

Shield, Symbolism and Identity: Post-colonial Heraldry in KwaZulu-Natal

Introduction

In the days of chivalry, mediaeval knights riding to battle or jousting at tourneys were covered from head to toe in armour, and with the visor on their helms shut, it was impossible to identify the knight-within, so to speak. For this reason the knight's cloak, worn outside his armour, the cloth worn outside the horse's armour, and later, the knight's shield as well, were decorated with easy-to-recognise brightly-coloured patterns and devices: crosses, circles, stars. Many knights also wore distinctive crests on their helmets. Over the years, as these symbols of identity proliferated, they became formalised and codified. The shield became the main carrier of the various symbols and images, and together with helmet and crest, and various other bits and pieces — all described below — these became known collectively as a 'Coat-of-Arms' or 'Armorial Bearings'. When the Age of Chivalry ended, and knights no longer rode to joust in tourneys, or to defeat the infidel at the gates of Jerusalem, the coats-of-arms, still in, on and around their shields, remained. They became the identifying symbols, not only of aristocratic families, but of institutions. Countries and provinces, cities and boroughs, guilds of tradesmen and other corporations, universities and schools, all used coats-of-arms, which were normally registered.

Identity has become an enormously important issue in the post-colonial era, and especially so in Africa, where for so long it has become a given that colonial settlers stripped the local inhabitants of their identity and replaced it with a quasi-European identity. Much has been written of how Christianity replaced local religions, of how local naming systems were replaced by European systems, how political, economic and social systems were perverted and reformed into variations of European systems. The African Renaissance, emphasised by South African president Thabo Mbeki over the last decade, is an attempt to bring back a sense of African identity.

There are two interlinked issues here:

Firstly, is it possible, or even desirable, to bring back the identity of 'The African' as it was before colonial times?

Secondly, is it possible, or even desirable, to discard completely all of the legacy of colonialism?

These are issues hotly debated in Africa, and particularly in South Africa today. The furore, as I write (May 2007) over the changing of street names in Durban is a case in point. There are those who argue that they must remain, as they are part of the legacy and the heritage of Durban. And there are those that argue, yes, precisely, they are the legacy and heritage of colonial Durban, and as we are no longer a colony, they must go. Here naming, heritage and identity go hand-in-hand.

It is with these issues in mind that I wish to examine the use of heraldic coats-of-arms in KwaZulu-Natal today, and to do so within a general framework of post-colonialism in Africa. So although the emphasis will be on the coats-of-arms adopted as visual identities by KZN's various municipal authorities, I will also look—briefly—at the arms adopted by various African countries on independence, and at South Africa's new coat-of-arms.

We will need to look briefly at the new entities which need new identities—mainly the district municipalities—and we will also need a brief introduction to the principles of armorial bearings: the arms themselves and their various parts: shield, parts of the shield, the helm, the crest, the mantling, the supporters, etc., the language of heraldry ('.. in chief, a lion passant guardant or, langued gules, ...'), the rules of heraldry, and typical and standard icons used in heraldry.

With these in mind, we can see how this aspect of colonial legacy has been retained as part of modern identities, albeit in a much adapted form.

Sources

The coats-of-arms described and analysed in this article were derived from three main sources:

Most came from websites. The majority of the local and district municipalities in KZN have functioning websites, and most of these place the coat-of-arms or other identifying logo on the home page. In a few cases this was too small to identify the separate elements (e.g. aMajuba Municipality, Greater Kokstad Municipality); in other cases a whole page was devoted to the coat-of-arms, with a detailed explanation of the elements (e.g. KwaZulu-Natal Provincial website, Zululand District Municipality).

Some came from the pages of local newspapers, from large half or full page colour advertisements with an uplifting message from the mayor of this or that municipality, to smaller single column black-and-white advertisements in the classified sections calling for municipal tenders and the like.

A few came from personal visits to municipalities, where the coats-of-arms were found, and photographed, on municipal buildings and vehicles.

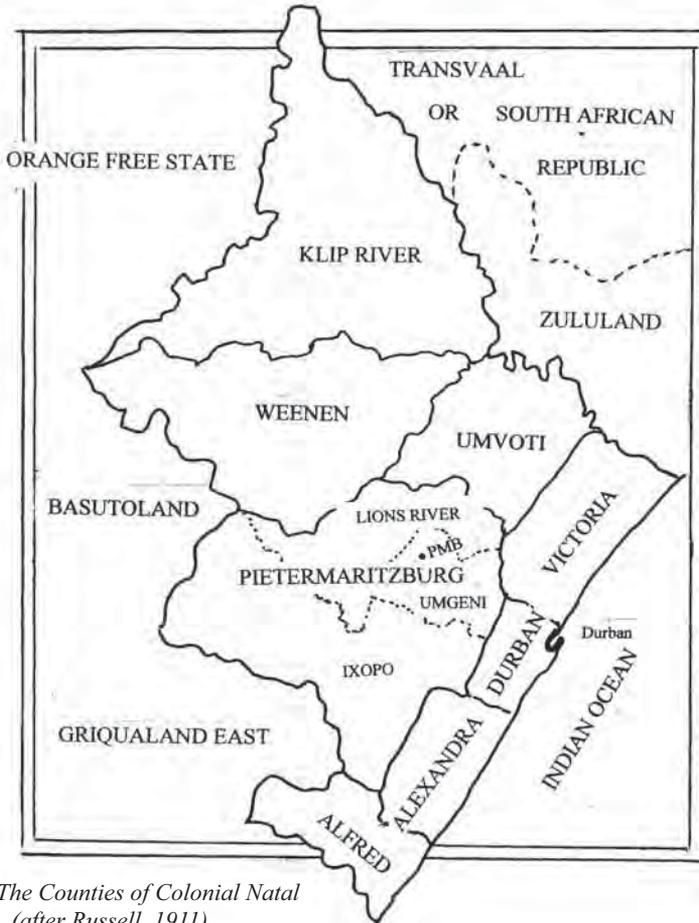
Approaches to provincial government officials came to naught, so the number of coats-of-arms described in this article is probably not the complete number. However, I believe it is a sufficient representation to give a general picture of contemporary heraldry in KwaZulu-Natal. The coats-of-arms of nine African countries have been added to give some sort of wider African perspective, those of one or two KZN cities, and those of the erstwhile Universities of Natal and Durban-Westville and the logo of their offspring, the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The Colonial counties of Natal, and today's equivalents: the District municipalities

The map provided with Russell's 1911 *Natal – The Land and its Story* [see map 1], gives the counties of Natal at the time:

Klip River, divided into Newcastle and Klip River (Ladysmith area), *Weenen*, *Umvoti*, *Victoria*, *Durban*, *Alexandra*, *Alfred*, and *Pietermaritzburg County*. Pietermaritzburg was divided into Ixopo (by far the largest portion), Lion's River, and Pietermaritzburg.

To the north of the Tugela River¹ was the completely separate entity named Zululand.



Map 1: *The Counties of Colonial Natal*
(after Russell, 1911)

The SA Constitution of 1996 defines three different categories of local government authority. These categories are described more fully in subsequent legislation as metropolitan, local and district municipalities. Metropolitan municipalities are essentially large economic conurbations, and in their geographic areas each 'Metro' is the only local government authority. In KwaZulu-Natal, eThekweni municipality (greater Durban including Umhlanga, Pinetown and Amanzimtoti) is the sole Metro.

¹I use the old spelling here, instead of the modern correct *uThukela*, as we are referring to a colonial map of 1911.

Many people find the concepts of district and local municipalities confusing because they seem to be describing exactly the same entities under different names. Local municipalities cover the geographic areas of traditional towns or cities, while districts cover much bigger geographic areas and include anywhere between four and eight or nine different local municipalities. Districts do not have any executive or oversight powers over local municipalities, but they do have a primary responsibility to provide for the bulk distribution of water and electricity services. In only one respect is there a clear distinction between the powers of the different categories. Metros and local municipalities have the power to levy property rates, districts do not (Municipal Property Rates Act, Section 2)².

