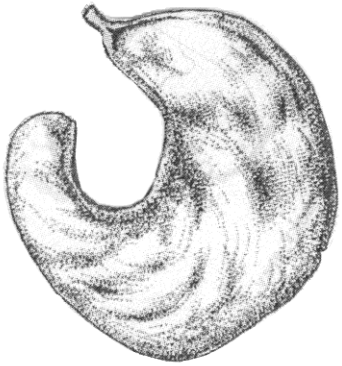

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The Owambo Campaign Memorial in context: Who is being commemorated?

Napandulwe Shiweda* and Kletus Likuwa**

Abstract

This paper focuses on the Owambo Campaign Memorial in Windhoek which was erected to commemorate the British South Africa troops who died during the campaign against King Mandume at Oihole on the 6th of February 1917. It explores the origin of the Owambo Campaign memorial project and interprets memorial's significance to Owambo people. Upon its erection in 1919, the monument was appropriated as a memorial to King Mandume because many Owambo people, particularly the Kwanyama, believed, and still believe, that the king was decapitated and that his head was later taken to Windhoek where it was buried under the monument. This paper examines the significance of the monument's location, the events surrounding its unveiling, and the subsequent activities amid the political turbulence in the capital city. Windhoek served as an intersection point between the north, the south and the coast, with labour coming from the north to mines, harbours and farms in the south. Thus, during colonial rule many Owambo came to Windhoek as migrant labourers where they lived in compounds. The end of colonial rule, however, created a space in the city's symbolic landscape for a new layer of postcolonial narratives to overwrite the inscribed colonial identities, memories and meanings. This paper argues that the Owambo Campaign Memorial is an important site for understanding the change of meaning process attached to monuments dedicated to colonial heroes.

Introduction

The history of Windhoek's public monuments has evolved in tandem with the changing political and cultural contexts of the capital. This paper explores the role of a belief among the Owambo about the Owambo Campaign Memorial in Windhoek – Namibia's capital city. The belief is rooted in oral tradition that claims that after the Kwanyama king Mandume ya Ndemufayo's death, he was decapitated and his head taken to Windhoek where it was buried under the base of the Owambo Campaign Memorial. Mandume ya

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Ndemufayo was a king of Oukwanyama from 1911–17. His six years as leader of the Kwanyama people were years of struggle. He fought to preserve the independence and unity of his people at a time when the tightening grip of the colonial powers was working to dominate and fragment them.[1] At the Berlin Conference in 1884 the mapmakers divided his kingdom between Portugal and Germany. Thus, some of his people lived north of the border, on the land claimed by the Portuguese as part of their colony Angola while others lived to the south of the border on land which Germany claimed as part of GSWA. The region was however only occupied in 1915 during World War 1, while Mandume was king.

Throughout his reign Mandume resisted both Portuguese and British-South African colonial rule. In 1915 he fought the Portuguese army at Omongwa in Angola, where he was defeated. He then moved his capital across the border into then South West Africa (SWA) now Namibia at Oihole. Mandume sought protection from the British South Africans by signing a protection treaty in September 1915 with Colonel Pritchard, the Union Government officer at the time.[2] There were however, conditions attached to the agreement. He was denied access to the Neutral Zone as well as to his subjects over the border. In January 1916, newly appointed South African Resident Commissioner Manning had recommended the creation of a 'Buffer State' between the Portuguese and British territory, to which Mandume or his immediate followers would have no access.[3] The Union Government complied with the Portuguese demand to prevent the Kwanyama king from entering the Neutral Zone although this was not in the original agreement to which Mandume was a party in September 1915. Thus Mandume mistrusted the Union officials.[4] Mandume rejected these restrictions and continued to exercise his authority over his subjects irrespective of the border. The Portuguese accused Mandume of travelling 120 miles into Angola with 800 fighters and killing a number of people.[5] The resident British South Africans interpreted Mandume's numerous trips into the Neutral Zone as blatant defiance of their authority.[6] Thus, on 25 September 1916 discussions were held in Windhoek regarding the removal of Mandume.[7] The operation was to be carried out by the South Africans alone as they rejected joint military action with the

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[1] Jeremy Silvester, *My Heart Tells me that I Have Done Nothing Wrong: The Fall of Mandume*, Windhoek, University of Namibia, 1992:

[2] An account of the history of Oukwanyama kingdom; the Namibian-Angolan border and the death of Mandume is narrated in: Napandulwe Shiweda, *Mandume ya Ndemufayo's memorials in Namibia and Angola*, M.A. dissertation, University of the Western Cape, 2005: 19-34.

[3] Patricia Hayes, *History of the Owambo of Namibia, c 1880-1935*, unpublished PhD Thesis, Cambridge, University of Cambridge, 1992: 211f.

[4] Ibid.: 213.

[5] Ibid.: 219.

[6] Silvester, *My Heart* : 16.

[7] Hayes, *History* : 222; idem, "Order out of chaos: Mandume ya Ndemufayo and oral history", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19 (1), Special Issue: Namibia: Africa's Youngest Nation, 1993: 89-113.

