Chapter 8

Struggle heroes and heroines statues
and monuments in Tshwane, South Africa

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In her chapter on *Creating Heritage, Manipulating Tradition: Art and Material Culture in South Africa's Rainbow Nation*, Anitra Nettleton contends,

... in South Africa, with its British colonial and apartheid legacies of not only racial but also ethnic separation of people, language has, for at least the past 100 years, been used to encourage particularist, separate identities, separate imagined communities which not even the protracted liberation struggle managed to eliminate (2008, 108).

As a result, she goes on, “the tactic of the post-apartheid government has been to celebrate various interacting cultures, to embrace the ‘rainbow’ nation concept” (Nettleton 2008, 108). However, recent calls for the removal or demolition of colonial and apartheid statues and monuments, seen as reflecting one of the many cultures on the South African landscape, have challenged and pushed the official narrative about the rainbow nation’s notion of memorialization, heritage preservation, and indeed the state’s reconciliation and social cohesion agenda. In response to the debates around the activities of the recent #RhodesMustFall Movement, Achille Mbembe (2015) observed that “the debate should have never been about whether or not colonial and apartheid monuments should be brought down”. All along, he continues, “the debate should have been about why it took so long to do so”.

My research on the identification and construction of statues and monuments in honour of anti-apartheid struggle heroes and heroines by the African National Congress (ANC), especially those at the

Groenkloof nature reserve in Tshwane, tells another story which seems to be a deliberate attempt to counter colonial statues or pre-1994 imagery.¹ The emerging struggle icons' statues, as well as the era in which they are constructed have given them the appearance of new imageries for the new dispensation, but only to a certain extent. While the statues represent anti-colonial and anti-apartheid heroes and heroines, the imagery is still largely colonial in nature (Gamedze 2015). Here, struggle icons statues are constituted by a group of bronze statues representing anti-colonial and anti-apartheid activists such as Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu, Nelson Mandela, Govan Mbeki, as well as Zulu chiefs, and missionaries. The project was conceived and implemented by Dali Tambo, son of struggle icon Oliver Tambo, with the stated aim of reflecting on South Africa's struggle for liberation dating back to the 1600s. The over 70 struggle heroes and heroines statues are intended to tell the story of South Africa's three centuries of colonial domination (1650-1950) and four decades of apartheid rule (1950-1990) through remembering and honouring the many activists who paid a price for the country's freedom.

The example of the newly constructed statues, among others, sends a strong message to heritage practitioners about the present cultural landscape. Indeed, the inventive and innovative reservation of a park for the statues commemorating struggle icons is a good example of shifting nature of cultural heritage resources. It demonstrates that in Africa and South Africa in particular, the imagery of the society is not static (Prashad 2001; Mbembe 2015; Sajjani 2015). It is always changing, especially in response to changes on the socio-cultural and political landscape.

The main argument in this chapter is that the Groenkloof struggle icons' statues provides us with the opportunity to understand the socio-cultural transfigurations that South Africa and Tshwane have been going through since 1994. Put differently, the anti-colonial and

1 Imagery here can be understood as a visually descriptive or figurative language, especially in literary work. It also refers to visual images collectively (cf. Page 1997)

anti-apartheid heroes and heroines statues allow us to comprehend the shifting nature of the imagery of success and power in South Africa. This practice can also be witnessed in willingness of the ruling ANC to construct statues and monuments in different parts of the country in honour of struggle heroes and heroines. More recent examples of some of these statues are those of former President Jacob Zuma at the Groot Marico capture site, in the North West Province, and that of Oliver Tambo at the O.R. Tambo international airport in Johannesburg. As some of my informants note this practice of constructing post-apartheid statues has become one of the most notable means of addressing past cultural imbalances.

This chapter examines the rationale behind the newly constructed anti-colonial and anti-apartheid statues at the Groenkloof nature reserve. In doing this, the chapter aims to show that while the statues are largely a replication of existing colonial imagery, they have become one of the embodiments of the ANC's response to the cultural imbalance on the South African and Tshwane landscape. To unpack this, I divide the chapter into four sections. First, I present a historical background to Pretoria and colonial imagery; second, I highlight the decline of the colonial imagery in Pretoria; third, I examine the emergence of the post-1994 imagery and lastly, I highlight the rationale behind the newly constructed statues.