Since 1999, KwaZulu-Natal has been divided into 11 District Municipalities, each itself divided into smaller units. These are, reading from North to South, and left to right (see Map 2):

Amajuba District Municipality, divided into Newcastle, Dannhauser and Utrecht;

Zululand District Municipality, divided into eDumbe, uPhongolo, Abaqulusi, Ulundi and Nongoma;

Umkhanyakude District Municipality, divided into Jozini, uMhlabayalingana, The Big 5 False Bay, Hlabisa and Mtubatuba;



Map 2: Local and District Municipalities since 1999 (map by Koopman, A 2007)

² I am indebted to mSunduzi Municipal Councillor Mark Steele for this information.

uThukela District Municipality, divided into eMnambithi/Ladysmith, oKkhahlamba, iNdaka, uMtshezi and iMbabazane;

uMzinyathi District Municipality, divided into eNdumeni, Nquthu, Msinga, and uMvoti;

uThungulu District Municipality, divided into Nkandla, eMthonjaneni, Ntambanana, Mbonambi, uMhlathuze and uMlalazi;

uMgungundlovu District Municipality, divided into Mooi Mpofana, iMpendle, uMn-
geni, uMshwathi, The Msunduzi [*sic*], Richmond and eMkhambathini;

iLembe District Municipality, divided into Maphumulo, eNdondakusuka, Ndwedwe and KwaDukuza;

eThekwini Metro;

Sisonke District Municipality, divided into kwaSani, Matatiele, Greater Kokstad, Ingwe, and uBuhlebezwe; and

Ugu District Municipality, divided into Vulamehlo, uMdoni, uMzumbe, uMuziwabantu, eZinqoleni, and Hibiscus Coast.

Heraldic Language

When armorial bearings are granted to an institution by a College or Arms (in South Africa the Bureau of Heraldry), the arms are accompanied by an official description in the esoteric language of heraldry. This description is known as a ‘blazon’, and there is a related verb ‘to blazon’. There is no space in this article to describe fully heraldic language, but just as an example, the following is the official blazon of the arms of KwaZulu-Natal (Fig. 28), with an explanation following:

Arms: Argent, a fess dancetty Vert, in base, within a bordure dovetailed of the last, a Strelitzia flower proper, on a chief dancetty Azure, filleted of the first, a mullet Argent. The shield is ensigned of a heading Or, thereupon a Zulu hut proper. Behind the shield a spear and knobkerrie in saltire proper.

Supporters: On a compartment Vert, the lower edge Or, dexter a lion and sinister a black wildebeest proper.

Motto: MASISUKUME SAKHE

Explanation:

Arms: Argent = silver = white, the main colour of the shield, mentioned first. A ‘fess dancetty’ is a zigzag band and ‘Vert’ is green. In the ‘base’ (lower part of the shield), within a border where green and white (‘of the last’ means ‘last colour mentioned’) are dovetailed, is a Strelitzia in its natural colours (‘proper’). On a chief Azure dancetty (in the top part of the shield, blue, with a zigzag edge) ‘filleted’ (edged) in white (‘the first’) is a white star (‘a mullet Argent’). The shield is ‘ensigned’ (topped, crowned) with a yellow heading (‘Or’ = gold, yellow). On top of that we find a Zulu hut in natural colours. Behind the shield a spear and a knobkerrie in natural colours are crossed (‘in saltire’).

Supporters: on a green base stand a lion on the right and a black wildebeest on the left, both in natural colours.

The motto MASISUKUME SAKHE means ‘Let us stand up and build’.

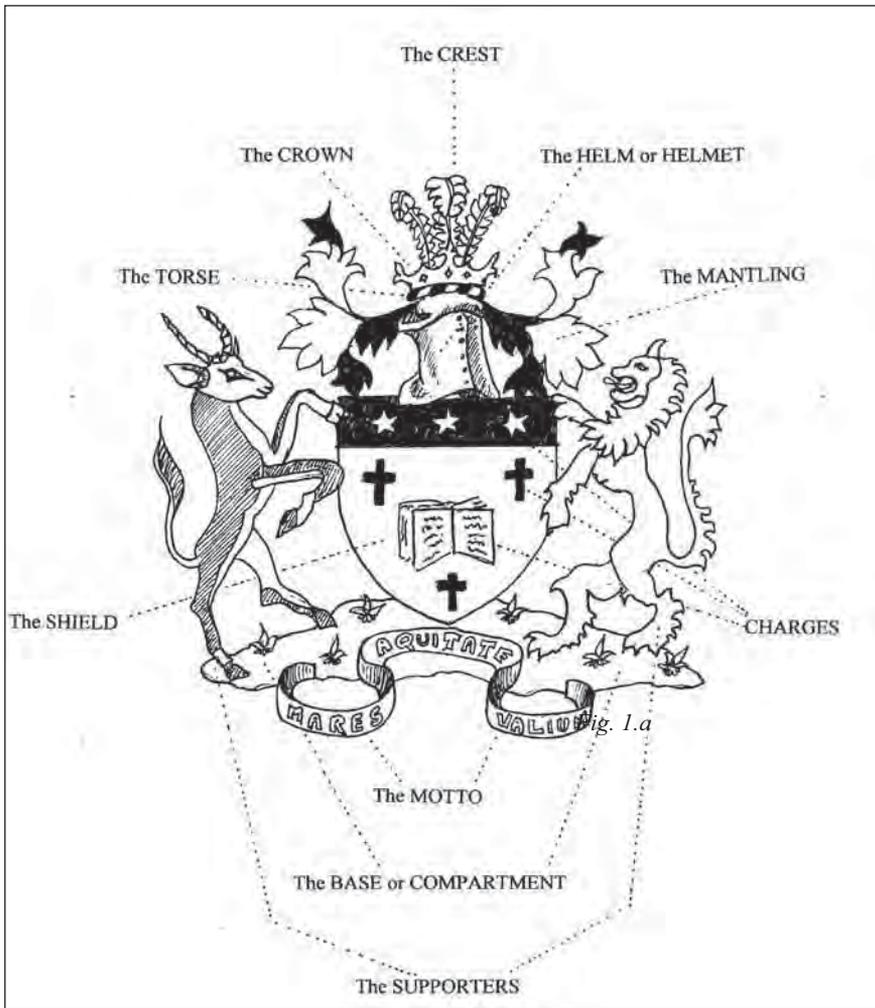
The structure of a Coat-of-Arms

The component parts of a coat-of-arms (see Fig.1.a) are listed below, and are briefly discussed as to their function in traditional heraldry, and the way they manifest in contemporary (post-colonial) African heraldry.

The Shield

The shield lies in the centre of the group of component which make up a complete coat-of-arms, and is important for two reasons:

Firstly, because it is the one essential item in a coat-of-arms. There are coats-of-arms without all the other components listed below, i.e just a shield on its own, but there are no coats-of-arms without a shield.³



³Having said that, I must add that in the coats-of-arms of Angola, Mozambique and Madagascar, the shield itself appears to be missing. That is to say, there is no obvious outline of a shield, but merely a space filled with the kinds of symbolic devices which would normally fill a shield.

Secondly, it is the main space where symbolic elements — ‘charges’ — are placed, and so contains the core of the projected identity.

Boutell (1970:19) gives four different forms of shield used in heraldry (see Fig 1.b) of which shape (b) is used most commonly. Many of the coats-of-arms described in this article use this shape.

