

# PORTUGUESE PLACE NAMES IN SOUTH AFRICA

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## INTRODUCTION

The fifteenth century was drawing to a close, and as yet no one knew the extent of the African continent. The Portuguese navigators, then the most intrepid mariners of Europe, had already worked their way down the west coast of Africa in their search for a maritime route to India, and discovered and occupied the islands off the north-western coast from the Azores to the Cape Verde group. The situation of the southernmost extremity of the continent, however, remained unknown.

Then, in 1486, King John II of Portugal sent Bartholomew Dias with three small ships on a new exploratory expedition. Dias passed Cape Cross, the last point to have been reached in 1485, and then called at *Angra dos Ilhéus*, the Bay of the Islets, later designated *Angra Pequena* or Little Bay, now known as Lüderitz Bay. Continuing southwards along the coast, and after tacking repeatedly, he arrived at a small inlet which he named *Angra das Voltas*, the Bay of Tacks or Turnings. Having been blown out to sea, Dias found himself in what is now known as Mossel Bay, but which he called *Angra dos Vaqueiros*, Bay of the Herdsmen. A later expedition altered the name to *Aguada de São Brás*, since Dias first saw

it on the day dedicated to St Blaize.

On his return to Portugal, Dias discovered in 1487 the headland he named *Cabo Tormentoso* or *Cabo das Tormentas*, subsequently renamed *Cabo da Boa Esperança* and still today known as the Cape of Good Hope.

No further attempt at discovering a sea-route to India via Africa was made during the reign of King John II. After his death in 1495 he was succeeded by Emanuel, who equipped a small fleet and entrusted it to Vasco da Gama. Da Gama set sail in 1497 and after a voyage of  $5\frac{1}{2}$  months arrived at an inlet some 200 km north of the Cape of Good Hope, to which he gave the name of St. Helena Bay. His next port of call was the present Mossel Bay, and on Christmas Day he named the Pondoland Coast, *Terra do Natal*. Then he touched at Moçambique and Melinda, and thence sailed to Calicut, thus achieving the object for which the Portuguese had so long striven.

Subsequent voyages by the Portuguese added to the nomenclature, and although many place names have been supplanted, numerous Portuguese names have survived. It will be noticed, however, that these names are to a large extent limited to the coastal belt of the subcontinent. The reasons for this are not difficult to find. The earliest explorers had set out with one definite purpose in mind, namely to discover a new sea-route to the Orient with its vast wealth. It is unlikely that they had any ideas of achieving more than the discovery and opening up of new channels of trade and commerce for Portugal. In addition, they were probably deterred from any attempt at penetrating into the interior of the country or forming settlements along the coast by the inhospitable terrain and, particularly, by the hostile and warlike disposition of the native inhabitants. They would not forget, for example, how, in 1510, Francisco de Almeida, the First Viceroy of the Portuguese possessions in the East, was murdered along with sixty-five of his men on the shores of Table Bay as result of an argument with the Khoi-Khoi.

Many of the place names bestowed by the Portuguese are of a descriptive nature, while others relate to incidents which either broke the monotony or deepened the gloom of their lonely voyages. Some names are indicative of the character of the native tribes they encountered. A study of the places named after officers of the various expeditions makes possible the dating of these voyages of discovery. Since many places were

dedicated to the Saints on whose days they were discovered, it is possible to ascertain when the Portuguese mariners touched at or passed these places.

A number of place names bestowed by the Portuguese have survived in their original form, while others have been partially or wholly translated. Hybrid forms, of which one element is Portuguese and the other English or Afrikaans, occur. As a result of the close association between Afrikaans and English in South Africa, dual forms, i.e. forms for which both an English and an Afrikaans element exist, are encountered, and are both officially equally acceptable. Finally, there are a number of Portuguese place names which have been supplanted by English or Afrikaans names and are to be found only in old documents and on ancient maps.

#### AGULHAS

*Vide* CABO DAS AGULHAS

#### A MESA

Pettman (1) indicates that this was ... the flat-topped *Tafel Berg*, named by the Portuguese *A Mesa* (the table). The name *A Mesa* is no longer in existence, having been replaced by the Dutch (Afrikaans) translation and its English equivalent, *Table Mountain*.

#### AGUADA DE SALDANHA

This name, derived from *aguada* (supply of water) and meaning 'Saldanha's watering place' (2), 'commemorates Admiral António de Saldanha, who, in 1503, was attacked and wounded by Hottentots, while taking in water at what is now known as *Table Bay*, but which, for nearly a century after Saldanha's misadventure, continued to bear his name' (3). The name was given 'not for any water he took, but for the blood of his men shed there' (4). It is generally accepted that the place referred to as *Aguada de Saldanha* is, indeed, *Table Bay*, but E.J. du Plessis (5) states that *Agoada (sic) de Saldanha* is the present *Varsrivier*. In 1601 Joris van Spilbergen changed the name to *Table Bay*. The present-day *Saldanha Bay* then took the name of António de Saldanha (6).

#### AGUADA DE SÃO BRAS

Vasco da Gama bestowed this name, which means the watering place of St. Blasius (7), in 1497. In 1601 the Dutch renamed the bay *Mossel Baai (mossel, a mussel;*

*baai*, bay), 'because they could get no refreshments here except mussels' (8). Today the Afrikaans form *Mosselbaai* and the hybrid *Mossel Bay* are used, while the Portuguese name has disappeared.