Pretoria (Tshwane) and colonial statues

For a better understanding of the motivations behind the emergence of struggle heroes and heroine statues at the Groenkloof Nature Reserve, I will begin with a brief history of Pretoria and colonial statues in the city in order to establish a context for my argument.² Pretoria,

2 The Groenkloof Nature Reserve is located adjacent to Fountains Valley at the southern entrance into Tshwane (Pretoria). It was one of the first game sanctuaries in Africa. The reserve of about 600 hectares is managed by the Department of Nature Conservation of the Republic of South Africa. The reserve is home to the newly constructed struggle heroes' and heroines' statues, also known as the National Heritage Monuments (www.nhmsa.gov.za accessed July 2016). The site visit was organised by the author in an attempt to get the public's perceptions about the Groenkloof Nature Reserve's struggle icons

the administrative capital of South Africa was founded in 1855 by Marthinus Pretorius, the then leader of the Voortrekkers who named it after his father Andries Pretorius, and chose a spot on the banks of the Apies River to be the capital of the South African Republic (Raper 1987; Bodel 1989). Prior to this, oral history holds that the area used to be called Tshwane, probably named after a local chief, Tshwane. The meaning of the name Tshwane is not very clear, but it is associated with the term Tswana, which means “we are same” (www.sahistory.org.za,). Other sources (Allen & Hannes 2007) associate the name Tshwane with the colour “black” in Sotho, as in black cow or “Kgomo e Tshwane” while still, others say it means “little Monkey”.

Following the arrival of the Voortrekkers, and successive Europeans, Pretoria slowly but steadily developed to become one of the most important colonial administrative centres in Southern Africa and South Africa, and has maintained its status until present day. The history of colonial statues in Pretoria dates back to the arrival of the Voortrekkers and the establishment of Boer Republics. However, I will start from 1938 with the Voortrekker Monument because of the important place it occupies in South African history. In her study on *History After Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*, Coombes explains that:

On 16th December 1938, the foundation stone of this central monument to apartheid was laid on a hill outside Pretoria. It was also the occasion of an elaborate reconstruction of the foundational event of Afrikaner nationalism – the Great Trek of 1838. That year, a party of Boer men

statues. It included five postgraduate students currently on internship at the Human Sciences Research Council, two heritage managers from the City of Tshwane as well as three researchers and two members of the public. The age range for the participants was 20-55 years old. Of the 12 participants in the group, seven were women and five were men. In terms of racial composition, 11 of the participants were black South Africans while the remaining one was a white South African. In terms of their professional background, seven were fully employed while the others were either students or private consultants. Most of the visitors were residents of black townships on the outskirts of Pretoria such as Mamelodi and Atteridgeville. The site visit was in addition to several other visits to the site by the author, in which he spent time observing how visitors behave at the site, talking to some of them and also documenting their experiences. However, in 2019, the statues were removed and taken to Maropeng at the Cradle of Humankind in Magaliesberg as there is more room to display what will eventually be about 400 life-sized bronze statues.

and women, and children, (known as the Voortrekkers or Pioneers), dissatisfied with British rule in the Cape and its inconvenience corollary of slave emancipation, set off in a convoy of ox-wagons on a gruelling journey from Cape Town to form independent republics in what were to become the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. One hundred years later, twelve replica ox wagons, complete with costumed Voortrekker families, set out from various parts of the country to restage that fateful journey and finally arrived (nearly four months later) at two of the most historically significant destinations – the city of Pretoria and the site of the battle of Blood River (the Ncome River) (2003, 26).

The laying of the foundation stone of the Voortrekker Monument was preceded by a countrywide symbolic Ox-Wagon Trek, organised by the Afrikaans Language and Cultural Organisation (ATKV) (Peters 2012). The Trek was punctuated by festivals in almost every centre through which the trekkers from Cape Town passed. The story narrated in the Voortrekker Monument starts with the artists who were involved in the sculpture work. It indicates that Hennie Potgieter designed and sculpted the buffalo head above the main entrance as a symbol of protection against enemies. Moreover, a Voortrekker leader is depicted on each side of the four corners of the monument to symbolize guard of honour. In front of the monument, on either side of Anton van Wouw's mother and children statue are four wildebeest mounted on bas relief against the wall to symbolise the danger posed by Africans to the mother and her children (Coombes 2003, 38). Also represented on the monument, is a marble frieze that tells the story of the Great Trek of 1835-1852 in 27 panels. Basically, what is portrayed on the panels is the history and different aspects of the way of life of the trekkers. Coombes argues that:

