15 attended the meeting] decided to lay out a town to 'be called D'Urban, in honour of his Excellency the Governor of the Cape Colony.' It was unanimously agreed that

'... the said town be situated between the River Avon and the Buffalo Spring; that it be bounded on the west by the River Avon, on the east by a line drawn from the bay in a right angle, and touching the Buffalo Spring near the residence of F. Berkin, Esq., and that the town lands extend four miles inland, and include Salisbury Island in the bay.'

The River Avon was the name given to the Umbilo River, the original Zulu name subsequently re-establishing itself. Buffalo Spring is marked by Old Well Court of Smith Street in Durban today. [Malherbe, 1965:24]

The spelling 'D'Urban' was not destined to last for long. Only ten years later, in 1845, when Martin West became Lieutenant-Governor of Natal, fifty-six citizens, describing themselves as 'inhabitants of *D'Urban*' sent an address of congratulations. In reply Governor West thanked the 'loyal inhabitants of *Durban*'. [my emphases] (His written reply, by the way, had the address 'Port Natal' at the top.) [Bird, *Annals* Vol II: 481]

For some 35 years after the town of D'Urban had been named and laid out, the two names *D'Urban* (Durban) and *Port Natal*, continued to be used side by side, as it were, as we have just seen in Governor West's reply. Goetzsche's *Father of a City*³, the story of George Cato, is filled with such side by side references [my emphases throughout]

'[in 1844]. an uneasy peace continued to pervade the small settlements of both *Port Natal (D'Urban)* and *Pietermaritzburg*...' [p. 56]

'the 158 ton brig *Sarah Bell* left Falmouth on Nov 22, 1845, arriving at *Port Natal* on Feb 18th 1846.' [p. 57]

'On March 19, 1847, Cato was appointed Consular Agent for the United States of America, at *Port Natal*...' [p. 60]

A letter written by George Cato is headed: '*Port Natal*, October 17, 1852'. [p. 70]

In 1854, George Cato, as first mayor of Durban, wrote a letter to Mark Foggitt, first town clerk, headed "*Port Natal*, 7th September 1854", but addressed to Mr Mark Foggitt, *D'Urban*. [p. 112]

Part of the confusion between 'Durban/D'Urban' and 'Port Natal' may have been because these two names were being used to describe two distinct physical locations. A letter/diary entry from Bishop Colenso dated 1854 suggests that the name Port Natal was used for the harbour, while Durban [D'Urban] was used for the town proper:

'At noon this day I stepped out upon the jetty at *Port Natal*, a stranger among strangers, but I was very soon relieved from all uncertainty as to my future movements by the kind attention of Mr Middleton, one of the churchwardens of *Durban*, who had come down ... to meet me.' [Colenso quoted in Goetzche, p. 98]

Later in the same letter we find 'I rode up from the Point, near where I landed, to the town of *Durban*, a distance of two miles.'

Similarly, when in 1864, John Scott, Lieutenant-Governor of Natal, laid a stone for the Port Natal light house, he was addressed as follows:

‘Sir, it affords us much pleasure to welcome your Excellency to Durban in connection with a great public improvement ... We feel assured that a lighthouse at Port Natal will be no merely local benefit, but ...’ [*ibid* p.175]

A letter written by a Miss Georgie Dunn in 1862 sheds some interesting light on the Durban/Port Natal onomastic partnership. It includes the message:

‘... when you write to me, be sure and put Port Natal

Miss Dunn

Post Office

Durban Port Natal South Africa

There is a Durban at the Cape and that is South Africa.’

I suspect, though, that Miss Dunn has confused ‘Port Natal’ with ‘Natal’, for in 1863 (the following year), when she has moved to Richmond, she gives her address as ‘Miss Dunn, c/o J.M. Beard, Esq., Post Office, Richmond, Port Natal.’⁴

This is one of the last references to Port Natal that I can find, and there seems to be general agreement among historians that by the 1870s, the name ‘Port Natal’ was falling out of use, and the name ‘Durban’ was being used for both town and port.

An interesting angle on the ‘partnership’ between the two names Port Natal and Durban is given by Pettman [1985:134] who quotes Bishop Colenso as saying ‘There is no such place as ... Port Natal’:

‘Port Natal may be mentioned here. This was the name by which Durban was known in the early days of the colony, and by which it is known to mariners. Colenso says: ‘Port Natal is to Durban what Port Philip is to Melbourne, that is to say, there is no such place as either Port Philip or Port Natal, these being only names applied to the towns of Melbourne and Durban, considered as ports’⁵.

The memory of Port Natal still lingers in the use of the Zulu name *Ebhodwe*. Doke and Vilakazi’s *Zulu-English Dictionary* [158:41] say that as a name, eBhodwe, (derived from ‘Port’) refers to Natal. Not Port Natal, note, but Natal generally. It is not clear whether the use of the word eBhodwe in the following refers to ‘Natal’ (i.e. south of the uThukela), or to Port Natal:

‘It was the Imihaye regiment ... which killed off the white people at Ndondakusuka, the white people from eBodwe [derived from the words Port Natal]’⁶ [Stuart Archive V p. 38]

In 1854 the borough of *Durban* was proclaimed, with boundaries considerably wider than those of D’Urban in 1835. The new borough had as its boundaries the Indian Ocean, the uMngeni River, the farms *Springfield*, *Brickfields* and *Cato Manor*, the uMbilu River, and the Bay of Natal. This last, with the ‘Bay of Natal’ as a boundary, rather than as a part of Durban, suggests that ‘Port Natal’ was still outside the official borough boundaries.