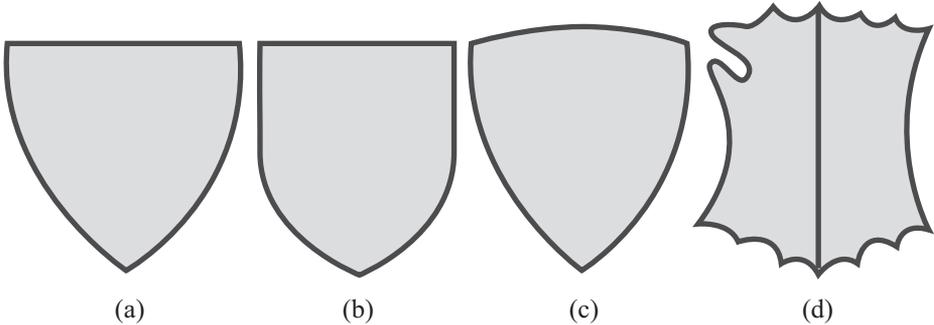


Fig. 1.b Different shield forms used in heraldry. After Boutell (1970:19)

According to Boutell (*op cit*:240) the arms assigned to Tanganyika in 1961 created a precedent for the use of a ‘native shield’. i.e the shape of the Zulu shield that South Africans are accustomed to seeing in tourist brochures. (See Tanganyika arms in Fig. 2, and their modern equivalent — those of Tanzania — in Fig. 3). Most of the coats-of-arms of the KZN municipalities use the ‘native shield’. Henceforth to be referred to as the ‘Zulu shield’. Lesotho (see Fig. 8) uses a very individually shaped shield, referred to in the blazon as ‘a Basutho shield’. Swaziland has solved the problem of which shape of shield to use by using the traditional heraldic shield, and having upon it as sole charge a Zulu shield (see Fig. 9).

The shield remains the most pervasive relic, not just of the colonial era, but of the mediaeval era of chivalry. Even when an institution, previously identified by full coats-of-arms, decides to abandon this type of iconic identity and go for the simpler, more modern ‘corporate logo’ type, the shield somehow ‘hangs on in’. I refer here to the University of KwaZulu-Natal, built out of the two previous entities, the University of Natal and the University of Durban-Westville, each with a full set of armorial bearings. One might perhaps have expected these to have been merged in the same way in which the two institutions were merged (a not uncommon heraldic procedure called ‘marshalling’), but the new university was determined to shake off its heraldic past and come up with something snappy and modern. I have to agree that they have done just that, but I am also delighted to see that the shield remains an integral part of the design. An African shield, of course, and then again only half a shield, but a shield nonetheless (see Figs 31, 32, and 33).

I do not have much of the KwaDukuza Municipality to go on — just a 4 × 4 cm black-and white newspaper cutting. The logo — for this is not a coat of arms — appears to be half a Zulu shield within the upper half of an egg. And the half shield appears to be fraying very badly on its inside edge (see Fig. 19). It is possible — the sample is too small to be sure — that what we have here is half a Zulu shield joined with half a mealie plant.

The Helmet or Helm

This is the one part of traditional heraldry which seems to have been completely abandoned in African heraldry. In traditional heraldry, the helm is an indication of status. Whether it is of gold or steel, whether open or shut, barred or visored, and whether it faces the front, or sideways, all these indicate a certain status, in British heraldry at least. For example, only the reigning monarch and ‘Princes of the Blood Royal’ (Boutell, 1970:154) may have an open, barred, gold, front-facing helm. Corporate bodies (which includes corporations and municipalities) must use the helm suitable to an ‘esquire’, that is a closed, steel, visored helm, placed sideways. See the arms of the old Union of South Africa (Fig. 11), those of the Umshwati Municipality (Fig. 25), the city of Pietermaritzburg (Fig. 29), the universities of Durban-Westville and Natal (Figs. 30 and 31), the city of Durban (Fig. 33), the Greater Kokstad Municipality (Fig. 35) and the Richmond Municipality (Fig. 42).

The arms of the Zululand District Municipality (Fig. 15) have what appears to be a leopard-skin heading between shield and crest, and their description of their coat-of-arms on their website [www.zululand.org.za] says that this heading is ‘The Helm’. Bruce Berry’s website on South African heraldry (<http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/za-kn-zu.html>) says ‘the shield is ensigned of a leopard skin heading ...’. I would personally say that in traditional heraldry, this would be described as a *torse*.

The Torse

Boutell (1970:155), says

‘The crest was laced or bolted onto the helm, and to hide the unsightly join, various decorative means were employed ... [such as a] scarf ... the twisting of such a scarf round the helm ... would give rise to the torse ...’

The torse seems to have virtually disappeared from modern African heraldry, and can be found in few of the examples illustrated in this article. I find this disappointing, and in the case of KwaZulu-Natal heraldry almost unbelievable, for the function of the torse can be seen as a support for loads to be carried on the head/helmet, and in Zulu tradition, this has been the precise function of the symbol-heavy *inkatha*. The *inkatha* in its simplest form is a coil of grass to be placed on the head to facilitate the carrying of heavy loads on the head. Such a head-ring quickly soaks up sweat, skin particles, hair, etc., known collectively (with other bodily waste) as *insila*, sometimes translated as ‘body-dirt’, but more correctly ‘body-essence’. These grass rings become highly personal to the owner, and must not be allowed into the hands of enemies or they would be used for witchcraft. In the days of the Zulu kings, from uShaka kaSenzangakhona, through Dingane and Mpande to Cetshwayo kaMpande, the king kept an enormous grass-ring, bound with python skin, under the roof of his ‘great hut’. This was added to yearly with the *insila* of the king and other notables. When the British defeated Cetshwayo in 1879 at the Battle of Ulundi, they burnt down his great hut, with its huge national *inkatha*, and this more than anything else symbolised the end of the nation to the Zulu people. When King Solomon kaDinuzulu was looking for a powerful symbol for a political party in the 1920s (Cope, 1993: 11, 170–171) the *inkatha* was an obvious choice. Solomon’s short-lived political group was revived by Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi in the 1960s as *Inkatha yeNkululeko yeSizwe* (‘the National Head-ring of Freedom’).

The Crest

After the shield, this is the next most important part of the armorial bearings from a point of view of identity, because often the crest is used on its own as a visual sign of the identity of the bearer, and because it carries the same symbolic, iconic weight as the charges in the shield. Almost every example of post-colonial armorial bearings featured in this article has a crest, and to discuss and compare all of them would be the work of another full article. I mention here some interesting features of the crests illustrated in this article, and will return to them later when overall symbolism of charges and crests are discussed in the latter half of the article.

- *Zululand District*: Half a sun (rays), red, on a semi-circle of triangle-motifed beadwork in the colours of the national flag, both mounted on a torse/headring of leopard skin. This combination already makes a complex symbolic statement. And this is only the crest. The rest of the coat-of-arms also contains much symbolism (Fig. 15).
- *Pietermaritzburg (City)*: A blue sun with five stars on it, the centre star gold, the others white (Fig. 29).
- *Lesotho*: The limited blazon does not mention a crest and it is a moot point as to whether the object at the top of the shield is a crest or not. If it is, it is an ear of corn, or perhaps millet. But it is more likely to be the furry top of the stick often seen at the top of a traditional African shield between the spear and the knobkerrie (Fig. 8).
- *Namibia*: A Fish Eagle on a torse both in the colours of the Namibian flag which is the sole charge of the shield (Fig. 7).
- *Swaziland*: Two black plumes (ostrich feathers?) on a blue and gold torse. The crest is said to be the king's *lidlabé* ('crown of feathers') (Fig. 9).
- *Transkei*⁴: On a green and white torse, a green mound with a wicker basket between two aloes (Fig. 43).
- *Zimbabwe*: On a green and gold torse, a five-pointed red star with the Great Bird of Zimbabwe superimposed.(Fig. 10).
- *eNdameni Municipality*: The crest is a gold crown with seven black diamond nuggets on the rim, and the spikes decorated with ears of wheat and maize (Fig. 18).
- *KwaZulu*⁵: On a black head-ring, an elephant's head facing the front (Fig. 44).
- *uMngeni Municipality*: A bead-work crown in yellow, red and blue (Fig. 16).
- *KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Arms*: On a gold headring, a traditional Zulu beehive hut (Fig. 28).
- *uThungulu Municipality*: A red spiky thing which could be a red aloe flower, or a horned cucumber, or something similar (Fig. 24).
- *aMajuba District Municipality*: Hard to tell from the tiny size of the arms on the web-page, but it would appear to be a women's red *isicholo* ('headdress') (Fig. 13).
- *uMshwathi Municipality*: A three-masted brigantine, red-flagged, on blue waves on a blue and white torse. These are the arms of New Hanover (Fig. 25).
- *Dundee Municipality*: A five-turreted castle. It is not clear whether these arms are still in use (Fig. 26).
- *uMsinga Municipality*: A women's red *isicholo*, with a bead-work rim (Fig. 21).