Historically, then, the Voortrekker Monument is of critical significance for the foundational myths of Afrikaner nationalism – in particular the idea of the Trek as the moment of emergence of the Afrikaner as the founding ethnic group of a new nation, the white tribe, and the divine right of the Trekkers to the land. These myths are embodied through the structure of the monument itself – first through the seductive resolution

provided by the narrative of encounter and conquest represented by the interior frieze, and second through the fact that the edifice houses what amounts to a cenotaph on its lower level, replete with eternal flame to the memory of Trekkers killed en route. (Coombes 2003, 28)

The above extract illustrates the fact that one of the rationales behind the Voortrekker Monuments is the recognition and preservation of the memories of the Voortrekkers. Preservation of the memories of heroes and heroines through statues and monuments was, and still is not unique to South Africa and Pretoria. Colonial statues and monuments were common across Africa during the colonial and apartheid era. As Larsen has noted in the case of Kenya, they were used as cultural tools in the project of colonialism until the achievement of independence in the 1960s (Larsen 2013). In the same vein, this use of symbols continues with the ANC government's position to undermine the power of the dominant class. The Groenkloof nature reserve statues in honour of struggle or anti-colonial and anti-apartheid heroes and heroines must be seen in this context.

Figure 8.1. Voortrekker Monument, Pretoria. Photograph: Mathias A. Fubah, August 2016

I therefore argue that the interest in struggle heroes and heroines statues and monuments by the ANC government is not about reducing the level of domination of the cultural landscape by colonial and apartheid symbols, but rather working to subvert pre-1994 imagery by eliminating any relations of domination that exist between the two symbols – the colonial and apartheid on the one hand, and the post-apartheid on the other hand.¹

At a site visit to the Groenkloof nature reserve struggle heroes and heroines statues in June 2017, some of the discussions between students, heritage practitioners and researchers centred on the question of the iconography of struggle heroes and heroines statues at the park.² Many of the participants agreed that it was important for the statues to be

constructed because they represent the symbols of the new South Africa. Many argued that the symbols of the colonial and apartheid era were no longer needed since the system had collapsed in 1994.

Right from the beginning of the deliberations, there was disagreement between students and heritage practitioners on what constitutes the imagery of the new dispensation. To most of the participants, statues and monuments such as the Voortrekker Monument that have been there since 1949 are largely seen in present day as an extension of the pre-1994 cultural iconography.

Since the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument, various cultural organisations have hosted festivals on the site. In 1959, for example, the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge (FAK) presented “Die Wonder van Afrikaans”, a language festival which was attended by more than 60,000 people (Peters 2012). One of the results of this festival was the creation of the popular film *Doodkry is min*, which portrays the history of the language. Additionally, at the 150th anniversary of the Great Trek in 1988, the FAK and the Afrikanervolkswa organised a small symbolic ox wagon trek during which several small monuments were constructed across the country and various memorabilia were manufactured.

Figure 8.2. Tambo, Dali. Cross-section of struggle heroes and heroines statues installed in 2015 at the Greonkloof nature reserve. Pretoria.
Photograph: Mathias A. Fubah, January 2016

This colonial and apartheid notion of statues and monuments created the impression that tangible heritage of European origin was the only acceptable symbol. The acceptable notion of heritage was one that ignored and avoided the history of black South Africans, except to display it as part of archaeological and natural history exhibitions (Kayster 2010). Moreover, the South African Cultural History Museum in Pretoria, for example, exhibited Greek, and Egyptian artefacts, European costumes and silver as well as Japanese ceramics and costumes. The inclusion of Japan pointed to an acceptance by the apartheid regime and other whites that Japan had a higher level of civilisation than the black Africans who were excluded. By doing this, the colonial and apartheid social actors conveyed the message that, culture, art, history and the construction of statues and monuments in honour of heroes and heroines came from Europe (Kayster 2010, 3). In fact, colonial statues and monuments, such as the Voortrekker Monument for example, were presented as more superior to those of the African population (if any), and therefore deserving of a place on the South African cultural landscape (Crooke 2005, 131).