#### ALBASINI

Is the name of a town at the foot of the Soutpansberg range in the Transvaal. It was named after João Albasini, who settled in the Transvaal about 1845. Several clans of the Magwamba, or Knobnose Bantu, accepted him as their chief. He was Vice-Consul for Portugal as well as Superintendent in the service of the South African Republic of the Bantu tribes in the region. In 1868 he was dismissed from the latter post but was reinstated by the British interim government from 1877-1881. He died in 1885 (9).

#### ALGOA BAY

This hybrid name is today applied to the bay on which the city of Port Elizabeth is situated. However, this was not always the case: it has, at various times, been borne by several different bays along the coast.

Theal (10) informs us that: 'In the *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis* of Duarte Pacheco ... a bay named *Alagoa* is mentioned which is said to have been so called on account of a lake which was there in a marsh.... This designation for that particular sheet of water was probably lost soon afterwards, as no other trace of it is to be found, and it does not appear to have had any connection with the naming of the present *Algoa Bay*'.

According to the maps of Caneiro and Cantino (1502) the name Algoa Bay was next applied to the present-day *Plettenberg Bay*. In Perestrello's Survey of 1575 it refers to the *Algoa Bay* of today. For nearly two hundred years that bay bore the name, but then maps of Sparrman (1785), Paterson (1789) and Le Vaillant (1796) indicate the name as applying once again to Plettenberg Bay. At about the time of the arrival of the British Settlers in South Africa, 1820, the name was finally transferred to the present Algoa Bay.

The name *Algoa Bay*, or *Alagoa Bay*, as it then appeared, seems to have been given to the latter two bays without taking into account the etymological significance of *lagoa*, a morass or lagoon, for neither of these bays has on its shores a lagoon or lake to which the name could refer (11).

'From what has been said it will be seen that the statement that Algoa Bay was so called because the Portuguese took their route from that locality on their way to Goa, and that *Delagoa Bay* was so named because land was generally made thereabouts on their return from Goa, cannot be maintained; it is another instance of Folk Etymology' (12).

#### ANGRA DA CONCEIÇÃO

This name is given by Pettman (13) as *Angra de Concepcao, Natal*, and should not be confused with his *Golfo da Concepcao* (14) (correctly *Conceição*) or *Angra de Temeridade*, which is actually the present *Walvis Bay*, South West Africa (15).

#### ANGRA DAS VACAS

According to modern Portuguese orthography the spelling of this particular bay by Botha (16), Nienaber (17) and Pettman (18) as *Angra das Vaecas* would be incorrect. There is no doubt, however, that the name is derived from *vaca*, cow, referring to the herds of cattle which were seen there (19). The name *Angra* (or *Bahia*) *das Vacas* is no longer extant: in 1601 it was altered to *Vleys Baye* by Paulus van Caerden, because at this place they 'met de Inwoonderen handelen, soo veel Ossen, Calveren ende Schapen bekomende, als sout hadden om te souten, en vers op te eeten, koopende een Os om een stuck van een ijsers hoep van een hant langh ... dies het de naem van de *Vleys Baye* gaven' (20). Today the bay bears the Afrikaans name *Vleesbaai*.

#### ANGRA DAS VOLTAS

'*Angra das Voltas* (*volta*, a tack), tells of the tacks which contrary winds compelled Diaz to make in the vicinity, being driven at last so far to sea that he failed on doubling the southernmost promontory of the continent for the first time, to discover it, and made land at *Flesh Bay*' (21). The bay Dias named *Angra das Voltas* may well have been far from it, and even further from the modern *Cape Voltas* at the mouth of the Orange River (22).

#### ANGRA DE TEMERIDADE

*Vide* ANGRA DA CONCEIÇÃO

#### ANGRA DOS ILHÉUS

While Dias was travelling southwards, he arrived at a bay, at the entrance to which was a group of small islands. He named the bay *Angra dos Ilhéus*, 'baai van klein, onbewoonde eilandjies', afgelei van *angra*, 'n baai; *ilha*, 'n klein, onbewoonde eiland' (23). Subsequently this bay came to be known as *Angra Pequena*, or Little Bay; and in 1866, when the British took possession of the bay, they named it Penguin Harbour (24). Today it is known as *Lüderitz Bay*, *Lüderitzbaai* and *Lüderitzbucht*. Botha (25), Pettman (26) and Nienaber (27) give the original name as *Angra dos Ilhéos*.

#### ANGRA DOS VAQUEIROS

From *angra*, bay; *vaqueiro*, herdsman, was so named by Dias 'because of the number of cattle seen there' (28), or 'because of the many droves of cattle he saw grazing on the shore' (29). Elsewhere (30) Pettman describes the name as 'indicating the pastoral character of the people' which, in view of the meaning of *vaqueiro*, may be a more suitable explanation. A subsequent expedition renamed it *Aguada de São Brás*, since Dias first saw it on the day dedicated to this Saint (St Blasius or St. Blaize) (31). *Cape St Blaise* was probably named after the bay, which is today known as *Mossel Bay*.

#### ANGRA PEQUENA

*Vide* ANGRA DOS ILHÉUS

#### BAÍA DA ROCA

This name, meaning Rock Bay (32), was bestowed by Dias in 1576 (33); at present it is known as *Algoa Bay*.

#### BAIA DAS BALEIAS

Nienaber (34), who spells the name *Baía das Baleias*, informs us that the Dutch subsequently correctly interpreted the name *Walvis*, that it was bestowed because many whales were encountered there, and *baai*. On Cantini's map of 1502 the name *Golfo da Congeção* (*sic*) is encountered for the bay.