The names ‘Port Natal’ and ‘D’Urban’ can still be found, but now only as names of institutions. Port Natal is the name of a well-known Afrikaans-medium school in Durban, as well as of a number of other institutions, such as *Port Natal Bowling Association*, *Port Natal Bulk Stevedoring*, *Port Natal Engineering* and *Port Natal Marine Club*. Durban’s only sea-scout troop is the *Port Natal Sea Scout Troop*. On the other hand, only the Hotel D’Urban in Cato Square still retains the spelling of the erstwhile Governor of the Cape [Durban Telephone Directory].

The name ‘Durban’ also occurs in the form *eMdubane*, a name used by Zulu-speaking youth and still current today⁷.

Let us now look at other Zulu names for Durban, beginning with *eThekwini* and the debate about its meaning that provided the readers of Durban’s morning newspaper *The Natal Mercury* such amusement during the period November 1978 to January 1979.

The meaning of eThekwini⁸

As we saw in the quote from the Durban Metro website, it is the bay which gives Durban its Zulu name *eThekwini*. *EThekwini* is the locative form of the noun *itheku* (‘bay’, ‘lagoon’), and the form *iTheku* is frequently used by Zulu speakers when the name is used in a non-locative context. Zulu speakers will say “ngihlala *eThekwini*” or “Ngiya *eThekwini*” (‘I live in Durban’, ‘I go to Durban’—the locative contexts), but “*ITheku* yigama ledolobha lethu” and “*Itheku* yindawo engilaziyo” (‘Durban is the name of our city’ and ‘Durban is a place I know’, i.e. the non-locative contexts). Both forms are therefore valid in Zulu, depending on the context.

The derivation or meaning of the name *eThekwini* as ‘place of the bay’, ‘place of the lagoon’ was not debated until a correspondent to *The Natal Mercury* said that as a recent immigrant to Durban, he had heard that the Zulu name for the city was ‘Thekwini’ and could anyone tell him what this meant. Several ‘armchair experts’ immediately wrote in with the information that *ethekwini* was the locative form of the Zulu noun *itheku* (‘bay’, ‘lagoon’), and that Durban was therefore the ‘place of the lagoon’ in Zulu.

And there the matter might have rested. or, at least, there it would have rested had not an unidentified correspondent with access to a Zulu-English dictionary pointed out that an alternative meaning for the word *itheku* is ‘the one-testicled thing’, suggesting that Shaka’s warriors had so named Durban because of the shape of the bay when seen from the hills of the Berea. Durban’s residents were furious at this suggestion and a number of letters followed decrying this theory.

Then came one from Louis Rencken of Eston, who stoked the flames by quoting the Reverend A.T. Bryant:

Sir,—This is something for the worthy citizens of Durban to ponder: the origin of the Zulu name for Durban, “Itheku”, locative Ethekwini”, as explained by the worthy Reverend A.T. Bryant in his work *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* page 500:

‘Over the Tukela, Shadwa⁹ sped on his way, along the coast, till finally held up by a broad and calm lagoon flanked by beautiful wood-clad hills and connected by a narrow channel with the ocean. Looking down upon the oval lake from the adjacent hills, the tribal wag playfully dubbed it the “iTeku” (or One-testicled thing), a name the local natives have since affixed to Durban (eTekwini), built around the land-locked bay.’

This quote from the Reverend A.T. Bryant prompted Sighart Bourquin, a well-known authority on Zulu history and language, to write in defence of the ‘place of the lagoon’:

Sir—With reference to the letter which appeared in your paper on November 29, under the heading “Origin of Durban’s Zulu Name”. I have no quarrel with the well-known linguistic knowledge of both your correspondent Mr. L.T. Rencken and his source of information, the Rev. A.T. Bryant, in regard to the words “Itheku” and “Ethekwini”.

However, to reassure the residents of Durban who might have felt dismayed at the meaning of Durban's Zulu name¹⁰, I believe that the Rev. A.T. Bryant must have given his version, as quoted by Mr. Rencken, with his tongue in his cheek because the same Rev. Bryant, in his Zulu dictionary (1905) gives two meanings for the word *ltheku*, viz, (a) a person or animal with only one testicle, and (b) a bay, or lagoon. The same two meanings are given in Doke and Vilakazi's *Zulu Dictionary* (1948). There are, of course, many Zulu words which have more than one meaning. The second meaning in this particular instance seems to have been of Lala origin¹¹, hence its application to the Bay of Natal.

In any case, the story about the tribal wag, although amusing, must appear tenuous because I very much doubt whether, having regard to the vastness of Durban bay, its then mangrove-fringed beaches, and the relative lowness of the surrounding hills, any observer could really have formed an idea of its shape and the particular "one-sidedness" suggested by the first meaning of "itheku".

