

**Names: A Journal of Onomastics**  
**Dictionary of Southern African Place Names**  
--Manuscript Draft--

<b>Full Title:</b>	Dictionary of Southern African Place Names
<b>Manuscript Number:</b>	YNAM-2019-0013
<b>Article Type:</b>	Book Review
<b>Keywords:</b>	
<b>Abstract:</b>	-
<b>Order of Authors:</b>	Maggie Scott

**Dictionary of Southern African Place Names.** 4<sup>th</sup> edition. By PETER E. RAPER, LUCIE A. MÖLLER, and L. THEODORUS DU PLESSIS. 2014. Johannesburg and Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers. Pp. xxiv + 566. R180.00 (PB), ISBN: 9781868425495; various prices (eBook), ISBN: 9781868425501.

With a modified title, the addition of two new named authors, and numerous updates and expansions, the fourth edition of this Dictionary builds on the success and reputation of its forebears to reassert its status as the key companion resource for South African toponyms. Peter Raper's original lexicon was published in 1987 as the *Dictionary of South African Place Names*, with its second incarnation following soon afterwards as the *New Dictionary of South African Place Names* (1989). The production of the revised and updated third edition, with the same title, was in part "necessitated by the election of 1994 and the increase in the number of provinces from four to nine" (2004, vii). The subsequent need for this new fourth edition has been driven particularly by the ongoing changes to place names that were made possible by South African Geographical Names Council Act (1998). This has seen the standardization of a significant number of new names (2014, viii). The State Information Technology Agency has developed the database and archival system for these names, which was formally approved by the Department of Arts and Culture in 2002. The introduction to the third edition of the Dictionary noted the establishment of SAGNC as the national authority responsible for geographical names (2004, x), but the organization was at an early stage of its work in 2004. As the authors of the fourth edition helpfully explain: "New place names, and proposals for changes or revisions of names, are submitted to the SAGNC and to the Provincial Geographical Names Committees. On their recommendation names approved by the Minister of Arts and Culture are published in the *Government Gazette*" (2014, xi).

Language, names, culture, and perceptions continue to evolve, and the fourth edition therefore provides a timely reflection of names in South Africa following many of these changes, with the inclusion of new entries and the revision of information about revised or altered names. The title of the fourth edition has also been revised to better reflect the geographical coverage, which, just like the third edition, includes "names of major features in neighbouring countries" (2014, vii). However, the authors note that since their remit was not to be inclusive of all southern countries in Africa, "[t]here has been no attempt at comprehensiveness" (2014, vii). The precision of the geographical references has also been revised for the fourth edition, with names given "latitude and longitude in degrees, minutes and seconds, and the GPS coordinates following [where available] the style of the Surveyor-General of South Africa" (2014, xxiii). The authors credit sources such as GeoHack and Maplandia for further data not available from the Surveyor-General (2014, xxiv).

The convention that "[o]fficially approved names are preceded with an asterisk" (2004, xviii) has been dropped for the fourth edition. Reasons for this are not clearly stated, but the preface notes that "the implementation of the South African Geographical Names Council Act [...] resulted in numerous new names being standardised" (2014, vii). Therefore, readers should presumably infer that all names in the fourth edition are standard names, or that flagging approved names is now unhelpful or unnecessary, given the pace of standardization.

Completely new entries in the fourth edition include the following, which is particularly indicative of the social and cultural changes undergone in South Africa in recent years:

**Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Post Office** (EC 3425 BA; 34:00:00S, 25:40:00E; -33.9889183, 25.66995239). Post Office in the Port Elizabeth CBD area. Named after the university which was named after the former State President. Replaces the name **UPE Post Office**. (2014, 364)

The inclusion of minor names associated with public services such as post offices is atypical for national name dictionaries, which more usually focus on towns and cities. Minor names are often of major local significance as sites of political contestation and challenge, being highly visible within the social and linguistic landscape. Their coverage in the Dictionary therefore enhances the potential uses of the work as a research tool for post-apartheid critical toponymy, as well as providing a higher level of detailed empirical information.