From the 1970s, the separation was marked by “native” section being moved to a cultural village venue near the Pretoria Zoo, and then relocated to the present African Window section.³ By doing this, the colonial and apartheid social actors vividly demonstrated the distinction between what was “perceived as primitive and civilized of culture and nature” (Gore 2005, 75). Similarly, statues and monuments in honour of colonial and apartheid heroes and heroines were presented as progressive in contrast to the differentiated representations of black warriors and clothed Afrikaners. primitive and Seen from the context of the political atmosphere at the time, this practice was interpreted as the expression of colonialism and apartheid where the belief was that high attainment and ability was of European or Western origin, whereas black history was absent and not deserving of any attention on the cultural landscape.

3 Nettleton Anita, observation, September 2017.

Figure 8.3. Voortrekkers leaving the Cape Colony, Voortrekker Monument, Pretoria, 1835. Photograph: Mathias A. Fubah

The decline of colonial statues and monuments in Pretoria/Tshwane

Following Fanon and Gramsci, we can argue that hegemonic culture such as the colonial and apartheid statues and monuments that were promoted and preserved in South Africa are constituted first and foremost following the values that serve and justify the privileged classes, and they are thus privileged because of their relation to the political system in place (Fanon 1963; Gramsci 1971). When the political system changes, as was the case in South Africa in 1994, fundamental changes occurred in the society, as in the case of the newly constructed cultural heritage resources such as Freedom Park, and the struggle icons statues at the Groenkloof nature reserve in Tshwane. As new cultural heritage resources in honour of anti-colonial and anti-apartheid icons become dominant, new classes are formed, class relations shift, and the new class(es) that rise to power then construct new imageries, aesthetics, values, and ultimately ideology, that justify their hegemony (Prashad 2001; Sajani 2015).

Writing about *Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive*, Achille Mbembe (2015) notes,

... the decolonisation of buildings and public spaces includes a change of those colonial names, iconography, i.e., the economy of symbols whose function, all along, has been to induce and normalize particular states of humiliation based on white supremacist presuppositions.

Such names, images, and symbols, Mbembe (2015) goes on, “have nothing to do on the walls of a public university campus more than 20 years after apartheid”. In his study on *HipHop Origin as Organic Decolonization*, Sajnani (2015) notes that “HipHop culture, at its origins, is an organic decolonization of local urban space by internally colonized people in post-industrial 1970s New York”. Similarly, the newly constructed struggle heroes and heroine statues can be interpreted as an organic decolonisation of the local Tshwane space by the ANC government, except that they have been erected by the privileged class and in memory of members of a largely elite section of the political class. However, while the New York case talks of HipHop culture as a new invention that was meant to subvert the dominant culture at the time, Dali Tambo’s struggle heroes and heroines statues at Groenkloof remain a continuation of the pre-1994 colonial symbols, both in styles and material forms, for example. According to Gamedze (2015), the newly constructed statues are not an act of liberation, but one of assimilation. The use of bronze as was the case with the colonial and apartheid imagery, she continues, does not make much meaning to previously marginalise South Africans. As she maintains:

Bronze symbolises a regime, a triumph over Bronze, of recent, has had a mobilizing effect, it spurs action within people who look at bronze figures and do not see themselves reflected back. Bronze can collect masses, can put institutions at a standstill, bronze can insult a black South Africa which is in a process of trying to re-imagine itself. Bronze has acted as the anti-imagination of a decolonized South

*Africa, and its continued use in the colonial style cannot ever be read as a project that attempts to create a space for all South Africans to memorialize anything whatsoever.*⁴

The above extract elucidates the fact that in trying to remember and preserve the memories of anti-colonial and anti-apartheid heroes and heroines, Dali Tambo has directly put them once again under the canopy of the same western artists who denied them the right to cultural representation.³ While most of the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid heroes and heroines may have lived and died without ever interacting freely with a bronze statue, they are now commemorated using this material that many consider to represent a regime and a triumph over land to the neglect of what they might have used and valued as their own imagery. In a process of decolonisation, Gamedze (2015) notes:

Our imagination of public symbolism surely needs to originate here, using our own image-makers and artists' skill sets and disciplines, in a process that takes as departure point a democratic conceptualisation of who and what needs to be memorialized, and how we would like to see that done.