⁴ No longer in use, since 1994, when Transkei ceased to be a political entity

⁵ No longer in use, since 1994, when KwaZulu ceased to be a political entity.

- *uMzinyathi District Municipality*: On a red ring, a golden crown with three turrets rising from it (Fig. 23).
- *eDumbe Municipality*: On an orange and blue torse, a white sheep couchant, surmounted by a spear blade (Fig. 27).

The Crown

In colonial heraldry, crowns and coronets may be used by royalty and certain ranks of aristocracy, and they would normally be placed between the helm and the crest.

In civic heraldry crowns may occur as charges and as crest coronets, and the mural crown ('masoned and embattled'—Boutell p. 188) is the most common. This seems to be the type of crown which adorns the top of the shield in the arms of the uMzinyathi District Municipality (Fig. 23), and it is certainly the crown on top of the arms of the Borough of Dundee (Fig. 26)

The arms of King Goodwill Zwelithini kaBhekuzulu (Fig. 45) show a royal crown above the shield, but it is interesting to note⁶ that when his arms were registered with the South African Bureau of Heraldry in 1975, they were registered *without* the crown.

The Mantling

The mantling is the ornate leaf-like structure which flows from under the torse on each side of the helm, and down each side of the shield if there are no supporters. It represents the cloak which was worn over the armour in the days of knighthood. It is always in two colours: the two main colours of the shield. The arms of the uMshwathi Municipality (New Hanover) (Fig. 25) show the mantling flowing down the sides of the shield as there are no supporters, while the arms of the City of Pietermaritzburg (Fig. 29) flow outwards and upwards from the torse to make room for the heads of the two wildebeest supporting the shield.

Modern African heraldry has discarded the mantling completely, which is perhaps a pity. One understands the wish to discard images of colonialism and imperialism, but the cloak can hardly be seen as a definitive statement of Western attire today (or indeed for several centuries) whereas the cloak or cape is often still a part of African formal attire, particularly if of lion or leopard skin. One thinks also of the Sotho blanket—unquestionably part of the sartorial image of the baSotho. Where there are no supporters in the modern coat of arms I cannot but think of how effective some sort of draped cloak on each side of the shield would be. European royalty decorated their cloaks with *fleurs-de-lis* and ermine; here in Africa we have even more effective patterning in the hides of zebra and giraffe, besides the leopard skin favoured by Zulu royalty.

Mantling can still be seen in the arms of those municipalities which have not changed from the coats-of-arms of towns dominant in the area. Besides uMshwathi/New Hanover, see the Greater Kokstad Municipality (Fig. 35), eMnambithi/Ladysmith (Fig. 41), uMvoti/Greytown (Fig. 17) and Richmond (Fig. 42). The only two municipalities which have devised new coats-of-arms using mantling are The Big Five False Bay Municipality, which has green and gold mantling issuing from the sides and the top of the shield, interrupted on each top corner by an elephant's head (Fig. 20), and uMhlabayalingana (Fig. 14), also with arms that combine mantling with an elephant. The

⁶ Jens Pattke (20.02.01) in a website dealing with KZN heraldry.

effect in each case is not unbecoming, giving the effect of an elephant appearing from within abundant foliage.

The Supporters

The role of the supporters is a simple one: to support and hold up the shield, but as with so much else in heraldry, they are also an opportunity for symbols of identity. Supporters are usually animals or birds associated with the person or place bearing the arms; occasionally they are humans. A quick roll-call of the arms of some African states, and some KZN municipalities will give an idea of the supporters favoured by African heraldry. Namibia has two oryx antelope, Lesotho two ‘Basutho horses’, Uganda a Ugandan Kob and a Crested Crane, Kenya two heraldic lions, the old coat of arms of South Africa (1932 to 2000) a springbok and a gemsbok, Tanzania a man and a woman in traditional clothing, Swaziland a lion and an elephant⁷, Zimbabwe two kudu, Botswana two zebra, and the old Transkei arms showed two leopards.

The dominant animal theme continues with KwaZulu-Natal heraldry. The coat of arms of Pietermaritzburg are supported by two black wildebeest, King Goodwill Zwelithini’s arms by two heraldic lions, the old arms of KwaZulu by a leopard and a lion, the KZN provincial arms by a lion and a black wildebeest, and the eDumbe Municipality by a wildebeest and an eagle. Birds only as supporters are favoured by the uMzinyathi District Municipality, with two bald ibises, the Zululand District Municipality with two Trum-peter Hornbills, and the aMajuba District Municipality, with two Secretary Birds.

The coats-of-arms of the uMsinga, the Dundee, the uMngeni and the uThungulu District Municipalities have no supporters at all.

The website of the eNdumeni Municipality provides interesting information:

The Bureau of Heraldry advised us that the Endumeni Municipality, being a Category B Municipality, is not qualify [sic] to utilize animals or birds as supports in the coat-of-arms, therefore we opted for the two guinea fowl feathers to flank the shield as supports. [See Fig. 18] The choice of the guinea fowls [sic] symbolizes the natural wildlife in this area.

This quote confirms that some at least of the new KZN municipalities are seeking the approval of the South African Bureau of Heraldry⁸. It also raises the question of what a ‘Category B Municipality’ is. And it introduces the curious heraldic notion that depending on one’s municipal status one may either have whole supporters, or partial supporters. If you can’t get the bird, at least you get the feathers. It brings us back to the question I raised earlier about indigenous hide mantling: if you are a ‘Category B Municipality’ and therefore do not qualify for complete lions as your supporters, can you at least drape a little lion skin around the edge of the shield?

The Base, or Compartment

As Boutell points out (1970:180):

The supporters themselves must have some support. Having the task of holding up the shield, they must be given something to stand on.

⁷ The lion representing the king and the elephant the Ndlovukadzi—the Queen Mother.

⁸ This has not always been the case. The website of KZN heraldry states for the coat-of-arms of the erstwhile ‘homeland’ KwaZulu that although it was registered for the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly with the Bureau of Heraldry, the ‘South African State Herald did not issue a formal certificate of registration as ...[the] ... arms had been devised without consultation of the Bureau of Heraldry’.

Boutell points out that occasionally the motto supports the supporters, but ‘when a massive elephant ..[is] ..made to stand on the edge of a ribbon’, this has ‘an unfortunate appearance of instability’. [*ibid*]

The solution which is commonly employed is to make the supporters stand on a mound, usually covered with grass or other vegetation. This area is known as the *compartment*. It has the added advantage of providing yet another space for various symbols, especially if these are growing plants representative of species found in the territory of the coat-of-arms. Some examples of compartments with and without anything extra are discussed below.

In the old arms of the Transkei (Fig. 43), the two supporting leopards stand on a grassy mound, and the motto is superimposed on this as well. The two oryx supporting the Namibian shield stand on a mound on which a *Welwitschia mirabilis* is growing, an example of local desert flora which is ‘symbolic of survival and national fortitude’ (*Wikipedia*, Namibian coat of arms). The two horses holding up the shield of Lesotho are on a grassy mound, which carries the motto. On the mound below the shield of Uganda we find a representation of the River Nile flowing from the base of the shield between examples of a coffee tree and a cotton plant. There is still enough space for the motto at the bottom.

Proteas grow between the legs of the supporting antelope on the mound of the old South African arms, and between the feet of the supporting humans holding the shield of Tanzania are a clove bush and a cotton bush. The two kudu holding up Zimbabwe’s shield are trampling on ‘an earthy mound composed of stalks of wheat, a pile of cotton, and a head of maize’. And yes, there *is* still room for the motto.

The two zebra of Botswana tread daintily on the edge of the ribbon carrying the motto, and the supporters of the Swaziland shield float in mid-air, just above the flimsy ribbon bearing the country’s motto.

Turning now to KwaZulu-Natal heraldry, we see that the two Trumpeter Hornbills of the Zululand District Municipality are safe on a grassy mound which also carries two Nguni cattle horns (if you believe the Zululand District Municipality website), alternatively ‘two conjoined elephant tusks, the points upwards beside the respective shield flanks, over the join a set of stringed beads, all Argent’ (if you believe Bruce Berry’s South African heraldic website). The two Bald Ibis of uMzinyathi likewise have a grassy mound, shared with the motto, and this is also the case of the wildebeest and eagle of eDumbe Municipality. It is sufficient, though, for the insubstantial guinea fowl feathers framing the shield of eNdumeni Municipality to flow out from the edges of the motto ribbon.

