

SOME SAIE PLACE NAMES

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An interesting phenomenon which occurs in South African Indian English (SAIE) is the use of "popular" place names or colloquial alternatives to official place names. These popular place names show many similarities to nick-names as they are often humorous variations of the official name. They can be divided into three main categories:

- (a) Phonological or morphological variations of the official name, e.g.

Merebank > Banks

- (b) Zulu place name equivalents, e.g.

Stanger > Dukuza

- (c) Alternatives derived by some form of semantic association, e.g.

The Himalaya Hotel > The Mountain

I shall now consider these categories in greater detail.

PHONOLOGICAL/MORPHOLOGICAL VARIATIONS

This is the most common type of SAIE place name and usually takes the form of a shortened version of the original place name with -s added to the end of the word, e.g.

Reservoir Hills > Hills
Chatsworth > Chassies
Wentworth > Wenties
Johannesburg > Jozies
Durban > Durbs
Port Shepstone > Sheppies
Overport > Ovies
Gingindhlovu > Gings
Newcastle > Castles
Umhlanga Rocks > Rocks
Mobeni Heights > Heights

Often the definite article **the** is placed in front of the shortened form of the place name, e.g.

Blue Lagoon > The Lagoon
Morningside/Riverside > The Sides
Yellowwood Park > The Parks
Springvale > The Vales
Greenwood Park > The Greens

Some of these constructions show the characteristics of popular or folk etymology (cf. Ullmann 1962:101) where the original place name is associated with some other well-known, similar sounding place name, e.g.

Newlands > New Orleans
Clare Estate > The States

ZULU PLACE NAMES

A number of Zulu place names are in common use in SAIE, e.g.

Stanger > Dukuza
Durban > Tegwini
Mount Edgcombe > Mashu
Ladysmith > Nambid
Newcastle > Madaks

The name **Tegwini** may refer to Durban generally but it usually has a narrower referent, viz. the city centre, "town" (Barnes 1986:5). **Towns** and **Stads** are also common synonyms for this particular use of **Tegwini**. Mount Edgcombe is adjacent to the large Black township of Kwa Mashu, hence the latter name seems to have attached itself to Mount Edgcombe as well. The actual Zulu name for Ladysmith is **Mnambithi** which is also the Zulu

name for the Klip River which runs through Ladysmith. The name for Newcastle (**Madaks**) seems to have been derived from the name of the Black township **Madadeni**.

SEMANTIC ASSOCIATION

The most interesting and original SAIE place names are those derived by some sort of semantic association. I have already mentioned the Himalaya Hotel which is often referred to as **The Mountain**. In this case there is an obvious association between the two names. Another type of association that sometimes occurs is an extension of the reference of a place name. For instance in Phoenix there is a hotel called **The White House** and the whole shopping area around the hotel is also referred to as **The White House**.

Sometimes the semantic association with the original name does not play as important a role in creating the new SAIE name as some topographical feature, e.g. Verulam is sometimes referred to as **Valleys** because it is situated in a valley. In Isipingo there is an area of reclaimed marsh land in the vicinity of the lagoon with the rather vivid appellation **Mosquito Valley**. (Other areas in Isipingo are **Hills**, **Beach** and **Rails** - all obvious reflections of the topography.) Another interesting SAIE place name is **Russian Town**. This name refers to an isolated area on the edge of the Palmiet Nature Reserve. There is apparently only one access road and the whole area is surrounded by dense bush. In the minds of the creators of this name the topographical situation seems to have suggested the inaccessibility of a country behind the Iron Curtain.

Creativity is a fundamental characteristic of language and this study of SAIE place names was an attempt to demonstrate how creative SAIE speakers are in this particular facet of language use.

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