#### BAIA DE SÃO BRÁS

Also *Aguada de São Brás* (q.v.), was so named by Vasco da Gama, who anchored there in 1497 (35). This name replaced *Baía dos Vaqueiros* given by Dias. Theal (36) indicates that the situation of Dos Vaqueiros Bay is doubtful; yet later writers (37) state that '*Bahia de St.*

*Bras* (is) now also Mossel Bay' (38); '... he ... found himself in what is now Mossel Bay, to which he gave the name of *Angra dos Vaqueiros*' (39); and '... in 1601 het Paulus van Caerden, ... die baai ... *Mosselbaai* genoem ...' (40).

#### BAÍA DOS VAQUEIROS

*Vide* ANGRA DOS VAQUEIROS

#### BAÍA FOPMOSA

*Formosa*, beautiful, was the name given to the present Plettenberg Bay. On Lichtenstein's map (1815) it is indicated as *Plettenberg's Bay* or *Formosa B.*, while on the official map of the Cape Colony of 1895 it is marked *Formosa* or *Plettenberg's Bay*. The Portuguese name has disappeared: the bay now bears the Afrikaans name *Plettenbergbaai*, while a hybrid form, *Plettenberg Bay*, is used as the English name.

#### CABO CORRENTES

Another name which is no longer in use is *Cabo Correntes*, 'generally, but inaccurately spelt *Corrientes* - (*corrente*, current, stream) north of Natal, (it) was so named because of the strong currents setting in against the rocks, which made the neighbourhood of this Cape dangerous to mariners' (41).

#### CABO DAS AGULHAS

The most southerly point of Africa was named Ponta de São Brandão by Dias and was marked as such in 1502. Dias probably dedicated it to St Brandon, an Irishman, whose day is 16th May (42).

Due to the fact that the Portuguese mariners discovered that off this cape the compass needle pointed directly to the north, the name was subsequently changed to *Cabo das Agulhas*, from *agulha*, a needle. This Portuguese word today still features in the hybrid forms *Cape Agulhas* and *Kaap Agulhas*, the English and Afrikaans names respectively.

#### CABO DAS SERRAS

Perestrello applied the name *Cabo das Serras* (Cape of Mountains) to the promontory at which terminate the mountain ranges that start at the Cape of Good Hope (43). The Portuguese name is no longer in use, and it is uncertain whether it referred to the present-day Cape St

Francis or Seal Point.

#### CABO DAS VACAS

'*Cape Vacca* ... was known as *Cabo das Vaccas*, the one meaning Cow Point and the other slender or Cattle Cape' (44). According to modern Portuguese orthography, the correct spelling would be *Cabo das Vacas*; cf. *Angra das Vacas*.

#### CABO DA BOA ESPERANÇA

*Vide* CABO TOPMENTOSO

#### CABO DE RECIFE

Situated at the western extremity of the present Algoa Bay is *Cape Recife*, known in Afrikaans as *Kaap Recife*. This name has been derived from the Portuguese *Cabo de Recife* (*recife*, reef of rocks), which is mentioned in Perestrello's Survey. We do not know when or by whom the name was first bestowed.

#### CABO DE SÃO FRANCISCO

is today known as Cape St Francis. Presumably the name was originally given because the cape was first seen or visited on the day dedicated to St Francis.

#### CABO DO INFANTE

This cape on the Swellendam coast, at present known by the corrupted form Cape Infanta, was named after João Infante, one of Dias' officers. *See also* Rio do Infante.

#### CABO FALSO,

for which the English form *Cape False* occurs on older maps, has disappeared from our modern maps. Where this physical feature was situated, is by no means certain. 'The 16th and 17th century charts show Cape Falso, and 17th and 18th maps mark Hangklip as Falso... Paterson... writes of Hangklip or Cape False, while the map in Sparrman's travels marks *Hangklip* about where Danger Point is, he has False Hangklip. Latrobe's map of 1818 marks *Cape False* or Hangklip' (45). The chart of the South Africa coast made by Perestrello in 1575 indicates *Cabo Falso* as having been about where *Danger Point* is (46), while *Cape Hangklip* was given by the Portuguese as *Ponta Espinhosa*, Thorny Point or, possibly, Bok Point (47). Percival (48) informs us that *False Bay* derives its name from *Cabo Falso*, which was so called because, at night particularly, ships rounding Hangklip from the east were deceived into



thinking they had passed the Cape of Good Hope (49).

#### CABO PADRÃO

*Cape Padrone*, with the Afrikaans equivalent of *Kaap Padrone* (50), is situated at the eastern extremity of Algoa Bay. The name is derived from the word *padrão*, a pillar, a monument, 'a pillar having been erected here by Bartholomew Diaz and dedicated to St. Gregório' (51). Pettman informs us that the name Cape Padrone is derived from *Cabo Padrone* (52), 'a contracted form of the original *Padrao de San Gregorio*' (53) or '*Padras de S. Gregorio*' (54).

#### CABO TORMENTOSO

An early name of the present Cape of Good Hope was *Cabo Tormentoso*, also: *Cabo das Tormentas*, Stormy Cape, descriptive of the weather conditions with which the Portuguese mariners had to contend. According to Barros (55) the alteration of this name to *Cabo de Boa Esperança* is to be ascribed to King John II, since 'he realized that this discovery of a new route to the Indies would mean the passing for ever, of the monopoly of the eastern trade, from the hands of the Venetian merchants' (56). Duarte Pacheco (57), informs us that Dias, who discovered the promontory in 1488, changed the name, since he noticed 'that the route was towards Sub-Egypt, and thence to the end of Arabia, (and) hopes were entertained of discovering India. For this reason he named it the Cape of Good Hope'. The Portuguese names are no longer in use, having been supplanted by the Dutch (Afrikaans) and English translations of the latter one, viz. *Cabo da Boa Esperança*. One wonders whether the change from *Cabo das Tormentas* was not a kind of atonement or appeasement also, just as *Pontus Euxeinus* was substituted for the original *Pontus Axeinus* (inhospitable) in Antiquity.