Clearly some readers of this debate found the issue more amusing than offensive, and the tongue-in-cheek approach that Bourquin ascribes to Reverend Bryant was itself adopted by David Dale, who wrote a week after Bourquin's letter the following, this time bringing in the heavy guns of Harry Lugg and Bishop Colenso:

Sir – The letter from S. Bourquin (Dec 12) refers to Durban's Zulu name 'eThekwini'. Does it mean "The place of the bay or lagoon" or "A person or animal with one testicle"? Basing one's reply on such authorities as the late Harry Lugg¹² one must side with Mr Bourquin on the "lagoon" version.

In the first place the Zulu is most apt at giving clear and concise names to people and places. And in the second he does not, in dealing with personalities, resort to intimacies. Indeed, his conversation generally lacks those bawdy or coarse references found in other tongues¹³.

Mr. Bourquin remarks that "itheku" has two meanings, like so many English or Zulu words, but to apply the testicular reference in this instance is surely not in keeping with Zulu custom or outlook. If, however, and for sake of argument, the pudenda observation was deliberate, why did the observation not go the whole hog and include the Bluff in the geographical picture? The Bluff, after all, lies in immediate juxtaposition to the lagoon, and with its Zulu name of "Isibubulungu", meaning a "long sausage-like or bulky thing", at once demands inclusion in the aforesaid name. And the Zulu, always acutely observant, would never have missed this point (or angle) had he intended to translate the layout into testicular topography.

Further credence that the testicle is the basis of Durban's Zulu name is posited by the intelligent and erudite Janie Malherbe. In her excellent history *Port Natal* she remarks that the authoritative J.T. Bryant [sic] gives "iteku" this interpretation, but at the same time notes that Bishop Colenso, who wrote the very first Zulu dictionary, does not, by omission, support that meaning. Colenso's reading is "an open mouth of a river or bay".

Venturing what seems to be an explanation of the omission on the Bishop's part, Mrs. Malherbe offers – I interpret the ploy with every respect – a delightful piece of rationalisation.

"Could it not be," she asks, "that this was an improvisation by a prudent Bishop for propriety's sake?"

It's here that we look at the Bishop ... with reverence. His Zulu name was "Sobantu"—"the father of the people", a v.i.p. standing that has inspired one wag to observe: "a paternal promiscuity which, taken literally, proclaims a vigorous marital history."

This is an aside, perhaps, though with a tongue-in-cheek relevance that could set the Bishop up as a knowledgeable and worldly, as well as a spiritual and practical, officer. And mark this, one obviously ready to include in his dictionary interpretations of a variety of Zulu words pertaining to the pudenda and the more intimate functions of the body.

The fact, I think, rather negates Janie Malherbe's suggestion that Colenso's omission of "itheku" and its interpretation in the testicular sense, was an episcopal "improvisation" based on "prudence" and "for the sake of propriety". No man, not even a Bishop, can detrouser himself for one purpose, and at the same time keep his shirt on to deactivate the effect of such an exposure.

So, in conclusion, and with a gamesy lighthearted counterplay to cope with any misinterpretation of my gesture, I leave Janie and her fellow protestants for the testicular character of Durban's Zulu name, with the ball, as it were, in her court.

One may have thought that this closely-reasoned letter, however tongue-in-cheek, would have marked the end of the matter. But no, the readers of *The Natal Mercury* had not yet heard from Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, who, writing from Ulundi some two weeks later, contributed the following:

Sir – I have no intention of entering the controversy of the original meaning of the word "Itheku", the Zulu name for Durban. I, however, wish to point out that in this part of the country where I grew up, the Zulu word for a person or animal with only one testicle is "Ithweka", not "Itheku".

But I would not dispute that it may well be that in some other parts of the country people use "itheku". I just think that for the record I must point out that Zulus in this part of the world know the word as "Ithweka".

I am sorry that my contribution will not throw more light on the controversy on Itheku.

It is not clear whether the editor had been waiting for an authoritative statement from Chief Buthelezi or not, but it was at this point that he declared the correspondence closed, leaving his readers to decide, on the evidence presented, whether they believed the lagoon or the testicle theories. Suffice it to say, that in the nearly thirty years since this correspondence took place, I have never yet seen the city of Durban produce tourist brochures describing their city as 'the city of the single testicle'. A pity, that. They could have promoted Durban as the place where visitors could really have a ball.

David Dale, in his letter quoted above, says that 'Mr. Bourquin remarks that "itheku" has two meanings, like so many English or Zulu words, but to apply the testicular reference in this instance is surely not in keeping with Zulu custom or outlook.'

However, Elsa Pooley, in her book on the trees of Natal [1993:106] gives as one of the Zulu names for the Tonga-kerrie (*Cladostemon kirkee*) the word *umthekwini*, a clear reference to the single small round fruit on the end of each stem¹⁴. This word is not in Doke and Vilakazi's dictionary, but it is clearly the locative form of *um-theku*, and I cannot imagine the relevance of the 'bay, lagoon' meaning here. This must be, to use Mr Dale's phrase, a 'testicular reference'.