The Motto

No coat-of-arms is complete without a motto, inscribed on a band or ribbon at the bottom of the arms, below, or superimposed upon, the compartment.

Here follow examples of mottos from African states:

- Namibia: *Unity, Liberty, Justice*
- Lesotho: *Khotso*⁹, *Pula, Nala* (‘Peace, Rain and Prosperity’)
- Uganda: *For God and my Country*
- Kenya: *Harambee* (for which no translation is provided on the Wikipedia website)

⁹ Although the illustration says ‘Khoto’

- Old South Africa: *Ex Unitate Vires* ('From Unity Comes Strength'¹⁰)
- Tanzania: *Uhuru Na Umoja* ('Freedom and Unity')
- Swaziland: *Siyinqaba* ('We are the fortress')
- Zimbabwe: *Unity, Freedom, Work*
- Botswana: *Pula* ('Rain')

From KwaZulu-Natal:

- uMsinga Municipality: *Sithuba amandla omnotho nentuthuko eMsinga* ('We drive the strength of wealth and progress in uMsinga')
- Provincial Arms: *Masisukume Sakhe* ('Let us rise up and build')
- uMshwathi Municipality: *Bete und arbeite* ('Pray and work')
- Old KwaZulu Arms: *Sonqoba simunye* ('We will conquer if we are one') (Fig. 44)
- Arms of King Goodwill Zwelithini: Ilembe *Leqa Amanye Ngoku Khalipha* (a slight rewording of one of the most famous phrases from the praises of Shaka kaSenzangakhona, meaning 'the axe that surpasses other axes in sharpness'. The Ilembe District Municipality takes its name from this phrase.) (Fig.45)
- Zululand District Municipality: *Inqubekela Phambili Ngobuqotho* ('Service Delivery with Dignity')
- eDumbe Municipality: *Utrumque* ('both' or 'each'. The significance is not clear)
- uMzinyathi District Municipality: *Thuthuka Mzinyathi* ('Go forwards Mzinyathi')
- eNdumeni Municipality: *Together in Prosperity*
- uMngeni Municipality: *uMngeni Municipality* (Fig. 16). Should we consider this a motto? — it occupies the place of a motto, and is placed within the standard ribbon. It raises an interesting question. Mottos, by and large are considered to be uplifting and inspirational messages. Scots Clan mottos, as explained by MacLean (1990)¹¹, are of this type, such as the Gaelic '*S rioghal mo dhream* ('Royal is my race') for the MacGregor clan (MacLean, 1990:71), and the Latin *Virtutis Gloria Merces* ('Glory is the reward of valour') for the Robertson clan, who also turn to Gaelic with *Garg 'n uair dhuis gear* ('fierce when raised') (*op. cit.* 105). Now and then, though, it is clear that a clan can think of nothing more inspirational than the clan name. Thus members of the Gordon clan went into battle shouting *An Gordonach! An Gordonach!* ('A Gordon! A Gordon!') (*op. cit.* 34). Perhaps the uMngeni Municipality see themselves in the same light, and perhaps the oft-repeated phrase 'uMngeni Municipality' drives the workers of this municipality to new heights of pride and productivity. Perhaps....
- uThungulu Municipality: We may have the same issue here, except that the uThungulu Municipality does not employ the standard ribbon for the words 'uThungulu District Municipality' (Fig. 24). They would need three ribbons, anyway, for this municipality is language sensitive, and under its emblem we find 'uThungulu District Municipality', then 'uThungulu Distrik [?] Munisipaliteit' and then 'uMasipala Wesifunda Waso Thungulu'.
- Pietermaritzburg Arms: Here again the motto is simply 'uMgungundlovu', the Zulu name for Pietermaritzburg. And yet — is this so simple? That *uMgungundlovu* is 'the Zulu name for Pietermaritzburg' is a given among whites, but amongst Zulu-speakers uMgungundlovu is the site of Dingane's former main establishment near Babanango,

¹⁰ One of the more splendid pieces of irony found in heraldic mottos.

¹¹ MacLean, Charles (1990) *The Clan Almanac*. Eric Dobby Publishing, Kent, England.

and Pietermaritzburg is referred to as *eTawini* ('town'). There may well have once been some sort of inspirational message in the Pietermaritzburg motto, something along the lines of 'Take cheer, white citizens, for we have beaten the Zulus, and the power lies in our town now.'

The Charges

Although these are very much part of armorial bearings, I consider them separately here, as these are the devices which make symbolic statements about identity, the third element identified in the title of this article.

Charges are any iconic statement in the body of the shield (and elsewhere) that can assist in the identification of the bearer of the shield. It may be as simple as a red band in the top third of the shield ('Argent, a chief gules'—the arms of the family Menzies (Boutell, 1970: Plate III) or a yellow band running from the top left to the bottom right across a blue background ('Azure, a bend or'—the arms of the Scrope family (*op. cit.* Plate II). The charges may be identifiable items: swords, crosses, animal heads. They may carry symbolic weight: the star represents light which may in turn represent knowledge, the book does so immediately.

Analysis of 27 coats-of-arms from KwaZulu-Natal municipalities and a few selected African states shows that a number of symbols occur regularly and these are described below, in order of frequency.

Heading the list is the category 'Wild animal' or 'African (game) animal', with 12 of the 27 arms using these. These are mainly used as supporters, and amongst others we can note the Uganda kob, zebra, gemsbok, lion, kudu, and springbok. The main charge of the Lesotho arms is a crocodile, here symbolic of the BaKwena ('People of the Crocodile') (Fig. 8), one of the largest clan groups in the nation. The Big Five and False Bay Municipality, as might be expected from the name, features lion, elephant, rhinoceros, buffalo, and leopard on the shield, with two additional elephants as crests (Fig. 20). False Bay is not exactly represented on the arms, but if you open the website of this municipality, you are greeted by the sound of a roaring hippopotamus. A buffalo head dominates the shield of the uMzinyathi Municipality arms, an excellent example of *canting* arms, where the *name* of the entity represented by the arms is represented by a charge in the arms. Boutell (*op. cit.* 298) defines canting arms as 'arms containing an allusion to or a play on the name of the bearer'. In this case the head of the buffalo alludes to the name of the municipality—*uMzinyathi* ('the home of the buffalo').

The next most popular image is that of the wavy blue band representing water, found in 11 coats-of-arms. This is very successfully used in the arms of the uMngeni Municipality (Fig. 16) where blue and white wavy bands in the lower part of the shield are counter-balanced by a falling blue band running from the top left to lower right, representing the famous Howick Falls.

Also used in 11 of the arms are various birds. These appear mainly as supporters: the kob of Uganda is assisted by a Crowned Crane (Fig. 5); the wildebeest of eDumbe Municipality by an eagle (Fig. 27); while the shield of the Zululand Municipality is held up by two Trumpeter Hornbills (Fig. 15). The shield of the aMajuba District Municipality is supported by what appears to be two Secretary Birds, or they may be Blue Cranes. It is difficult to tell when a website gives a coat-of-arms only 9 mm high (Fig. 13). The aMajuba arms also give a good example of canting arms with the main

symbol on the body of the shield a pair of white doves (Zulu: *amajuba*). The uMzinyathi District Municipality uses Bald Ibises to guard its shield. The Fish Eagle appears twice, as a crest on the arms of Namibia (Fig. 7), and in the top left corner of the shield in the arms of the uMhlabayalingana Municipality (Fig. 14). The South African coat-of-arms uses the head and wings of a Secretary Bird as part of a very complex 'multi-crest'. The crest of the Zimbabwe arms (Fig. 10) is the famed 'Zimbabwe bird', a soapstone sculpture of some antiquity.