#### CAPE AGULHAS

*Vide* CABO DAS AGULHAS

#### CAPE ST BLAIZE

Cape St Blaize derives its name from the adjoining bay, namely *Aguada de São Brás* (q.v.)

#### DELAGOA BAY

The bay at present known as *Delagoa Bay* was, around the year 800, known to the Arabs as *Dugutha*. When Vasco da Gama discovered it in 1497, he named it *Bahia de Boa*

*Pax*, the Bay of Good Peace. I was unable to ascertain at what stage the bay received its present name. Weber (58) informs us that the name was given in contrast to Algoa Bay, because Portuguese sailors on their way to Goa took their route from Algoa Bay (Algoa - to Goa), while on their return they made land at Delagoa Bay (Delagoa - from Goa). Far more acceptable, however, is the explanation that the name is derived from 'Dalagoa met die oog op binnelandse mere waarvan die bestaan vermoed is' (59).

#### DIAZ POINT

and its Afrikaans equivalent *Diaspunt*, is so named because Dias planted his first cross there.

#### GOLFO DE SANTA MARIA DA CONCEIÇÃO

*Vide* GOLFO DA CONCEIÇÃO

#### GOLFO DA CONCEIÇÃO

On Cantini's Chart of 1502, Walvis Bay on the coast of South West Africa is indicated as *Golfo da Concepção* (60), while on other maps of the same period the names *Golfo de S. Maria da Concepcao* (61) and *Angra de Temeridade* (from *temeridade*, rash, foolhardy) (62) are encountered.

#### GOLFO DA BALEIA

M.J. Codine (63) indicates that the name *Golfo de Baleia* appears twice on the map of Martellus (1489), applying to situations to the north and to the south of *Angra Pequena* (now *Lüderitz Bay*). A map of John Senex (circa 1719) marks *Gulf d'Baleines* as south of *Angra Pequena*. These names have all disappeared.

#### ILHA BRANCA

The name *Ilha Branca*, the earliest name given to this island, means White Island, from *branco*, white. It was no doubt bestowed because of the white guano deposits of the seabirds. In 1601 Joris van Spilbergen called the Island Elizabeth Island, but four years later Sir Edward Michelburne changed the name to Coney Island, on account of the number of conies and seals encountered there (64). Both the English and Portuguese names have disappeared: the island is today known as *Dasseneiland* or *Dassen Island*, hybrid forms containing Dutch, Afrikaans and English elements (*das* = badger).

## ILHÉU DA SANTA CRUZ

In 1486 Dias named an island in Algoa Bay *Ilhéu da Santa Cruz*. This island is at present known as St Croix. See also *Penedo das Fontes*.

## ILHÉUS CAOS

In 1497 Vasco da Gama named a group of small islands in Algoa Bay *Ilhéus Caos* or, according to Botha (65), Pettman (66) and Nienaber (67), *Ilheos Chãos*, from *chão*, flat. When the British ship the *Doddington* was wrecked there in 1755, the survivors named the island *Bird Islands*, referring to the large numbers of birds which had made their nests there, a name which has supplanted the Portuguese one completely.

## ILHÉUS DA CRUZ

These islands in Algoa Bay were thus named by Dias. Ravenstein (68) states that Dias may have erected a wooden cross on the larger of the islands, but it had disappeared by 1576, when Perestrello surveyed the coast. Ravenstein also remarks that the name may have been given because the islands were discovered on the day of the Invention of the Cross, 2nd May (69).

## MACHADODORP

In 1894 a town was surveyed on the Farm *Geluk*, which belonged to J. Potgieter. In 1904 this town was proclaimed. It was named *Machadodorp*, after Joaquim J. Machado, a Portuguese colonel who in 1883 surveyed the first railroad between the South African Republic and Lourenço Marques. In this hybrid place name we have the Portuguese surname *Machado* plus the Afrikaans word *dorp*, a town.

## NATAL

*Vide* TERRA DO NATAL

## PENEDO DAS FONTES

In 1486 Dias named an island in Algoa Bay *Ilhéu da Santa Cruz*. Some of his followers, however, called it *Penedo das Fontes*, from *penedo*, rock; *fontes*, a spring. According to Pacheco (70) this name was given on account of the presence of two springs of fresh water they found on the island. In the vicinity of the Kowie River there are a number of rocks known as the *Fountain Rocks*, and some consider this name to be a direct descendant of the

Portuguese *Penedo das Fontes*. Dapper (71) describes *Penedo das fontes* as being opposite the mouth of the Great Fish River. Of these names, only *Fountain Rocks* as a translation seems to be in existence today: the *Penedo das Fontes* in Algoa Bay is now known as *St Croix*.

#### PICO FORMOSO

In the Uniondale district of the Cape Province there is a mountain which seems to have been named in connection with the bay, *Bahia Formosa*. Pettman (72) renders the name as *Pic Formosa*, which is grammatically incorrect.