‘Testicular reference’, again, is the only possible interpretation of the hill near Natal Table Mountain called ‘Spitkop’ or ‘Spitz Kop’ in Afrikaans, but according to Stayt (confirmed by Bryant; *Dictionary* p. 761) called by the Zulus *inTweka*, which as we will remember from Chief Buthelezi, is the word people in his area use if they wish to refer to a beast with one testicle. Stayt says:

inTWEKA: “inTWEKA, The Hill Resembling a Testicle” – Spitkop near Table Mountain opposite Camperdown.” [1971: no page number]

I took a photograph of Spitkop/iNtweka in 2003 from the top of Natal Table Mountain, looking across to the west, but from this angle the hill appears as a sharp pointed pyramid. Perhaps it looks testicular from below.

We could also perhaps consider another name mentioned by Bryant [*Dictionary* p. 756], the Zulu name for Mount Erskine in the ‘Bushman’s River Range’, which he gives as *kwaMasende* (‘the place of the testicles’). From these and similar references to breasts and other more private body parts in Zulu toponyms, it seems that the testicular interpretation of the name *eThekwini* cannot be ruled out.

Before we move on to other Zulu names for Durban, a last word on the meaning of the word *eThekwini*, an interesting theory from Bryant [*Dictionary* p. 760], which seems to have escaped the notice of the various contributors to the ‘Thekwini debate’. He notes:

‘*eThekwini* (*i(li)Theku*) Durban (name prob. imported by Xosa-speaking pioneer Colonists, from Xo. *i(li)-Teko*, place of meeting).’

I should perhaps mention just one last variation on the *form* of the word *eThekwini*: in the *izibongo*¹⁵ (‘praises’) of Henry Francis Fynn, whose Zulu name was Mbulazi (also as Mbuyazi), we find the following lines:

UMbulazi *weTheku!*
 Ujoj’ ovel’ emaPondweni.

 Ubuhle bangizindlazi [sic] *zaseManteku*.

(Mbulazi of the Bay!
 Finch that came from Pondoland.

.....

 Beautiful as the mousebirds of the Bay.) [my italics]

We have already seen that *iTheku* is a regular variant of *eThekwini*, but the variant *eManteku*, to my knowledge, only occurs in these oral praises.

Various other Zulu names relating to Durban

■ *iSibubulungu*

In 1824, Shaka apparently made a ‘land grant’ to ‘Farewell and Company’, in a document, part of which read:

‘... grant, make over and sell to F.G. Farewell and Company, the entire and full possession ... of the Port or Harbour of Natal, known by the name of “Bubolongo”, together with the islands therein and surrounding country ...’ [Fynn, 1969:87]

This name, *Bubolongo*, is clearly the well-known Zulu name for *The Bluff*, as we see

in Doke and Vilakazi's dictionary [1958:88]: '*iSibubulungu* "The hill range which terminates in the Bluff at Durban" ' derived from *isibubulungu* 'long, round-topped ridge'.

It is interesting that Shaka appears to use the word to refer to the bay, rather than to the ridge which separates the bay from the Indian Ocean.

Dingane also apparently saw the name *iSibubulungu* as referring to far more than simply the same ridge. The following refers to a meeting between Gardiner and Dingane in 1835:

'Dingane then said he would from henceforth look on Gardiner as chief of the white people, and therefore personally responsible for due observance of the treaty. Gardiner pointed out he had no power. "You must have power," said the King, "I give you all the country called Sibubulungu. You must be chief over all the people there."' [Fynn, 1969:244]

Incidentally, of all the geographical features in the vicinity of today's Durban, it is the Bluff which may have the honour of receiving the earliest recorded name. According to Malherbe [1965:2]:

'...[in 1497]...Vasco da Gama's ships cast anchor in the lee of a protecting headland which we know today as The Bluff. Here they "took much fish", and according named the headland *Ponta de Pescaria*.'

Some 200 years later, but still well before the arrival of Fynn and the others, the Bluff received another name, this time from stranded crew members of the Dutch ship the *Stavenisse*, wrecked in 1686 at the mouth of the uMzimvubu River:

'Captain Knijff and his remaining ten men were accordingly delighted when the chance came to join the survivors of the Good Hope at Port Natal. In appreciation of the hospitality they received, the Hollanders subsequently named the headland, which we today call The Bluff, "Het Engelsche Loge" (The Englishman's Lodge). It was known by this name for many years.' [*ibid*]

If we add to this the fact that many early maps, such as Lt King's map of 1823, show the Bluff with the name *Cape Natal*¹⁶, this topographical feature may have the additional honour of the feature with the most different names. Nor do we stop there. In the evidence of Henry Francis Fynn before the Native Commission of 1852, cited in Bird's *Annals* (11:124), we find the following:

'The only instance in which any number of a tribe held together was in the case of the Amatuli under the regent chief, Matubana, uncle of the present chief, Umnini, who recently occupied the Bluff. This tribe have dwelt on the "*Ifenya*" or Bluff-lands, through twelve generations of their chiefs ...' (my emphasis)

Stuart's informant Mazinyana (Stuart Archive II:282) says that '*Ifenya* got its name because fish was eaten there; it was not the name of a hill'. This is a curious statement; Doke and Vilakazi (1958:204) state that *ifenya* refers to 'soft, moist, rich, alluvial soil', supporting the statement of another of Stuart's informants (II:43):

'The *iFenya* is the wet or damp or moist country, i.e. the Bluff lands, the grounds occupied by Mnini. It is said to be land where crops are easily grown.'