In essence, while the Groenkloof nature reserve struggle heroes and heroines site might be seen as a step towards addressing cultural imbalance on the South Africa landscape, it remains old-fashioned and repulsive in terms of the imagery since black South Africans to the site are reminded through the bronze statues of a past that they are struggling to forget. According to Dali Tambo, the project initiator, it is a tourist site. Heritage tourism, he continues, “is a massively growing aspect of international tourism, with the educated middle classes seeking otherness ...” (cited in Gamedze 2015). However, the “otherness” that Dali Tambo mentions here only takes the tourist to the pre-1994 gaze.

4 While bronze is considered to represent a regime, a triumph over land and is also Western, it should also be noted that bronze is very much African (Cf. Layiwola and Olorunyomi, 2010).

The resources associated with such landscapes enabled white South Africans to enjoy exclusive rights and privileges in such spaces and in the society. A white South African who accompanied the author and a group of students and heritage practitioners to the Groenkloof Nature Reserve recalled with regret the good old days when statues and monuments meant a lot and could attract crowds of people from the population group that they represented. As she explained to us during the discussions at the site, she remarked:

- I feel sorry that even with the huge sum of money that has been invested here, the population is not aware, not many people come to view the statues, yet they are constructed in the name of heroes and heroines of majority of the population. In the past, the colonial and apartheid statues and monuments that some people are calling for their removal meant a lot and I am certain they still do in present day South Africa, especially to those they represent.⁵

What this colleague failed to realize was that, while huge sums of money have been invested in the Groenkloof struggle heroes and heroines statues, the project is largely a process of replicating the pre-1994 iconography because the forms and aesthetics of the statues have not changed much. As one of the students who participated in the trip observed “most of us are happy seeing this, but I am concerned because the statues give only a partial picture of the people they represent.” Apart from their heads that show that this is comrade Mandela, or Mbeki, or Tambo, the rest of the image, is not in any way different from the pre-1994 statues and monuments.⁶

The emerging struggle icons statues and monuments in Pretoria/Tshwane

If in the 1960s, 70s and 80s the apartheid regime portrayed statues and monuments in honour of their heroes and heroines as some of the

5 It is important to note here that artists for the Groenkloof Nature Reserve statues were mostly white South Africans.

6 Margaretta, personal communication. June 2017.

resources that could give status and success to the government, then the 1990s and 2000s were the in which these symbols started to be undermined. Three reasons account for this. The first is that the ideology that presented the apartheid cultural landscape or imagery as ideal was not true.⁴ Second, these colonial and apartheid symbols were considered outdated because they have persisted “well beyond the advent of democracy” (Kros 2015, 151). In fact, similar changes were experienced by most African postcolonial societies in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s (Coombes 2011; Larsen 2013; Mbembe 2015; Swartz 2017). For example, Larsen (2013) noted that the lifting of colonial rule in Nairobi (Kenya) was followed by a symbolic restitution of the cultural landscape for the “expression of resistance and the inscription of new voices” (2013).

In Zimbabwe, independence was followed by the removal of the statues of colonial authorities such as Cecil John Rhodes, Alfred Beit and many others, since they were seen as offensive to Africans (Samwanda 2013). Similar observations have been made about colonial statues and monuments in West Africa, most notably, in Mali (Arnoldi 2007). Given this trend, South Africa with a similar colonial history cannot be an exception, even though it achieved its independence 30 years later.

Third, when South Africa achieved its democracy in 1994, social transformation was made one of the priorities of the government. The constitution for example, declared equal rights for all citizens, and one can add equal cultural representation on the landscape. Because the cultural landscape and associated cultural spaces are platforms where national ideals such as those enshrined in the new constitution are given material form, the landscape became a space where the ANC government had to persuade the population to support its policies (Kayster 2010). Accordingly, on Heritage Day 1997, former President Nelson Mandela used the opportunity to criticise the cultural landscape as one which reflected colonial and apartheid points of view (Kayster 2010, 3). In line with the country’s new constitution, Mandela demanded a change of the old iconography. Indeed, he emphasised that the cultural representation had to change in order to reflect the democratic ideals

and experiences of the majority of the population, rather than focusing on a privileged few as had been the case (Kayster 2010, 3).