#### PICO FRAGOSO

To the east of St Helena Bay, on the west coast, a mountain range is indicated on various maps dated 1507, 1513 and 1516 as *Pico Fragoso* (*pieo*, mountain peak: *fragoso*, rugged, craggy). Botha (73) identifies this range as Cape Point and Hangklip, the Portuguese designation having disappeared.

#### PONTA DA PESCARIA

Another Portuguese place name which no longer exists is *Ponta da Pescaria*, Fishery Point, which appears on a map dated 1502. Today this place is known as *Gerecke Point*.

#### PONTA DE SÃO BRANDÃO

*Vide* CABO DAS AGULHAS

#### PONTA DOS ILHÉUS

'*Ponta dos ilhéus* (*ponte*, a bridge) the cape jutting into the sea, which has become broken into a bridge of small islands' (74): I have been unable to establish to which place Pettman is here referring. Comp. also: *ponta*, point, as an etymology.

#### PONTA ESPINHOSA

The name *Ponta Espinhosa*, meaning Thorny Point, has disappeared. It could either have referred to the present *Bok Point* or *Cape Hangklip*. See also *Cabo Falso*.

#### PRAIA DAS NÉVOAS

(*Praia*, shore; *névoa*, fog, mist) means 'shore of the mists'. I have been unable to establish the location of this place.

## PRAIA DAS PEDRAS

From *pedra*, stone, denotes 'the stony shore'.

## RIO DE NAZARETH

The *Breede River*, Broad River, which is today known as *Breërivier* in Afrikaans and *Breede River* in English, was known to the Portuguese as *Rio de Nazareth* (75).

## RIO DAS FORMIGAS

The Portuguese name *Rio das Formigas* (= 'ants') has been supplanted by the Zulu name *Amzimkulu*, Large River, europeanized to *Umzimkulu* (76).

## RIO DAS PESCARIAS

The mouth of the river known as the *Rio das Pescarias*, River of Fisheries, was the scene of one of the first shipwrecks in South African history, namely that of the *São Jerome* in 1552. The Portuguese name of this river has disappeared, having been supplanted by the Zulu name *Mhlatuze* (77).

## RIO DE COBRE

'The rapid river forming the northern boundary of the Transvaal bears the descriptive name *Limpopo* (Z. *uku popoza*, to rush); it is also known as the *Krokodil Rivier*. Vasco da Gama gave it the name *Rio do Cobre* (River of Copper), because the people he found there were wearing copper ornaments' (78). The Portuguese name is no longer extant, the name *Limpopo* having survived.

## RIO DE JAQUELINA

The earliest known mention of the present *Soutrivier* or *Salt River* near Cape Town is that by Joris van Spilbergen in 1601, who describes it as: '... een kreke oft Riviere te landwaerts in, bij onsen Generael ghenaeamt Rio de Jackuelina ...' (79). The Portuguese name is no longer extant.

## RIO DE SÃO THOMÉ

On the map of Waldseemüller (80) dated 1516, the river at present known by the Zulu name *Mtata* (popularly *Umtata*) is indicated as *Rio de S. Tomé*, a name which has subsequently been completely supplanted by the Zulu one. Du Plessis (81) gives the Portuguese spelling as being *Rio de S. Tholme*.

## RIO DO INFANTE

There seems to be unanimity regarding the origin of this name: 'The Great Fish River was named *Rio del Infante* because João Infanta, the second in command with Diaz (1486) was the first to leap ashore there' (82); '*Rio do Infante*, so called because João Infante, Captain of one of the ships of Dias, was the first to leap ashore' (83); '... toe Dias in 1486 anker gegooi het by die mond van 'n rivier ... (was) Juan Infante, Kaptein van een van Dias se skepe, die eerste persoon ... wat aan wal gestap het; daarom is die rivier deur die Portugese Rio do Infanto genoem' (84). As may be seen, there is no uniformity in the spelling of the name of the river; nor is there agreement as to which river was known by this name. Ravenstein (85) and Mentzel (86) think it is the present-day Great Fish River, in which surmise they are supported by Pettman (87). Botha (88) says it 'was probably the *Great Fish River*, but ... may have been the *Kowie* or the *Keiskamma* as known to us'. Elsewhere (89), however, he says: 'The present *Olifants River* was known to the Portuguese as *Rio do Infante*, apparently after João da Infante'. Axelsson (90) is of the following opinion: 'The indentation in the coast to the east of the *padrão* [as indicated on the map of Johannes Rysch Germanus, 1508] may be held to be the entrance of the Bushman's River into the sea; in which case the Infanto River is probably the *Kowie*. But if this indentation is held to be the mouth of the *Kowie*, then the Infante is probably the Great Fish River'. Of course we notice a voluntary or involuntary confusion between the proper name and the common name *infante(a)*.

## RIO DOCE

Our present *Varsrivier* was known in Van Riebeeck's time as *Soete Rivier* (91). Du Plessis (92) tells us that this river was known to the Portuguese as *Agoada de Saldanha* (*sic*) elsewhere (93) he informs us that it was known to the Portuguese as *Rio Dolce* (*sic*).

## RIO DOS REIS

In January, 1498 Da Gama's fleet arrived at the mouth of a river, which they named *Rio dos Reis*, River of the Kings, since it was the day of the Feast of Kings, according to the Roman calendar (94). According to Nienaber (95) this river is today known as *Mansa* or *King George River*. Du Plessis (96), who gives the spelling as *Rio des Reijs*, identifies it as the *Komati*.

## RIO DOS VAQUEIROS

Botha (97) tells us that: '... the *Gourits River*, which is named after a Hottentot tribe, was given the name of *Rio dos Vaqueiros*, the River of the Cowherds'. The Gourits River was also known as *Rio Formoso* (98).

