

MANGAUNG — PLACE OF THE GREAT CATS

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It may interest the curious reader to know that Lion and Tiger* (sic.) abounded in the environs of "Bloom Fontein" during the 1840's and 1850's. For example, William Flemming in a letter dated 19th October 1848 wrote: "Lions and tigers* (sic.) are to be got within 3 miles of Bloemfontein. There are two young tigers* (sic.) running in the town now quite tame whose mother was killed quite closeby" (Butterfield 1984). W.W. Collins (1907) reminisces that when his father had charge of the local Post Office, (c. 1851), he was particularly requested by the Resident magistrate not to despatch the mails to Colesberg later than about 4 p.m., as Lions were then roaming at large in the immediate neighbourhood of Bloemfontein in the vicinity of Quaggafontein and the adjacent hills — "and these were dangerous customers for postriders and others to meet with alone and unprotected at night". Collins also refers to personnel attached to the Bloemfontein Military Garrison who for example during 1853 bagged 3 and on another occasion 7 Lion.



Lengau, Jagluiperd, Cheetah, ACINONYX JUBATUS.
Photo: Walker's Mammals of the World.

It is of course not strange that large predators including Hyaena and Wild Dog abounded in the vicinity of Bloemfontein and sometimes even strayed into the town because game (prey) was extremely abundant in the "Orange Free State" at the time. G.A. Fichardt reminiscing on the early days of the Orange River Sovereignty and the later Orange Free State says that one of the drawbacks farmers had to contend against were the enormous herds of game. He knew of farms of 10 000 morgen that could not produce more



Painting of "Bloemfontyn" by T. Baines depicting what MANGAUNG looked like in 1851

than six bales of wool because the game cleared off the pasturage not only by feeding but by trampling the ground to such an extent that not a blade of grass could be seen, just "dust and dry ground" (Van der Bank 1984).

Probably because of the abundance of prey and predators "was hierdie plek [Bloemfontein] 'n bymekaarkomplek vir jagters, en die Swartmense het daaraan ook die naam Mangaung gegee" which according to Schoeman (1980) denotes "die plek van die groot katte of luiperds". Vandag nog is Mangaung die Sotho-naam vir die stad.

However, I am not convinced that *mangau* refers to Leopard as alleged, since in Shortridge (1934) and Mabile & Dieterlen (1937) a Leopard in



Nkwe, Luiperd, Leopard, PANTHERA PARDUS.
Photo: Walker's Mammals of the World.

Sotho is *nkwe* and a cheetah is *lengau* (plural: *mangau*). Zoologically this is significant since these two species differ quite distinctly from each other; anatomically as well as in habits and the habitat they generally occupy. These differences the Sotho recognized, hence a specific name for each. Why then the ambiguity? Perhaps this arose through placing too much emphasis on the word "leopard" in the other colloquial names of the Cheetah, namely Hunting **leopard** and **Jagluiperd**, so that eventually in some dictionaries Leopard instead of Hunting Leopard is *lengau*.

It is not unlikely that Leopard occurred in Bloemfontein as suitable cover was probably available at the time in the koppies and mountains. Leopard are of course very secretive and primarily nocturnal and in general more a forest species and not so well adapted to an open savanna environment. Cheetah, by contrast, are diurnal and generally a species which frequent

open plains — such as are found in the Orange Free State.

But what's in a name one might ask. Does it matter whether the Sotho name for Bloemfontein, *Mangaung*, denotes Leopard or Cheetah? Zoologically it does, as in many of the old writings ambiguous names such as tiger or panther were often used thereby restricting our knowledge of what was exactly referred to. Symbolically it also matters, consider for example what the implications might have been had the emblem of Bloemfontein City featured a Leopard instead of a Cheetah.

* Tigers, unlike any other southern African felines, have stripes and not "spots" and do not occur in Africa, notwithstanding Tiger is used to refer to a number of African felids which have "spots" e.g. Serval (Tierboskat), Black-footed cat (Miershooptier), Leopard (Afrikaanse tier) and no doubt also the Cheetah (Hunting leopard).



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CORNELIS WESSELS (1851-1924)

C.H. Wessels het die Oranje-Vrystaat in verskeie belangrike openbare posisies gedien, waaronder leier van die Afrikanerbond in die Boshof-distrik (1883-1885), Volksraadslid (1885-1899), lid van die Uitvoerende Raad (1892-1895), vise-voorsitter van die Volksraad (1896), voorsitter van die Volksraad (1897-1899), Deputasielid (1900-1902) na Europa, Rusland en die Verenigde State van Amerika gedurende die Anglo-Boereoorlog, Sentrale Komiteelid van das eerder sy forse persoonlikheid, politieke takt, nugtere denke, hardwerkendheid, sin vir geregtigheid en onbetwisbare liefde vir die Vrystaat wat meegebring het dat hy in hierdie leiersposisies gedien het. Hy was ingetoe van aard, maar sy aangebore waardigheid, tesame met 'n aangename aardse humor, het hom laat uitstaan. Hy was groot van gestalte met growwe gelaatstrekke en 'n kenmerkende snor

Die doktorsale proefskrif van J. Haasbroek, DIE ROL VAN CORNELIS HERMANUS WESSELS IN DIE ORANJE-VRystaat 1885-1924, word eersdaags deur die Nasionale Museum gepubliseer.