It certainly seems as if *Ifenya* was used as a place name; if not for the Bluff itself, something less easily definable—the 'Bluff-lands'—perhaps the flats at the base of the Bluff, or the substantial valley within the bluff itself.

Finally, on the meaning of the Zulu noun *isibubulungu*, generally accepted in dictionaries as referring to a long, bulky ridge, here is a different suggestion from Charles

Pettman, writer of the first South African place-name dictionary in 1931:

‘... *isi Bubulungu* is the appropriate name given by the natives to the Bluff itself (*uku bubula*, to groan, make a noise), the waves of the Indian Ocean breaking against its base with a continuous roar.’ [1985:43]

■ *KwaKhangela**

Fynn, in reference to his first arrival at Port Natal on 10th March 1824, writes [1969:58]:

‘The bay appeared to be surrounded by bush in every direction; the only spot that was somewhat open was the locality now known as *Khangela*.’

My reading of this is that the name was not current at the time of his arrival.

The story of *Khangela/KwaKhangela/Congella* is a curious one. It is generally accepted that Shaka established a military *ikhanda* in the Port Natal area, and that the name of this garrison – [*Kwa*]-*Khangela* – became corrupted to the name of the present Durban suburb *Congella*¹⁷.

Raper [2004:60] states:

‘*Congella*: the name is said to be an adaptation from Zulu *kangela*, ‘to watch’, and to have originated from a garrison placed there by Shaka to observe the refugees living around Port Natal – to “watch the vagabonds”, *kwa-kangela amankengane*.’

In my own book on Zulu names [2002:95] I state

‘Bryant tells us (644) that when the *umGumanqa* regiment was sent down to the flats near Port Natal to keep an eye on the newly arrived whites, they became known by the nickname *uKhangela-amanNkengane* (‘keep an eye on the vagabonds’), which not only gave this regiment another name, but also gave the name *Congella* to that area of Durban.’

And Zungu, writing about restoring the correct forms of ‘toponymic lapses’ (misspelt Zulu place names), has this to say about ‘*KwaKhangela or Congella*’ [1998:31]:

‘The Zulu place name originates from *KwaKhangela amankengane* (view the foreigners in the sea), a name given by King Shaka. To “*khangela*” means to look at, behold, view ... *KwaKhangela* applied to King Shaka’s outpost on Durban Bay which is now known as “*Congella*”.’

And yet, there is confusion about this name. The Stuart Archive makes a number of references to the *umuzi* or military *ikhanda* with the name *Kangela* or *KwaKhangela*. A few of these references indicate that this was an *umuzi* of Senzangakhona, the father of both Shaka and Dingane, some refer to *Khangela* as an *umuzi* established by Shaka, either as a military garrison established in the Port Natal area, or as a ‘general’ *umuzi* in the Emahlabathini area (near the White iMfolozi). Most of the references in the Stuart Archive give (Kwa)*Khangela* as the second most important of Dingane’s establishments, after *uMgungundlovu*, with some informants stating that Dingane inherited this *umuzi* from Shaka, but most saying he established it himself.

Here are some of the references from the Stuart Archives:

- Vol. II: 161: ‘Tshaka had several kraals in Natal. One was called *Kangela*; it was across the Umgeni, although his recognized boundary was the Umgeni.’ Webb and Wright’s footnote 10 refers to the word *Kangela*: ‘Subsequently corrupted into *Congella*, the name of a Durban suburb’.

**Kangela* was the correct spelling until the orthographic change of 1949, after which *Khangela* was the correct spelling.

- Vol. II:205: ‘Nkobe ... died in the *Emahlabathini* country at Kangela kraal.’ The footnote to this says ‘The *emaHlabathini* country ... [near the] White Mfolozi was the locality where many of the Zulu royal *imizi* were built. KwaKhangela was one of Shaka’s *imizi*.’
- Vol. II:253: ‘Dukuza, also Siklebe, Dhlambedhlu, *Kangela*, Tulwana, were all located – in my time [say 1850–1857] – close to Nobamba, on the south side of the White Mfolozi’ [my emphasis, Stuart’s aside]
- Vol. III:100: ‘Tshaka had a kraal at the head of the Bay (Natal); probably Kangela by name. [*Ngidi denies this*¹⁸]. The rumour is common that he used to go to the large rock at the foot of the Bluff and bathe.’ [my emphasis, Stuart’s aside]
- Vol. III:259: ‘Kangela (Dingana’s¹⁹ kraal) was built in Pakatwayo’s district near Mandawe hill at the Emtilombo (stream) ... Kangela was in good view of Maqwakazi Hill.’
- Vol. V:33: (oral testimony from Ngidi): ‘Dingana’s kraals ... 1. Kangela—great kraal, at KwaMpehlela Hill where Pakatwayo had built. 2. Mgungundlovu—great kraal, the largest. At Nzungeni, on the White Mfolozi ... between the Mkumbane and the Inzololo...’
- Vol. V:39: ‘Kangela was *not* built by Tshaka at or near Durban. It was Ngalonkulu (the Boer-leader) [i.e. Andries Pretorius] who built Kangela; he called it after Dingana’s Kangela.’
- Vol. V:89: ‘We set out with the Kangela (i.e. the Hlomendlini, Mqumanga, Dhlangezwa, Ntontela & Kangela). (Kangela was an *umuzi* of Dingana—the place of his people (*wa kwabo*)).’
- Vol. V:91: ‘Kangela was spoken of a Kwa Kangela-qa! This kraal was built on Mpehlela hill, a hill on which Pakatwayo had built his kraal, eMtandeni. Mpehlela was near or opposite the amanDawe hill. Kangela was about four miles from the Mhlatuze ... The fountain [from] which water was got ... by those living at Kangela was uNtontonto.’
- Vol. V:93: ‘... Kangela and iBongo (eBongweni) were both Senzangakhona’s kraals; they were built in the neighbourhood of Mahambehlala, an *umuzi* of Mpande, at the Mkukuze [rises near eShowe and flows into the Mlalazi].’