## RIO FORMOSO

*Vide* RIO DOS VAQUEIROS

## ST HELENA BAY

Vasco da Gama anshored at St. Helena Bay, which he named because it was first seen on that Saint's day (99).

## ST SEBASTIAN'S BAY

St Sebastian's Bay, from which the point takes its name, was dedicated to that saint by Perestrello (100).

## SAINT FRANCIS BAY

Manuel de Mesquita Perestrello, who surveyed the coast in 1576, named *St Francis Bay* in honour of that Saint (101). The original Portuguese name is today known in an anglicized form.

## SANTA LUZIA

Pettman (102) mentions *Rio S. Luzia*, which Du Plessis (103) identifies as the *Tugela River*, The Zulu name of which has supplanted the Portuguese one. The alternative Portuguese and now anglicized form, St Lucia, however, is still to be found in names such as *Lake St Lucia*, *La Lucia*, etc.

## SANTIAGO

The *Berg River* was known to the Portuguese as the *Santiago River*, spelt *Santiago* by Du Plessis (104). The clerk of Vasco da Gama's ship *San Raphael*, in an entry dated Tuesday, 7th November, 1497, wrote as follows: 'The River Samtiaguo (S. Tiago - St James) enters the bay four leagues to the south east of the anchorage and is a stone's throw across at the mouth and from two to three fathoms in depth at all states of the tide' (105).

## SÃO CRISTÓVÃO

According to Raven-Hart (106), San Christovão (*sic*) was the name given by Perestrello in 1576 to the river known today as the Keiskamma. Pettman (107), however,

states that '*São Christovão* of the Portuguese is now our *Port St John* - this later name given in memory of the wreck in the locality of the Galleon *São João*, which occurred on June 18th, 1552, near the mouth of the *Um-tamvuma River*'.

#### SERRA BRANCA

'Here and there along the coastal belt the early chartmakers have marked mountains, for instance ... the *Serra branca*, White Mountains, described the *Zuurberg* or *Addo Height*' (108). Whether *Serra branca* be a name or a descriptive note, it no longer exists.

#### SERRA DA ESTRELA

'... the western *Outeniqua Range* was the *Serra de S. Lázaro*, and the *Outeniqua Mountains* were known as *Serra da Estrella*, or *Star Mountains*' (109). Neither of these Portuguese names has survived.

#### SERRA DA PENHA

'... about the middle of the seventeenth century ... Dutch names begin to appear, supplanting in some cases, the earlier Portuguese Place Names: ... *Sierra da Panha* (*penha*, stony hill, rock) gives place to *Vogelklip*' (110).

#### SERRA DE SÃO LÁZARO

*Vide* SERRA DA ESTRELA

#### TABUA DO CABO

'Die oudste blanke naam vir *Tafelberg* was ... 'n Portugese naam, nl. *Tauoa do Cabo*' (111). At first I presumed the spelling of this early name for *Table Mountain* to be a printing error, but it is repeated elsewhere (112): '*In 1503 het Antonio da Saldanha ... die berg uitgeklim ... Dis by hierdie geleentheid dat Tafelberg sy Portugese naam, Tauoa do Cabo gekry het.*' This name is no longer extant, having been supplanted by the Afrikaans *Tafelberg* (from the Dutch) and the English *Table Mountain*.

#### TERRA DA BOA GENTE

Pettman (113) makes mention of this name: 'Other names were descriptive of the character of the inhabitants as the sailors' occasional intercourse with them allowed them to gauge it: *Terra da Boa Gente* (*gente*, people),



"Land of Good People", testifying to the kind reception which they received from this people'. The occasion to which Pettman is here referring occurred on 11th January, 1498. Having passed the present Pondoland coast, Vasco da Gama and his sailors came to the mouth of a river which they named *Rio de Cobre* (q.v.). This region is the one to which the name *Terra da Boa Gente* was given (114). The name has not survived.

#### TERRA DAS TROVOADAS

The *Langkloof*, situated between the Outeniqua, Kamma-nassie and Komgha Mountain ranges (115), was known to the Portuguese as *Terra das Trovoadas* (*trovoada*, thunder-storm, thunder-bolt), Land of Thunder-storms (116). The Portuguese name is no longer extant.

#### TERRA DO NATAL

Storms and the warm Agulhas current caused Vasco da Gama considerable delay; but on 25th December 1497, he passed a beautifully wooded coast. Because it was Christmas day, he named the land *Terra do Natal*, Land of the Birth of Christ. Pettman (117) expresses the view that the territory so named was the present-day Natal, and Nienaber (118) seems to agree with him, for he says: 'Op Woensdag (25 Desember) 1497 het Da Gama die teenswoordige Port Natal ontdek, en aan die mooi beboste land rondom hierdie baai het hy die naam gegee van *Terra Natalis*, ter gedagtenis aan die dag waarop dit vir die eerste maal deur Christenmense aanskou is'. However, Van der Walt (119) and Rosenthal (120) are of the opinion that the land to which Da Gama gave this name was the present Pondoland coast. Be it as it may, the Portuguese name lives on in the name of the province of *Natal*.

#### TERRA DOS BRAMIDOS

To the coastal territory situated to the south of the the Orange River was given the name *Terra dos Bramidos* (*bramido*, roaring as of the sea), ... it is descriptive of the ceaseless roar of the surf as it breaks on the shore; it will be recognised as being an eminently appropriate designation by those who have had the opportunity of listening to the incessant thunder of the heavy Atlantic swell as it breaks on the rocky coast' (121). This descriptive Portuguese name no longer exists.