Next in popularity are images of various plants, flowers and trees, with ten of the arms using these. Occupying the lower half of the shield of the KwaZulu-Natal arms is a strelitzia (Fig. 28), while a flowering aloe occupies approximately the same space in the arms of uMsinga Municipality (Fig. 21). A dominant feature of the uThungulu District Municipality, occupying the whole of the lower part of the arms (outside and over the shield) is a flowering, leaved and fruiting branch of what I assume to be the Natal Plum (*Carissa grandiflora*, or, in Zulu, *umthungulu*). Here we have another example of canting arms. In the arms of Tanganyika, and its successor Tanzania (Figs. 2 and 3), coffee bushes grow out of the compartment, while an orange tree in full fruit occupies the third quarter of the old South African arms, a canting reference to the Orange Free State (Fig. 11). Proteas grow from the base of the old South African arms (Fig. 11), while a protea is also part of the crest of the new South African arms (Fig. 12).

At the same level of popularity is what I could call Zulu (or African) cultural icons, with ten arms displaying these. Dominant in the lower half of the Uganda arms (Fig. 5) is an African drum. The Zululand Municipality (Fig. 15) and the uMngeni Municipality (Fig. 16) both feature traditional Zulu pots. Traditional weapons, usually a spear and a knobkerrie crossed behind the shield, are found in the arms of Kenya (Fig. 4), Uganda (Fig. 5), Lesotho (Fig. 8), eDumbe Municipality (Fig. 27), KwaZulu-Natal (Fig. 28) Zululand Municipality (Fig. 15), Nquthu Municipality (Fig. 22), eNdumeni Municipality (Fig. 18) where they occur inside the shield, and South Africa (Fig. 12) where they occur as part of the complex crest. In the arms of uMsinga Municipality (Fig. 21), a traditional battle-axe is crossed with a hoe, and in the arms of Zimbabwe (Fig. 10), the hoe is crossed with an AK-47 machine gun. The KZN provincial arms use a traditional bee-hive hut (Fig. 28), while the arms of both the aMajuba Municipality and the uMsinga Municipality use a traditional Zulu women's headdress (*isicholo*) (Figs. 13 and 21). The Nquthu Municipality arms drape the traditional Zulu king's lion-claw necklace around a silhouette of iSandlwana Mountain, one of the more curious juxtapositions of images to be found in KZN municipal heraldry.

Next on our scale of popularity is the elephant on its own, or elephant tusks, with nine coats-of-arms featuring this symbol. I deliberately excluded the elephant from the list of wild animals above (apart from the reference to the Big Five) because the elephant is such a popular symbol on its own. Besides being the 'King of the Beasts' in Zulu lore, the elephant is also the 'Beast of the King', for Zulu royalty is always greeted with the shout of 'Wena wendlovu!' ('You of the elephant'). The elephant is one of the supporters of the Swazi coat-of-arms, a reference, as already mentioned, to the important role of the Queen Mother (*Indlovukadzi*) in Swaziland. In municipal heraldry the elephant is a very dominant crest on the arms of the uMhlabayalingana Municipality (Fig. 14), and the sole charge on the shield of the uMvoti Municipality (which I assume to be the original arms of Greytown, the seat of the uMvoti Municipality). The elephant is also

the sole charge on the shield of the city of Pietermaritzburg (Fig. 29), a canting reference to the Zulu name of Pietermaritzburg (*uMgungundlovu*—supposedly ‘The Place of the Elephant’, but see Koopman in Laband and Haswell). The elephant appears in the top half of the shield of the Zululand Municipality, and a pair of upturned tusks surround the base of the shield (Fig. 15). Tusks held by supporters to surround the shield are a feature of the arms of Tanganyika and Tanzania (Figs. 2 and 3), of Botswana (Fig. 6), where the tusk held by the zebra on the left is balanced by the stalk of sorghum held by the zebra on the right, and of South Africa (Fig. 12) where double tusks on each side of the lower half of the shield rise out of the motto.

Eight of the coats-of-arms featured in this analysis show some sort of topographical icon. I have already mentioned the representations of rivers by means of the wavy blue band. Here we have more references to mountains and other topographical features. The arms of Tanganyika and Tanzania (Figs. 2 and 3) both depict Mount Kilimanjaro in the base, while from the base of the shield of Uganda (Fig. 5) flows the Nile River. The main charge on the shield of Zimbabwe (Fig. 10) is a representation of the rock and walls of the historical site Great Zimbabwe. The arms of the Zululand Municipality (Fig. 15) show two identical conical mountains with ‘top-knots’, while the arms of the uMsinga Municipality (Fig. 21) show three green mountains. The symbolic rendering of Howick Falls in the arms of the uMngeni Municipality (Fig. 16) has already been mentioned above. In the lower third of the shield of the uMhlabayalingana Municipality (Fig. 14), we find a hippopotamus swimming in a lake, while in the background a sun rises (sets?) behind a low range of green hills. The mountain shape in the top quarter of the eNdumeni arms is supposedly that of a prominent mountain in the district (Fig. 18), while iSandlwana Mountain, sporting a lion’s-claw necklace in the arms of the Nquthu Municipality (Fig. 22), has been mentioned above.

Besides the arms of the uMhlabayalingana Municipality (Fig. 14) mentioned in the previous paragraph, six other arms feature a sun in one form or another. The central charge on the shield of Uganda (Fig. 5) is a ‘sun in full splendour’, in other words a full sun surrounded by rays. Namibia has a similar, but much smaller sun in the top left of the shield (Fig. 7). In the South African arms, a quarter sun is the top element of the complex crest (Fig. 12). A similar sun forms the top part of the crest of the arms of the Zululand Municipality (Fig. 15). In the arms of the uThungulu Municipality (Fig. 24), the Zulu shield sits on top of a round yellow-orange sun, from which issue little triangular rays, alternating in purple and light blue. The crest of the arms of the City of Pietermaritzburg (Fig. 29) is a blue fully-rayed sun, carrying five stars.

Equally popular is imagery of agricultural crops, with seven of the coats-of-arms depicting the cultivation of cotton, sorghum, maize and the like. I have already mentioned the coffee trees of Tanganyika and Tanzania, and the sorghum of Botswana. The shield of the uMhlabayalingana Municipality (Fig. 14) emphasises agricultural produce. I recognise the cashew nuts to the right of the Fish Eagle, and the maize cob below it, but cannot identify the two fruits on the right. Perhaps the most bizarre juxtaposition of images among all the armorial bearings described here is the crown forming the crest of the arms of the eNdumeni Municipality (Fig. 18), which has ears of maize and wheat growing out of it. As if this was not enough, the crown has seven black nuggets of coal decorating its base as well. The Zulu shield forming the arms of KwaDukuza (Fig. 19) has already been discussed. The only image I could obtain is very small, and the nature

of the objects is unclear. It could be a representation of a shield unravelling on one side, as if knitted of wool, with a loose end steadily pulled out on one side, or one half of a Zulu shield conjoined with one half of a stalk of maize. I suspect it is the latter.

Five of the arms discussed here use flags as charges. These are either the flags of the entity concerned, as with the arms of Tanganyika (Fig. 2), Tanzania (Fig. 3), Kenya (Fig. 4) and Namibia (Fig. 5), or they are smaller charges as in the case of the arms of the City of Pietermaritzburg (Fig. 29), where the wildebeest on the left is charged with the flag of Great Britain, and the one on the right with the flag of the shortlived Boer Republic of Natalia (1838–1843).

Wildebeest form a category of their own in KwaZulu-Natal heraldry, and were excluded from the category wild animals which headed this list of commonly recurring images. It is not clear to me why wildebeest should be heraldically associated with Natal, but the old Natal coat of-arms (not illustrated) had two wildebeest, and this iconic association has continued. Among the arms discussed here, five use the wildebeest, usually as a pair. Two wildebeest in the second quarter of the old South African arms (Fig. 11) represent the province of Natal. Another two stand upright facing one another in the left and right quarters of the shield of the eNdumeni Municipality (Fig. 18) and the same two in identical pose are the supporters of the arms of the City of Pietermaritzburg (Fig. 29). The KZN provincial arms (Fig. 28) and those of the eDumbe Municipality (Fig. 27) are satisfied with only one wildebeest as a supporter, with KZN using the wildebeest on the right of the shield, and eDumbe on the left. The arms of the town of Dundee (Fig. 26) have two wildebeest running in the top part of the shield. Wildebeest are found in the arms of many institutions in KwaZulu-Natal, such as in the arms of the erstwhile University of Natal (Fig. 31).