Early in 1992, the South African History Workshop at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg held a conference under the theme, “Myths, Monuments, Museums” with the aim of charting the future of historical statues and monuments in the country and Tshwane (Coombes 2003). Some of the debates at the conference centred on whether or not public sculpture set up over the long apartheid years to commemorate key moments and figures in the Afrikaaner nationalist canon should be removed (Coombes 2003, 3). Following the deliberations, it was decided that some statues, such as those of Hendrick Verwoerd, “the man considered by many to be the major architect of apartheid be destroyed, while many of the symbolically laden such as the Voortrekker Monument and the Taalmonument” (Afrikaans Language Monument) outside Paarl in the Western Cape should survive (Coombes 2003, 20).

Despite the above debates, many perceived Nelson Mandela’s Heritage Day pronouncement as a wake-up call and museums and heritage institutions and practitioners noted that what the cultural landscape represented and the way in which it was represented was “opposed to the new human rights culture of the new South Africa” (Dubin 2006). According to Anziske Kayster, President Mandela’s speech showed vividly that the post-apartheid government proposed and desired transformation of the South African cultural landscape. Transformation in this case encompasses “inclusion, assimilation, participation, collaboration and sometimes eradication” (Kayster 2010, 4). It is a process of “constructing new ways of thinking, doing and understanding” (Kayster 2010, 4).

However, the call for transformation of the cultural landscape has less to do with the fascination with the new imagery than with fundamental changes that have been happening in South Africa since the 1990s. Not only have these changes supposedly swept away the colonial and apartheid ideologies that in the past served as cultural

tools for self-confidence and control of the population by the white minority government; it has also greatly hampered the influence these resources had, as many are now openly challenged, destroyed or even removed as in the case of the Rhodes statue at the University of Cape Town in 2015. This is how unimportant some colonial and apartheid statues and monuments have become, not only for the previously marginalised who are calling for their complete removal but also for some of the population groups represented by these statues who feel South Africa needs a new cultural identity.

Struggle icons statues and monuments in Pretoria/Tshwane: A new imagery

In present day South Africa and Tshwane, most of the previously marginalised population groups are fascinated, (though with reservations) by the ANC's efforts in remembering and commemorating the lives of struggle heroes and heroines through statues and monuments. Most of the twelve participants that accompanied the author to the Groenkloof nature reserve statues in June feel they relate to the statues in one way or another. Indeed, most of them, and visitors to the site, feel those represented by the statues are role models for most South Africans aspiring to leave a legacy. For instance, in one of the visits to the site, I was astonished by the extent to which the statues have impacted on the lives of black South African visitors. On most occasions, I met visitors, most of them black South Africans who spent many hours not only moving from one statue to the other, but also reading the accompanying literature or explanatory information. In fact, most of those that I spoke to referred me to a Facebook and Instagram page, which I wasted no time subscribing as one of their followers (Figure 8.4).

Figure 8.4. Photograph of a visitor to the Groenkloof National Heritage Monuments Park taken next to one of the statue with an Instagram display

The esteem that most of these participants and visitors showed in the struggle heroes and heroines statues and monuments, was manifested in the type of stories and issues they discussed. For instance, most of them told me that if it were in the 1970s and 1980s, none of them would have come any closer to a statue or monument because the spaces that historical statues and monuments occupy were “no go areas”. Instead, in present day, one of them observed, we are not only viewing statues and chatting in a park without any restrictions, but anyone can kiss and comment about the statues. One of the participants, Tembileli maintains:

Under the pre-1994 system of government, some of us would have only come here as security officers or cleaners. Those are the type of jobs that were designed for black South Africans: to guard and clean the surroundings of Paul Kruger’s statue at Church Square while our bosses drink coffee, smoke cigarette and stroll around. But as you can see, most of these heroes and heroines represented by the statues sacrificed

*their lives so that we can also drink cold drink, smoke cigarette freely and stroll around their own statues not as security guards or cleaners but as professionals in our different fields.*⁷

As a matter of fact, most of the stories narrated by the participants and visitors at the site centred on their achievements resulting from the sacrifices of these icons. This fascination with the new imagery of anti-colonial and anti-apartheid heroes and heroines raises a number of questions, the answers to which might help us understand the rationale behind the new cultural representations on the South African and Tshwane landscape. Notable among these questions is, what makes the struggle heroes and heroines statues and monuments at the Groenkloof site attractive to South Africans? And what kind of message does the interest in these struggle heroes and heroines statues and monuments convey? Four suggestions, which are not definitive, attempt to answer these questions.