#### TERRA DOS FUMOS

'The name *Terra dos Fumos* was the name given by Vasco

da Gama to the coastal territory south of Delagoa Bay; an early map of 1665 marks the country immediately south of Delagoa by this name, a later map (1744) applies it to the whole of the coast country running from Natal up to Delagoa Bay. The word *Fumos* is generally regarded as having reference to the smoke (*fumo*) which the mariners were supposed to have seen as they sailed up the coast, caused by the fires which the natives kindled to burn off the old and dry grass' (122). Ravenstein (123) however, offers another explanation regarding the derivation of the place name, stating: 'Hence called *Terra dos Fumos*, or more correctly "Mfumos", the "Land of petty chiefs" ... the appellation has nothing to do with either "smoke" (*fumo*) or "moisture" (*humor*)'. The name *Terra dos Fumos* is no longer extant.

## TERRA NATALIS

*Vide* TERRA DO NATAL

## VASCO DA GAMA'S PEAK

The name of this peak, which is situated at the extremity of the Cape of Good Hope, is a hybrid form and, apparently, not given by Portuguese, being of comparatively recent origin. However, it is a worthy member of the group of Portuguese place names in South Africa. Indeed, far too little recognition has been given in our nomenclature to the achievements of those early intrepid mariners; achievements all the more wonderful when one considers the technological conditions which then existed.

## CONCLUSION

It will have been noticed from the quotations in the foregoing passages that many of the place names are incorrectly spelt. The explanation is probably two-fold; the early writers and researchers either wrote phonetically or used Spanish. As far as possible each entry is headed with the place name written according to modern Portuguese orthography. This, it is hoped, will make for easier reference; the reason, too, why the entries have been arranged alphabetically.

Portuguese place names in South Africa are of great value both from an historical and from a cultural point of view. They were the first names in South Africa bestowed by Europeans; they give us an insight into the customs and beliefs of those early mariners; we can often deduce historical facts from them. These names were invariably aesthetically pleasing, being euphonious

and accurately descriptive. We in South Africa are the richer for those few Portuguese place names which have survived, albeit in corrupted form in many cases: we are incalculably the poorer for having lost so many, either directly or by supplantation.

#### NOTES

- (1) Pettman, Rev. C. - *South African place names past and present*, 1931, p. 61.
- (2) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 57.
- (3) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 58.
- (4) Theal, G. Mc C. - *Portuguese East Records*, I, p. 10.
- (5) Plessis, E.J. du - *Ondersoek na die oorsprong en betekenis van Suid-Afrikaanse berg- en riviername*, 1973, p. 10.
- (6) Botha, C.G. - *Place names in the Cape Province*, 1927, p. 23.
- (7) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 54.
- (8) Botha, C. G., *op. cit.*, p. 16.
- (9) Nienaber, P.J. - *Suid-Afrikaanse pleknaamwoordeboek*, Deel I, 1963, pp. 148-149.
- (10) Theal, G. Mc C. - *The Portuguese in South Africa*, 1896, p. 131.
- (11) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, 45. P.E. has, however, a small lagoon frequented by flamingos and called Smelly Creek.
- (12) *Ibid.*
- (13) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 54.
- (14) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 144.
- (15) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 54.
- (16) Botha, C. G., *op. cit.*, p. 25.
- (17) Nienaber, P.J., *op. cit.*, p. 155.
- (18) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 61.
- (19) *Ibid.*
- (20) Oost-Indische reyse onder den admiraal Both, 1646. Translation: [...traded with the inhabitants obtaining as many oxen, calves and sheep as they could salt with the salt they had, or eat fresh, purchasing an ox for a piece of an iron hoop as long as a (man's) hand ... which gave it the name of Flesh Bay.]
- (21) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 54.
- (22) Theal, G. Mc C. - *Portuguese East Records*, I, p. 32.
- (23) Nienaber, P.J., *op. cit.*, p. 156. Translation: [bay of small, uninhabited islands, derived from *angra*, or bay; *ilheo*, a small, uninhabited island].

- (24) *Ibid.* Outside South-Africa the name Angra Pequena is still used occasionally.
- (25) *Loc. cit.*
- (26) *Loc. cit.*
- (27) *Loc. Cit.*
- (28) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 55.
- (29) Botha, C.G., *op. cit.*, p. 19.
- (30) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 58.
- (31) Nienaber, P.J., *op. cit.*, p. 155.
- (32) Botha, C. G., *loc. cit.*
- (33) Ravenstein, E.G. - *The voyages of Diogo Cao and Bartholomeu Dias 1482-1488, 1900.*
- (34) Nienaber, P.J., *op. cit.*, p. 388.
- (35) *Journal of the first voyage of Vasco da Gama*, pp. 9-14.
- (36) Theal, G. Mc C. - *Portuguese Records*, I, p. 34.
- (37) Botha, C.G., *loc. cit.*; Nienaber, P.J., *op. cit.*, p. 155.
- (38) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 55.
- (39) Botha, C.G., *loc. cit.*
- (40) Nienaber, P.J., *op. cit.*, pp. 155-156.
- (41) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 57.
- (42) Ravenstein, E.G., *op. cit.*
- (43) *Portuguese East Records*, I. p. 319.
- (44) Botha, C.G., *op. cit.*, p. 25.
- (45) Botha, C.G., *op. cit.*, p. 24.
- (46) *Portuguese East Records*, I, p. 310.
- (47) Dapper, O. - *Naukeurige beschrijvinge der Afrikaansche gewesten*, 1668, p. 636.
- (48) *Account of the Cape of Good Hope*, 1804, p. 41.
- (49) Pettman, Rev. C., - « An enquiry into the origin and derivation of certain South African place-names » *South African Journal of Science*, vol. XVI, N.° 5.
- (50) Nienaber, P.J., *op. cit.*; p. 255.
- (51) Pettman, Rev. C., - *South African place-names past and present*, 1931, p. 56.
- (52) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 175.
- (53) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 56.
- (54) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 61.
- (55) Nienaber, P.J., *loc. cit.*
- (56) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 55.
- (57) *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*, 1495-1521.
- (58) *Vier Jahre in Afrika*, II, p. 316.
- (59) Nienaber, P.J., *op. cit.*, p. 203. Translation: [Da Lagoa with a view to inland lakes the existence of which was suspected.]
- (60) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 144.
- (61) *Ibid.*