This evidence—taken as a whole—is undeniably puzzling. It is unlikely or unusual for two places to have the same name. A well-known exception to this is *uMgungundlovu*—a name referring both to Pietermaritzburg, and to Dingane’s great palace, the one referred to above as ‘at Nzungeni, on the White Mfolozi ... between the Mkumbane and the Inzololo...’. There are two theories as to why the name of Dingane’s great palace was ‘transferred’ to Pietermaritzburg; the generally accepted theory says that when the Boers sacked Dingane’s great palace *uMgungundlovu* after the Battle of Blood River in 1838, the name ‘naturally’ transferred to Pietermaritzburg; the other more current theory is that this was a deliberate transfer of name by the Boers themselves, as if to say ‘see where power resides now’.

I would like to interpret the confusion around the name ‘(Kwa)Khangela’ as follows, stressing that this is a personal view, and a possible interpretation. It is not presented as ‘historical fact’.

1. It is possible that Senzangakhona first used the name ‘Khangela’ for a royal *umuzi*.
2. It seems more than likely that Shaka likewise had an *umuzi* with this name, but this

was not in the same location as Senzangakhona's Khangela.

3. There seems little doubt that Khangela was one of Dingane's main palaces, seemingly only second in importance to uMgungundlovu. It was very likely inherited from Shaka and enlarged by Dingane.

4. That Shaka established an actual garrison at Port Natal named Khangela seems in doubt.

As the word *khangela* means 'look at, behold' it is a likely name for a military garrison anywhere placed to watch approaches, and in the phrase '*khangela amankengane*' it is a nickname for the uMgamanqa regiment, who may well have been assigned to keep an eye on the Port Natal situation without actually having been physically barracked there. My main objection to the idea that such a garrison was present is the complete and utter dearth of any reference to it in any of the contemporary diaries and journals.

5. There may well be merit in the suggestion that Andries Pretorius, in establishing his camp on the shores of the bay in the 1840s, named it Khangela after the name of Dingane's second most powerful establishment. Appropriating a name for its power, symbolic or otherwise, is and has always been common in history, and as we have seen above, this is currently a popular theory of how uMgungundlovu came to be known as the Zulu name for Pietermaritzburg. If this was indeed a precedent for Pretorius down on the Durban foreshore, it was a very recent one.

6. I suggest that over the years the nickname of the uMgamanqa regiment and the name Pretorius gave his own Boer fort have become confused, and have led to the impression that Shaka actually had a military establishment at Port Natal in the 1820s and 1830s.

Before we leave the question of the names Khangela and Congella, here is a thought from Pettman, the man who gave us the 'groaning waves against the Bluff' (1985:43):

'*Congella*... is derived from um Kangel, meaning prospect or view. The name has reference to the fine view of Durban bay and the Bluff beyond which is to be obtained from this point.'

■ *KwaMalinde*

References to Congella and Khangela can be found in almost every book dealing with the early days of Durban. A far rarer toponym is *KwaMalinde*, to my knowledge only found sporadically in the oral testimony recorded in the James Stuart Archive. The name apparently referred to the flat area of Durban where today the Greyville Racecourse is found. In Volume I [p. 77], Christian Cane (also known as Lavuta), the son of original settler John Cane, states:

'My father's kraal was at Sinyameni. This was near the Botanic Gardens. The cattle grazed at kwa Malinde.'

Webb and Wright's footnote here explains 'kwa Malinde' as 'the Greyville Flats'. Another informant (II:278) says:

'The flat on which Durban, race course, etc., stands, is known as Kwa Malinde. I do not know where this name comes from.'

For informant Dinya kaZokozwayo (I:109), 'KwaMalinde is the name of the flat Durban is built on, as far as the Mngeni. This includes the Berea.'

More information comes from Dinya (I:104):

‘Kwa Malinde is the Durban flat (which extends) from the Umgeni to Kangela—a flat with *monkey oranges*, fruit eaten by elephants, and still growing in Greyville. Amalinde is a very old name, existing before Europeans came.

....

‘*On the Mayinde*²⁰ flat there is a rolling movement of the sea’. This is a song that used to be sung [by the Cele tribe].’