First, Chief Tshwane, whose statue is constructed at the site, is a famous leader of those who, according to oral history, inhabited the area now known as Tshwane before the Boer trekkers arrived in the mid-1800s (Figure 8.5). According to the explanatory information on the statue, Chief Tshwane was the son of Chief Mushi, a Ndebele king who led his people from Maponong to what later became known as the Transvaal, settling first in the east of the city at the origin of the Moretele River.⁵ It is believed Chief Mushi moved to the region in the early 1800s and first settled at Mokgapane (Mooiplaas, east of Pretoria) before moving to what is now Pretoria and gave an area near the present-day Apies River to his son, Tshwane. Some people therefore believed that the African name for the Apies River is Tshwane River, in honour of Chief Mushi's son. The name Tshwane disappeared from the records following the founding of Pretoria in 1855. Hence, the South African government's move to change the name to Tshwane in 2005 and later to construct statues and monuments in honour of Chief Tshwane remains a fascination for those who believe and appreciate historical facts.

⁷ Molera Stanle, personal communication, June, 2017.

Figure 8.5. Chief Tshwane. National Heritage Monument Park, Pretoria.
Photograph: Mathias A. Fubah, June 2017

Second, most South Africans are likely to be attracted to the Groenkloof Nature Reserve site because the mere presence of struggle heroes and heroines statues there, is a recognition and preservation

of their memories. But, it also points to the fact that, like the Afrikaners who constructed statues and monuments such as the Voortrekker Monument in honour of their heroes and events in the past, the ANC and most South Africans see the statues and monuments of struggle heroes and heroines as a means of remembering their own past. This is a means of ensuring continuity with both ancestors as well as descendants of these icons and the new dispensation. It builds on and reminds viewers of the significance of the sacrifices and achievements of these struggle icons for present and future generations. As a matter of fact, it is through the construction of statues and monuments especially those of struggle heroes and heroines that the ANC can convince themselves that they are in control, since many South Africans believe one way of achieving symbolic restitution is through such practices (Swartz 2017). As a result of this belief, the notion of statues and monuments in honour of struggle heroes and heroines has become a common practice across South Africa since most people believe they “belong to the people.”⁸ At least, this was the view expressed by one of the visitors that I talked to at the site, who maintained that: “through these statues and monuments, the souls of anti-colonial and anti-apartheid heroes and heroines have been resurrected.”

Third, struggle heroes and heroines statues and monuments are also popular in the eyes of the ANC leadership and South Africans because they contribute in giving a voice to the formerly marginalized groups (Sherriff 2014). For example, Gavin Jantjes has written on the one-sidedness of statues and monuments across South Africa during the colonial and apartheid era. In his introduction to the Visual Century project, he describes the evolution of South African art, including statues and monuments from 1907 onwards. He demonstrates how the harsh political circumstances of the 20th century, colonial, union, and apartheid rule often eroded facts and shaped cultural fictions (Jantjes 2011). As a result of these fictions, the majority of South Africans were rendered voiceless until 1994. It is no wonder that efforts towards reversing these fictions have become one of the main preoccupations of the government.

Fourth, the ANC leadership and most South Africans see statues and monuments in honour of struggle heroes and heroines as an instrument of defence. For instance, a number of studies on Africa and South Africa have reiterated the fact that the construction of statues and monuments across the country, today, as in the past is essentially a political phenomenon (Dubow 1997; Coombes 2003; Nettleton 2008). This holds true, especially for the struggle icons statues and monuments at the Groenkloof nature reserve, since statues and monuments have formed part of an aesthetic practice that have played a crucial role in defining and shaping South Africa's cultural landscape since the colonial era (Leibhammer & Bila 2011). Leibhammer and Bila have noted that all these were clearly spelt out in the "treaty of Vereeniging (1902), the proclamation of the Union of South Africa (1910) and the Native Land Act (1913) that saw black South Africans forfeit all their residual (Maylam 2001).