- (62) *Ibid.*
- (63) Codine, M.J. — Extrait du *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie*, 1876.
- (64) Botha, C.G., *op. cit.*, p. 23.
- (65) Botha, C.G., *op. cit.*, p. 19.
- (66) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 56.
- (67) Nienaber, P.J., *op. cit.*, p. 246.
- (68) Ravenstein, E.G., *op. cit.*
- (69) Ravenstein, E.G., *op. cit.*
- (70) Pacheco, Duarte — *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*, 1521.
- (71) Dapper, O., *op. cit.*
- (72) Pettman, Rev. C., *loc. cit.*
- (73) Botha, C.G., *op. cit.*, p. 22.
- (74) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 57.
- (75) Plessis, E.J. du, *loc. cit.*
- (76) *Ibid.*
- (77) Plessis, E.J. du, *op. cit.*, p. 275.
- (78) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 45.
- (79) RZA, I, p. 9, n. Translation: «...a creek or river on the landward side, named Rio de Jackquelina, by our general.»
- (80) *The World of Waldseemüller* (Illacomilus), 1516, quoted by W. Randles in *South East Africa* ..., p. 15.
- (81) Plessis, E.J. du, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
- (82) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 58.
- (83) Botha, C.G., *op. cit.*, p. 20.
- (84) Plessis, E.J. du, *op. cit.*, pp. 228-229. Translation: 'when Dias in 1486 cast anchor at the mouth of a river ... Juan Infante, Captain of one of Dias' ships (was) the first person ... to go ashore; therefore the river was named Rio do Infante by the Portuguese'.
- (85) Ravenstein, E.G., *op. cit.*
- (86) Mandelbrote, H.J., ed. — *A geographical and topographical description of the Cape of Good Hope*, by O.F. F. Mentzel, p. 38.
- (87) Pettman, Rev. C., *loc. cit.*
- (88) Botha, C.G., *loc. cit.*
- (89) *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- (90) Axelson, Eric — *South-East Africa*, 1940, p. 169.
- (91) Plessis, E.J. du, *op. cit.*, p. 328.
- (92) *Ibid.*
- (93) *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- (94) Nienaber, P.J., *op. cit.*, p. 341.
- (95) *Ibid.*
- (96) Plessis, E.J. du, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
- (97) Botha, C.G., *op. cit.*, p. 25.

- (98) Perestrello, Manuel de Mesquita — *Roteiro*, 1576, quoted by Raven-Hart, R., *Before Van Riebeeck*, p. 12.
- (99) Theal, G. Mc C. — *Portuguese East Records*, I, p. 3.
- (100) Botha, C.G., *loc. cit.*
- (101) *Ibid.*
- (102) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, 54.
- (103) Plessis, E.J. du, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
- (104) *Ibid.*, p. 225.
- (105) Quoted by Randles, W. — *South East Africa*, p. 5.
- (106) Raven-Hart, R. — *Before Van Riebeeck*, 1967, p. 13.
- (107) Pettman, Rev. c., *op. cit.*, p. 56.
- (108) Botha, C.G., *op. cit.*, p. 25.
- (109) *Ibid.*
- (110) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 61.
- (111) Plessis, E.J. du, *op. cit.*, p. 10. Translation: « The oldest European name for Table Mountain was ... a Portuguese name, viz. Tauoa do Cabo (*sic*). »
- (112) Plessis, E.J. du, *op. cit.*, p. 184. Translation: « In 1503 Antonio da Saldanha ... climbed the mountain ... It was on this occasion that Table Mountain received its Portuguese name Tauoa do Cabo. »
- (113) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, 57.
- (114) Walt, A.J.H. van der, *et al.*, ed. — *Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika*, I, 1951, p. 11.
- (115) Scannell, J.P., ed. — *Afrikaanse Kernensiklopedie*, 1965, p. 471.
- (116) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 61.
- (117) *Ibid.*, p. 57
- (118) Nienaber, P.J. *op. cit.*, p. 366. Translation: « On Wednesday (25th December) 1497 Da Gama discovered the present-day Port Natal, and to the beautiful wooded land around this bay he gave the name of *Terra Natalis*, in memory of the day on which it was first seen by Christians. »
- (119) Walt, A.J.H. van der, *et al.*, *loc. cit.*
- (120) Rosenthal, Eric — *Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa*, 1964, p. 186.
- (121) Pettman, Rev. C., *op. cit.*, p. 56.
- (122) *Ibid.*, p. 57.
- (123) Ravenstein, E.G. — *A Journal of the first voyage of Vasco da Gama, 1497-1499*, 1898, p. 17.