John Ogle, son of Wohlo (the Zulu name of original settler Henry Ogle) says (V:218) ‘I remember leaving “Mahinde” and going to *ifenya*’. Webb and Wright’s footnote explains ‘Mahinde is probably a rendering of the word *amayinde* (*amalinde*) which was a designation for the flat lands of what is now the Greyville area of Durban’. ‘Ifenya’, as we saw above, was a name for the ‘Bluff-lands’.

According to Shelagh Spencer²¹, Lt C.J. Gibb RE, responsible for the erection of the British fort in the 1840s, wrote a report at the time of the siege of the fort, in which he refers to ‘Amallinde’ [sic].

These few references are all that I have been able to find, but I think them sufficient to establish *Kwa Malinde* as one of the earliest names for Durban (or at least the flat, central parts), and one which has passed into complete obscurity.

Our next, and penultimate name, alas, has even fewer references than *Kwa Malinde*.

■ *eMhlume*

For this Zulu name for Durban I have only one source: Doke and Vilakazi’s *Zulu-English Dictionary*. One page 338, we find ‘*umHlume*, Durban Bay [cf. *i(li)Theku*]’. This meaning—a name for Durban Bay—is the third meaning given to the noun *umhlume*, and the first two meanings are relevant. The primary meaning of the noun is given as ‘Large tree growing along rivers, ... resembling mangrove, having an astringent bark’. Pooley [1993:348, 454] gives *umhlume* as the Zulu word for two species of trees, of which *Beonadia salicina* (Transvaal Teak) growing mostly in the Lebombo Mountains seems less relevant to Durban. The other species, however, is *Rhizophora mucronata* (Red Mangrove) marked as occurring in Durban. Durban Bay was at one time characterised by its mangroves, and a small number still exist today. The other, second, meaning of the word *umhlume* in Doke and Vilakazi is ‘young, castrated animal’, a meaning which brings us from the state of singular testicle-ness contained in the word *itheku* to the sorry state of testicleless-ness.

There is no reference that I can find to the name *uMhlume* for Durban Bay in any other source, but it is perhaps interesting to note [Stuart Archive Vol. II:268] that ‘Farewell built a ‘camp’ ... of *umhluma* wood ...’.

■ *eThusini*

This Zulu name for Durban differs from many of the others in that it is a name used by a very specific group of people: those associated with the University of Natal (now the University of KwaZulu-Natal). Even today one may ask a Zulu-speaking graduate of the old University of Natal ‘*Wafundaphi—eMgungundlovu noma eThusini?*’ (‘Where did you study—Pietermaritzburg or Durban?’).

Most sources say that the name *eThusini* (the locative form of the noun *ithusi* ‘brass’, ‘copper’) is a reference to the gold leaf ball on the top of the dome of the first building (Howard College) of the University in Durban. Zungu, however, has a different theory, for which she unfortunately gives no source [1998:31]:

'Further up hill from KwaKhangela was a trading centre where copper was bartered for local material. This place was known as EThusini—a place where ithusi (copper) and brass articles were sold. When the University of Natal was built in this area new names emerged ...

Some of [the] students and lecturers now tend to use both names interchangeably. It is not only the African people and students who strive to preserve the former name, but non-Zulu-speaking people are also interested in knowing and preserving the history of the area, and proud to say 'Ngifundisa eThusini' ('I lecture at eThusini/the University of Natal, Durban').'

One could paraphrase Bishop Colenso here, and say that 'there is no such place as eThusini, this being only a name applied to the town of Durban, considered as a university'.

The names and the naming of Durban today

The City of Durban today, like many other cities and towns in South Africa with the dual identity of an African and a European name, has taken advantage of the government requirement in 2002 for all towns and cities to set up an independent, named, municipal structure. Durban, like Pietermaritzburg, has kept the 'colonial' name for the city, but used the indigenous name for the Municipality. Where Pietermaritzburg, though, has decided not to use the name uMgungundlovu, and has opted for the name *The Msunduzi Municipality* (the name of the river running through the city), Durban has kept the Zulu name for its bay, and become the *eThekwini Municipality*. The two names *Durban* and *eThekwini* now operate as partners, rather in the manner of Port Natal and Durban in the period 1835 to 1870. The municipal newsletter *eZasegagasini Metro* carries articles and reports about happenings and events in the city, with approximately equal use of the two names.

For example, in their issue of 29 April 2005, we find the following (my emphases throughout):

'Tourism KwaZulu-Natal is pulling out all the stops to ensure *Durban* remains the host city for Africa's premier travel and tourism trade exhibition ...' [p. 3]

'A vehicle monitoring system is to be introduced to tighten control of *eThekwini's* fleet.' [p. 3]

'*EThekwini* is co-hosting a Workers' Day celebration in Durban on Sunday.' [p. 3]

'*EThekwini's* campaign to get ratepayers to use EasyPay facilities is bearing fruit ...' [p. 3]

'*EThekwini* is well on course to retain its AA credit rating which comes up for review later this year. The AA rating recognises Durban as the best financially rated city in Africa.' [p. 4]



The name of this newspaper – *eZasegagasini Metro* – is in itself interesting. The Zulu word for 'wave' is *igagasi*, in the locative form *egagasini* 'in, at, from the wave'. The word *ezasegagasini* is a short form of *izindaba zasegagasini* 'matters from the place of the wave'. I have suggested to the editor of this newspaper that *eZasemagagasini* 'from the place of the waves [plural]' might be more accurate, and also avoid connotation of a single tsunami-like wave, but as yet have had no reply.