As a result of these restrictive policies by the apartheid government, the ANC regime and many black South Africans see the whole notion of identifying and constructing statues and monuments such as those at the Groenkloof nature reserve as an instrument in the counter-hegemonic project.

Across Tshwane and South Africa, the ANC's interests and obsession with struggle icons statues and monuments fits into the country's mode of symbols as objects of status and prestige for political elites. It also shows the ambition of the ANC to outshine pre-1994 statues and monuments in what Arjun Appadurai calls "the tournament of values" (1996). By tournament of values, we should be understood as referring to the complex ways in which the pre-1994 regimes perceived statues and monuments, and portrayed them as instruments of power and authority, as well as a means of controlling the population. In the same vein, the ANC government sees struggle icons statues and monuments as an opportunity for them to make their voice heard in the wider South African community. As a mark of this tendency, the ANC has taken upon themselves the task of constructing struggle icons statues and monuments not only in Tshwane and South Africa, but also beyond

the country. One notable example of this was in Rhamala, Palestine where the statue of struggle icon and former President Nelson Mandela was recently unveiled by the premier of Gauteng Province. Additionally, there was also the unveiling of the Deville Wood Memorial in Paris in honour of the members of the South Africa Native Labour Corps who died during the First World War in Paris but were never honoured in the same manner as their white colleagues.

Prior to 1994, with the exception of Nelson Mandela, whose statue was installed in London in the 1980s and one recently unveiled, ANC heroes and heroines, whether within or out of the country did not have such privileges. Undoubtedly, by identifying and constructing statues and monuments in honour of struggle icons, the ANC was further extending the pre-1994 practice of obsession with objects of status and prestige. This, however, is not to suggest that statues of status and prestige such as the Benin bronzes, for example) were not part of pre-colonial Africa.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has presented an overview of the historical and contemporary symbols of status and monuments in South Africa and Tshwane. The chapter has shown that while the colonial and apartheid era statues and monuments were constructed exclusively in honour of heroes and heroines of the time, post-apartheid statues and monuments are also largely in honour of anti-colonial and anti-apartheid heroes and heroines. Using the example of the Vootrekker Monument and the newly constructed Groenkloof nature reserve struggle heroes and heroines statues, the chapter highlights the shifting nature of the imagery of success and power in South Africa and Tshwane. The chapter further shows that, while the Groenkloof nature reserve anti-colonial and anti-apartheid statues are intended to address the issue of cultural imbalance on the South African landscape, the styles and material forms are western, making the statues to look like a replication of the pre-1994 symbols. The fascination with the newly constructed statues and monuments is supported by four major reasons. First, the

fact that the founding chief of Tshwane, chief Tshwane is represented at the new site, thereby disrupting the apartheid founding myth of Pretoria. Second, the fact that the memories of those who fought for South Africa's freedom is recognised and preserved. Third, the fact that struggle heroes and heroines statues and monuments have contributed in giving a voice to the ANC leadership and most South Africans, something that they could only dream of in the past. Fourth, the fact that struggle heroes and heroines statues and monuments present themselves as instruments of defence against the continuous domination of the cultural landscape by pre-1994 symbols.

By constructing statues and monuments in honour of struggle heroes and heroines across South Africa and Tshwane, the ANC leadership is slowly, but steadily disrupting the old symbols, thereby ushering in new classes, new relations, new cultural representations and eventually a new ideology that will help support its leadership and policies. Indeed, through the actions of the ANC and many South Africans, we can ascertain that hegemony is never a permanent state of affairs and it is never uncontested (Gramsci 1971). For example, Stuart Hall, one of the founding figures of cultural studies, has pointed out that “people are simultaneous makers and consumers of culture, participating in that culture according to their place in economic and political structures” (Hall, 1980). And that people, through “processes of encoding and decoding, shape culture and that organisations such as the church, the state,” and we may also say the ANC (in the case of this paper), encode certain ideas in the mass media, which audiences then decode (Hall 1980). To this end, the Groenkloof struggle heroes and heroines statues can be interpreted as both a continuation of the pre-1994 imagery as well as a departure from it in terms of the initiator of the project, the faces and personalities represented and the message that it seeks to promote and preserve.

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