Earlier in this article I discussed the difference between the traditional shape of the heraldic shield, and the ‘African shield’, first adopted by Tanganyika in 1961. Here I especially identify the ‘Zulu shield’, a shield of African shape, with dappled markings in black or brown, and two vertical lines of parallel black bars. Four of the coats-of-arms analysed here use this shield specifically, one being Swaziland (Fig. 9), where it is the sole charge on an otherwise traditional heraldic shield. The unravelling shield of the KwaDukuza Municipality (Fig. 19) was discussed above in conjunction with maize. The shield of the Nquthu Municipality (Fig. 22) is dappled brown and white and has the traditional arms in saltire behind the shield, with a tufted stick between them. The uThungulu Municipality (Fig. 24) has a shield dappled in black and white.

Four coats-of-arms use livestock as a charge. These are Botswana, with the head of an ox in the lower third of the shield (Fig. 6), Lesotho, with two Sotho ponies as supporters (Fig. 8), eNdumeni Municipality (Fig. 18), with the head of an ox in the bottom quarter (and a website which boasts the ‘biggest feedlots in KwaZulu-Natal’), and eDumbe Municipality (Fig. 27), where the couchant sheep of the crest appears to be transfixed by the spear behind the shield.

Other symbols and images found in the African and KwaZulu-Natal heraldry include:

Stars (Figs. 10, 26 and 27); representations of industry, such as cogs and wheels (Fig. 6), a miner’s lamp (Fig. 18), a flaming torch (Figs. 2 and 30), an early Portuguese seafarer with an anchor (representing the Cape) and an ox-wagon (representing the Transvaal),



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19



Fig. 20



Fig. 21



Fig. 22



Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25



Fig. 26



Fig. 27



Fig. 28



Fig. 29



Fig. 30



Fig. 31



Fig. 32



Fig. 33



Fig. 34



Fig. 35



Fig. 36



Fig. 37



Fig. 38



Fig. 40



Fig. 41



Fig. 42



Fig. 43



Fig. 44



Fig. 45

both in Fig. 11) and what appears to be an old amphora (although possibly it is a harp) in the arms of Dundee (Fig. 26).

The symbols in the arms of the uMshwathi Municipality are unique (Fig. 25): a three-masted barque in full sail over a wavy ocean is the crest; while a red 'Foreign-Legion' type fortress occupies the top half of the shield, and a badge consisting of a black cross superimposed on a red heart, in turn superimposed on a white rose, is the charge on the bottom half of the shield. These are surely the arms of the town of New Hanover, the seat of the uMshwathi Municipality.

Multiplicity of images

The number of images found in a single coat-of-arms in this analysis ranged from two to nine. Simplest of all the armorial bearings is that of the uMvoti Municipality (Fig. 17), using the old arms of Greytown. This simple design has a single elephant on the shield and a single animal head as a crest. (What this animal is, is difficult to tell from the small image available. An ox? A boar? A sheep?) In contrast, the arms of the Zululand Municipality (Fig. 15), and those of the eNdumeni Municipality (Fig. 18) seem very fussy and 'bitty'—indeed, overcrowded—with nine distinct images or symbols.

By and large, the charges found in post-colonial African heraldry, and in the KwaZulu-Natal heraldry, carry enormous symbolic weight. My personal impression is that the aesthetic design of the arms is often drowned by the weight of its symbolic icons. I can imagine a committee somewhere, charged with the design of a coat-of-arms to represent the image that the people presumably have of their piece of territory saying:

'And we must have a sheaf of wheat to represent agriculture'

'Yes, and a miner's helmet to represent coal mining'

'Right, and we *must* have one or more of the big five animals to represent the importance of the game reserves in our tourist initiative'

'And what about a Zulu shield/beehive hut/ crossed knobkerrie and spear/Zulu *ukhamba*/beadwork to represent Zulu culture and heritage?'

'Yes but what about the beauty of our natural flora? I suggest a *strelitzia/protea/arum lily* ...'

And so the shield becomes packed to overflowing with symbols, and thereby loses the simplicity of design which makes a good visual symbol.

How African are these municipal identities?

Here we come to the last part of the title, the phrase 'post-colonial'.

It is surely beyond any dispute that Africa has for decades, having won independence from colonial powers, tried to shake off the trappings of colonialism. The street-name changing in Pietermaritzburg in the early years of the 21st Century, and the identical process in Durban in the early months of 2007, have been widely described as a need to rid these cities of colonial images (including, on occasion, street names which refer to colonial figures). With the 'New South Africa', the new African Union, South African president Thabo Mbeki's concept of the African Renaissance, and various other bodies, anything to do with colonialism, imperialism or Europeanism has been seen as needing replacement with objects, ideas, attitudes, processes, and symbols that are

African in nature. (Curiously enough, this has never applied that that unsuitable item of dress for African climes: the Western suit with its tightly knotted tie). This shrugging off of European values and images has to do with the pursuit of an African identity, and it is within the framework of this pursuit that we finally look at coats-of-arms in Post-Colonial Africa.

The first, and surely immediate question is ‘Why do these independent African nations, and these post-apartheid municipalities in the new South Africa need coats-of-arms at all?’ Granted, some kind of visual or iconic identity is needed just as a product brand needs a trademark symbol. Badges, crests, logos, marques and so on have their use for political entities as they do for trade products. But why the shield? Why the shield with its crest, its supporters, and its motto? Surely this combination has no place as a political symbol in the new ‘Non-European’ Africa? And yet clearly it does. No matter how many of the charges on these shields are African in nature—African animals and birds, African landscapes, African artifacts—they still fit into an iconic matrix which is essentially unchanged from the days when knights jousting at tournaments on the fields of Europe.

At this point, I have to acknowledge that there *are* some entities in the ‘new’ South Africa which have totally eschewed the trappings of knighthood, and have opted for visual symbols which are more like commercial logos and brand marks. We have, in fact, a sliding scale of visual symbols of identity for political identities, which range from those which are still utterly indistinguishable from European heraldic images, to those that bear no resemblance at all.

At the European/colonial end of the scale are those municipalities and other entities which have not discarded previously existing coats-of-arms. Among those discussed and illustrated in this article are the municipalities of uMvoti, bearing the arms of Greytown (Fig. 17), uMshwathi, with the arms of New Hanover (Fig. 25), the Greater Kokstad Municipality, using the arms of Kokstad (Fig. 35), eMnambithi/Ladysmith with the arms of Ladysmith (Fig. 41), and Richmond, using the arms of the town of Richmond (Fig. 42). It may be that these municipalities are a little slow off the mark and despite in 2007 having been in existence for eight years, have yet to shrug off the old identity and apply for a new one. It may be that their new identities are being processed by the South African Bureau of Heraldry which, after all, has almost certainly not seen such a demand for heraldic identities since its formation, and may be having trouble with the overload. And, of course, it might be that these municipalities are content to piggy-back on the heraldic identities of colonial entities.

Just below this level on our sliding scale comes the independent African nation of Tanzania. Fig. 2 shows the coat-of-arms of Tanganyika, awarded by the College of Heraldry in 1961. Tanganyika was a British colony, so these are colonial arms, however African they may appear at first sight. Tanzania was what the same country called itself once it gained independence from Britain. Fig. 3 shows the Tanzanian arms. A quick comparison of the two will show that the new Tanzania changed very little indeed of the previous Tanganyikan arms. Two golden crossed hoes were added, the black band edged with gold on a green background tilted up to the right, and the flaming torch retained only its flame. The shape, colours, supporters, compartment and charges in the compartment remained the same.