Standardization has led to several systematic changes in the forms of names with official status, as is exemplified by the four entries for names taking the (now unofficial) form *Olifants River* in the third edition (2004, 288), which, having been updated, are now listed under the official spelling *Olifantsrivier* (2014, 391). Curiously, the names in this group with the same etymology – directly from Afrikaans, translated as ‘elephant river’ – do not receive uniform treatment in the Dictionary. The entry for the Olifantsrivier that is a tributary of the Limpopo informs the reader that “[t]he name is Afrikaans and means ‘elephant (river)’. The river is known as *Lepelle* in Sotho, *Balule* in Shangaan, and *Libhalule* in Swazi” (2014, 391). The entry for the Olifantsrivier that is a camp in the Kruger National Park is explained as being “[n]amed after the Olifantsrivier [i.e. the river], which in turn is named after *Loxodonta Africana*” (2014, 391). Additionally, a newcomer to the fourth edition, the Olifantsrivier found in the Bohlabela district, is explained as being coined in reference to “the occurrence of many elephants in the area,” with a further intriguing note that “[t]he name **Lepelle** has been proposed as a replacement” (2014, 391). Taken collectively, the information in these entries facilitates a comprehensive picture of relevant linguistic connections, i.e. that *Lepelle* is a Sotho word and that the Latin term for the relevant elephant species is *Loxodonta africana*, but the reader is required to join the dots across the group, rather than having one explanation cross-referenced to the others.

The expansion of the Dictionary has led to the inclusion of some names which at first sight may be mistaken for doublets, but which differ significantly in their derivation and remind the reader of the wide range of languages encountered in South African onomastics. For example, in the third edition we encounter the following entry for the name *Malebogo*:

\***Malebogo** (FS 2825 CA). Township 2km from Boshof, at 28 33S, 25 14E. The name is of Tswana origin and means ‘thanks’, ‘gratitude’. (2004, 222)

This entry is retained in the fourth edition, where it is joined by a subsequent name with the same spelling, but a notably different etymology:

**Malebogo** (FS 2825 CA; 28:32:21S, 25:14:17E; -28.539167, 25.23806). Township 2 km from Boshof. The name is of Tswana origin and means 'thanks', 'gratitude'.

**Malebogo** (Lim 2329 BB; 23:13:00S, 28:58:00E; -23.26610756, 29.06487656). Post office 37 km west of Bochum. The name, derived from Northern Sotho, means 'dangerous hand'. The inhabitants of the place killed many people using arrows during wars. In the Free State (see above), the same name means 'gratitude' (derived from *kalebogo*). (2014, 297)

Introductions to dictionaries are notoriously ignored by the majority of users, but readers of the Dictionary would be well advised to note the conventions and approaches described therein. A case in point for international readers is the new note "D." in the "User guidelines" (xxiv). This explains that "[t]he term cognate is used in this Dictionary in the sense of the definition given by Webster [i.e. Webster's Third International Dictionary (1961)], namely 'related in a manner that involves borrowing rather than descent from or as well as descent from an ancestral language'" (xxiv). This may shock or surprise readers from Britain and their ilk, acquainted with the quite opposite use of *cognate*, defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as: 'Of languages: Descended from the same original language; of the same linguistic family. Of words: Coming naturally from the same root, or representing the same original word, with differences due to subsequent separate phonetic development' (OED s.v. cognate *adj.* 2.a.). Caveat lector.

While the ongoing changes to names are likely to instigate further revised editions of the important work, it is very timely that we now have the fourth edition with its thoroughly reworked coverage of South African names and its enhanced geographical detail. This work showcases the onomastic wealth of Southern Africa, and the existence of the four editions also provides an important repository of data marking a period of significant cultural change.

### Works Cited

OED3. 2000-. *Oxford English Dictionary*. Edited by Michael Proffitt. *OED Online*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com>.

Raper, Peter Edmund. 1987. *Dictionary of South African Place Names*. Johannesburg: Lowry Publishers.

-----, 1989. *New Dictionary of South African Place Names*. Johannesburg, South Africa: Jonathan Ball Publishers.

-----, 2004. *New Dictionary of South African Place Names*. Johannesburg, South Africa: Jonathan Ball Publishers.