The use of the word *igagasi* to refer to Durban might be obvious enough on the surface, but in fact there is a story behind the choice of this masthead. *EGagasini* (place of the wave) has been a popular Zulu nickname for Durban since the 1960s. It was popularised by K.E. Masinga, the first black announcer for what was then Radio Bantu in the early 1960s. He used to refer to himself on the radio as *uKE Masinga ogibel' igagasi* ('KE Masinga who is riding a wave') and news from the Durban radio stations became known as *izindaba zasegagasini*. Even today on the radio, if there is a programme of exciting forthcoming events in Durban, the announcers will put this to their listeners as *kuyasha eGagasini manje* ('things are hot in Durban at the moment').²²

It is clear that *eGagasini* must be added to our list of names for Durban, and with the move towards indigenous language toponyms in South Africa to replace 'colonial' ones, one wonders whether the atlases of the future will record South Africa's busiest port as *eGagasini*.

The other names for Durban and parts of Durban show no signs of revival – possibly simply because they are unknown – and there seems little or no chance that various suburbs of the city might be renamed *KwaMalinde*, *iFenya* or *iSibubulungu*. The University of KwaZulu-Natal has officially chosen the name *Howard College* for the campus otherwise known as *eThusini*. There may be a small chance of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Geographical Names Committee recommending to the *eThekweni* Municipality that they officially change the name of Congella to *KwaKhangela*, as 'Congella' as a name has managed to achieve a similar notoriety to that of 'Umbogintwini', now corrected to 'eZimbokodweni' as a river name, but still retaining its colonially mangled spelling as a suburban post office near Amanzimtoti.

One must, I think, assume that these minor but intriguing examples of Durban's onomastic past have now faded away for ever.

NOTES

1. The Pietermaritzburg Municipality (official name *The Msunduzi Municipality*, after the river running through the city), does not like the sobriquet 'Sleepy Hollow'. It refers to the city in promotional literature as 'The City of Choice'.
2. Early names for Cape Town, according to the cover of Jenkins et al *Changing Place Names*.
3. Undated, but the foreword by Dr The Hon D.G. Shepstone is dated 1966.
4. I am indebted to Shelagh Spencer for passing on this information about Miss Dunn's correspondence.
5. A footnote reference at this point in Pettman directs the reader to Colenso's 1855 *Ten Weeks in Natal*.
6. Stuart's aside in square brackets.
7. Regularly confirmed by my Zulu-speaking students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg.
8. This section on the meaning of *eThekwini* is taken almost entirely from Chapter Ten of my book *Zulu Names*.
9. Not a misprint for 'Shaka', as we might expect, but the name of the chief of the Luthuli clan.
10. i.e. the white, or at least the non-Zulu-speaking, residents of Durban.
11. Bourquin probably gets this idea from Lugg [1970:48]: '*eThekwini*. Loc. of *itheku*, an old, and probably Lala word for a lagoon or estuary.'
12. Mr Dale does not say so, but he is probably thinking of Lugg's comments in his *Life Under a Zulu Shield* [1975:107]:
 '[*eThekwini*] means a large sheet of water, and also—according to Bryant—a man or beast with one testicle ... but *ithweka* or possibly *ntweka* are the only words I have ever heard for this, but never *theku*, nor have I met a Bantu who has done so.
 The story that it was so named by a chief driven out of Zululand in Shaka's time cannot be accepted. The name definitely refers to water and *thekwane* the name of our common hammerkop, or mud lark, a frequenter of muddy pools and lagoons, confirms it.'
 The logic of this last comment about the 'thekwane' escapes me.

13. Clearly Mr Dale is totally unfamiliar with the oral 'praise'-poems of the Zulu people, particularly those created by women with men as the topic.
14. I guess that the English name (Tonga-kerrie) and the Afrikaans *Tongakierie* make similar reference, via the metaphorical reference to a knobkerrie, with its single round ball at the end of the stick.
15. Fynn, Diary (1969: frontispiece)
16. While an original watercolour map dated 1839 in the possession of the Alan Paton Centre of the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg, gives this same topographical feature the name *Cape Nathaniel*, clearly named after early settler Nathaniel Isaacs.
17. A byside area of Durban, a place of wharves, warehouses and factories.
18. The information about 'Tshaka's' kraal comes from Stuart's informant Meseni kaMusu. Another of his informants, Ngidi kaMcikaziswa, was obviously present at the interview.
19. 'Dingane' and 'Dingana' are both acceptable spellings. Doke and Vilakazi's dictionary gives 'Dingane', while Stuart tends to favour 'Dingana'.
20. The name 'Malinde' is 'thefuya'd here—a style of speech which replaces 'l' with 'y'.
21. Pers. Comm.
22. I am indebted to my colleague Ndela Ntshangase for this information on *eGagasini*. My mother-tongue Zulu students also confirm this name, and have offered another unofficial nickname for Durban—*kwelikaBanana* ('at the place of the banana'). I do not know how widespread this name is.

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