Next on our scale are those entities which have started afresh with a ‘new’ coat-of-arms, but have somehow not been able to shake off certain aspects which remain deter-

minedly colonial. Take for example all those that could not resist a crown—surely the quintessential symbol of European monarchy. The African nations have resisted using this symbol, but not the municipalities of uMngeni, eNdumeni, and uMzinyathi, all with shield ensigned with a dominant crown. In this category are the arms of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal (Fig. 28), not because of an imperial crown, but because the lion supporting the shield on the right is straight from the arms of the monarch of England: the stance, the curled tail, the tongue hanging out, the tufts below the knee—these are all the hallmarks of the British heraldic lion. Compare this lion to the lion supporting the right side of the arms of Swaziland (Fig. 9), still a little ‘Euro-heraldic’ in nature, but a lot more African.

Then we come a little lower on the scale to those coats-of-arms where no particular symbol or charge reminds us specifically of Euro-Western ideas and values, but the overall impression of a shield (especially if it is the traditional heraldic shape, and not an African shield) with supporters on a compartment, a crest above the shield and a motto below, still reminds us of European heraldry. King Goodwill Zwelithini’s arms (Fig. 45), the arms of the erstwhile Transkei (Fig. 43), those of the Zululand District Municipality (Fig. 15), the uMhlabayalingana Municipality (Fig. 14), the uMngeni and eNdumeni municipalities (Figs. 16 and 18)—all these still would not look out of place attached to a venerable boys’ school in England, or the Guild of Haberdashers in Stuttgart.

Below these on our sliding scale are those municipalities which have made the break from the shield, and have dispensed with crests, mottoes, supporters and the rest. The shield may still be used as a symbol, but the overall shape of the emblem (we must now stop calling it a ‘coat-of-arms’) no longer says ‘heraldry’. Two of these that use the Zulu shield as a symbol are the emblems of the uThungulu District Municipality (Fig. 24) and the KwaDukuza Municipality (Fig. 19). The former places a Zulu shield within a large yellow-orange ball, which may be either the sun (it *does* have what appear to be rays issuing from it) or a very large *ithungulu* fruit. A fruiting, flowering, branch of the *ithungulu* lies across the bottom, slightly off centre. The name of the municipality, in three languages, lies beneath the yellow ball in concentric arcs, concave to the top, and are without the ribbon so typical of standard heraldry. The latter (KwaDukuza) is the Zulu shield which appears to be unravelling into a mealie stalk, this being placed in the top half of an oval, a rather wobbly line of beadwork separating this from the words

KWADUKUZA
MUNICIPALITY

It is worthwhile looking again here at the logo of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. As has been previously stated, the University of KwaZulu-Natal was the result of a merger on 2002 between the previous universities of Natal and Durban-Westville, whose coats-of-arms are shown in Figs. 31 and 30 respectively. The new logo, or emblem, again clearly not a coat-of-arms, uses half a Zulu shield conjoined with half a globe, on a vertical axis. The five coloured bars in the shield and the five coloured sun rays issuing from the globe represent the five campuses of the new university. The only symbol which has been carried over from the arms of the previous universities is a book, shown as a single wavy red band.

The emblem of the Mkhambathini Municipality (Fig. 36) consists of a white egg, within which is an elephant on the left (for no obvious reason), a chicken in the bottom (representing the large number of Rainbow Chicken farms in the area), with sugarcane (the dominant crop of the area) in the background, and in the very distant background, faintly visible is the gray outline, of the flat-topped Natal Table Mountain, the Zulu name of which—eMkhambathini—gives its name to this municipality.

The Mpošana Municipality uses a circle within a circle (Fig. 40). In the space between the two circles are the words ‘MPOŠANA MUNICIPALITY’ and ‘UMKHANDLU WASE MPOŠANA’), while within the inner circle an eland on the banks of a river is backed by mountains on the left and factories on the right. The eland and the river together are canting references to the name of the municipality, named for the Mpošana River which runs through it, which could be interpreted as the tawny-yellowish river, or the River of the Eland.

The uMgungundlovu District Municipality (Fig. 34) has eschewed the shield, but has not been able to resist multiple symbolism, giving rise to an emblem that can only be described as ‘cluttered’. Five squares are tilted 45° so they are more like lozenges, and placed two above three, and all five above a wavy blue line, which, as we know by now, represents a river. The space between the lower three lozenges and the wavy blue line is filled in with a zig-zag black-and-white pattern which could possibly represent roof tiles. The squares are filled in with full colour pictures of (reading from left to right and top to bottom) an elephant (which could refer to the *indlovu* (‘elephant’) in the name of this municipality), an eland (which surely refers to the Mpošana Local Municipality which is part of this District Municipality), a red flat-topped mountain (Natal Table Mountain—see Mkhambathini Municipality above), a Zulu woman with a red *isicholo* (‘headdress’) (referring perhaps to the Zulu population and Zulu cultural tourism), and some factories set against green hills (industry and landscape). Arising out of the top two squares, and creating an overall pyramid shape, is the top part of the clock tower of the Pietermaritzburg City Hall, a reference to the fact that Pietermaritzburg is the dominant city of this municipality, and also because this municipality has chosen as a name one which is often called ‘the Zulu name of Pietermaritzburg’.

By far the simplest of the logos/emblems chosen by municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal are those of the Ugu District Municipality and the eThekweni Metro. The Ugu D.M. has chosen as its emblem a pale yellow sun, under which are what could be four waves, two on each side, the upper waves a light blue, the lower ones a pale mauve (Fig. 38). The eThekweni Metro has chosen the dome of Durban’s City Hall, a simple, striking and effective logo, in bold blue-and-white (Figure on outside cover). Although these are far simpler in design than the often highly-complex visual conglomerates which other municipalities have adopted, they are not without symbolic value. The Ugu logo reduces ‘sun-and-surf’ to the simplest possible visual elements, suitably so for a municipality with a Zulu name which translates into English as ‘coast’. The Durban municipality has chosen an iconic architectural image—the highly recognisable dome of the City Hall, and this itself is symbolically relevant. Indeed, the phrase ‘city hall’ is often used as a metonym for ‘local government’. The effectiveness of the eThekweni logo as a visual image, simple, uncluttered and direct, can be seen when we contrast it with the logos used for both the Msunduzi Local Municipality (Pietermaritzburg) and the Mgungundlovu District Municipality (Pietermaritzburg district). Both use the top half of the

Pietermaritzburg City Hall tower—itself a highly recognisable visual icon—but then clutter this image with a variety of other images (see Figs. 29 and 34).

Conclusions

There is certainly no consistency in the manner in which the newly constituted municipalities of KwaZulu-Natal have created their symbolic and iconic identities. As we have seen, some appear quite content to adopt the full heraldic emblems of the towns with which they are associated. It may well be, of course, that they are still in a process of designing new emblems. But if so, in the process, they appear quite happy to use the old emblems in modern contexts. The newspaper advertisement which shows the mayor of the uMshwathi Municipality happily wearing ceremonial robes with the arms of New Hanover embroidered thereon, is a case in point.

A majority have opted for a new emblem, but have stayed within the general heraldic framework of the colonial past, producing images which are curiously unsettling in that the symbols chosen are uniquely and exclusively African but are fitted within a framework which remains identifiably European. Some have discarded this framework and come up with aesthetically satisfying emblems that are both African and modern, by which I mean are able to incorporate traditional African elements in a new and vibrant way. Such a one is the emblem (can we call it a ‘coat-of-arms’) of the uThungulu Municipality (Fig. 24), undoubtedly my favourite of all the modern municipal designs.

And then others, as we have seen, have gone for very basic logos, knowing that the simpler the design, the stronger the brand identity. Students of branding and identity have long acknowledged that it is the very simple logos, like those of both Mercedes-Benz and Volkswagen, which are the successful ones.

Many questions have been left unanswered in this article. It would be interesting to know at what point a proposed municipal emblem ceases to be regarded as a coat-of-arms, needing approval by the South African Bureau of Heraldry. Surely when the eThekweni Municipality chose their simple blue-and-white dome, this did not need heraldic permission? It would be interesting to know what sort of brief was given to the designers of the various coats-of-arms, the logos, and the other visual symbols of the various municipalities. How did they perceive their own identities as municipalities before an artist produced a provisional draft of a coat-of-arms? Did the central government produce any kind of guideline for the new municipalities?

This has been very much an exploratory research. More in-depth research into municipal and other political iconography in South Africa is called for, but these are the sorts of questions that need answers.

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