Portuguese,[8] who were however cautioned to prepare for the eventuality that Mandume might escape into their territory.[9]

The British-South African authorities left nothing to chance and assembled a powerful armed expeditionary force to be sent against Mandume. The military expedition of over 270 troops left Ondangwa for Namacunde on 2 February 1917. That night Mandume mobilized omalenga and fighters near the Ondonga border while he stayed at his *ombala* (palace) in Oihole. The South Africans avoided the ambushes that were set for them and headed straight for Oihole. Mandume himself was reported to have a bodyguard at Oihole of between 200-300 well-armed men.[10] The South African troops approached Mandume's residence from the opposite direction from which the attack was anticipated. Mandume chose to fight rather than run but he died in battle. Afterwards two versions of his death arose, one saying Mandume was killed by Maxim fire, while the other says that the King committed suicide and was subsequently decapitated by Union forces. It is widely believed that Mandume was decapitated by the British-South African troops and taken to Windhoek.[11]

The Owambo Campaign Memorial was erected in Windhoek as a tangible symbol of victory for the British South African troops who died fighting Mandume at Oihole. In the years after its erection and unveiling, the Owambo Campaign Memorial functioned for most Owambo people not as a work of art but as a constant reminder of Mandume's demise. As stated earlier, there was a popular belief that he was decapitated and his head was taken to Windhoek where it is believed to have been buried under the monument. This belief still persists and the monument is thus associated with Mandume. It is also important to analyse the centrality of the association of the monument with Mandume and explore more deeply how these beliefs were constructed in Windhoek. However, it is very surprising that people in Windhoek share this belief, considering that the campaign and Mandume's death took place in southern Angola, on Oukwanyama soil, and that the Windhoek area had little connection with these events.[12] In addition, Windhoek was a largely white controlled area and was the administrative centre. Thus, this paper asks, how it then came about that this belief achieved such centrality in the Kwanyama or the Oshiwambo-speakers' consciousness? What is the meaning of ascribing a monument to Mandume in the capital city, the centre or heart of the colony? Additionally, why did this belief take hold in? What was it about historic conditions in Windhoek for Owambo that this belief found a home here? In responding to these

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[8] Hayes, *History*: 230.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.: 233.

[11] Personal communication, Hinananye Nehova, January 2010; see Margo Timm, "The Death of Mandume ya Ndemufayo the Last King of the Kwanyama", paper presented at the 'Trees Never Meet' Conference, Windhoek, Aug. 1994; also Shiweda, *Mandume*.

[12] See Napandulwe Shiweda, *Omhedi: Displacement and Legitimacy in Oukwanyama Politics, Namibia, 1915–2010*, PhD Thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2011, on issues of Oukwanyama kingship following the death of Mandume ya Ndemufayo and memory/border politics.

questions, this paper will look at what was happening at that time especially in terms of construction of identities and reclamations of oneself.

History of Windhoek

It is important to look at the role of the Owambo Campaign Memorial in relation to its site in the centre of Windhoek. The city is historically known by two names, //Ai-//Gams, in the Nama language and Otjomuise in otji-Hererero language.[13] //Ai-//Gams literally refers to the hot springs that were once part of Windhoek, and Otjomuise means a place of steam. It was founded by Jan Jonker, an Afrikaner, and was later taken over by the Germans and then by the British South Africans. A relatively young town, Windhoek was a place claimed and reclaimed by Africans before 1890 when the Germans made it their capital.[14] However, colonial Windhoek originated primarily from the process of conquest and dispossession.[15] The German colony came into being in 1890 when Germany sent a *Schutztruppe* (protective corps) under Major Curt van François to establish order.[16] Von François stationed his garrison at Windhoek, which was strategically situated with a spring that provided water for the cultivation of food. The present Windhoek was founded on 18 October 1890 when von François laid the foundation stone of the fort, which is known as the *Alte Feste* (Old Fortress). Windhoek developed slowly, with only the most essential government and private buildings being erected. The German colonial era ended during World War 1, and South African troops occupied Windhoek in May 1915 on behalf of Britain. From 1915–1921 a military government administered SWA.[17]

Windhoek as the capital stood at the heart of South West Africa/Namibia and controlled its bureaucracy, which was highly centralised. The importance of this piece of urban space is illustrated by the (contested) efforts to produce it as a colonial capital, by progressively inscribing colonial boundaries onto the landscape.[18] Ibrahim Abdullah describes the typical African capital city, as "a colonial creation founded on violence and was not built for Africans". He continues by saying "rather it was built for the white man, the foreigner, the other".[19] Wallace states that "in Windhoek, as is common with other African cities, the colonial elite struggled to produce the capital as colonial space".[20] She

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[13] Windhoek is also not a colonial name but a Nama-Oorlam name that predates 1884.

[14] Marion Wallace, *Health, Power and Politics in Windhoek, Namibia, 1915–1945*, Basel, Schlettwein, 2002: 24.

[15] Ibid.: 40.

[16] It became a colony legally in 1884, although 1890 is significant here.

[17] Carol Ella Kotze, *A Social History of Windhoek, 1915-1939*, unpublished PhD thesis, Pretoria, University of South Africa, 1990.

[18] Wallace, *Health*: 6.

[19] Ibrahim Abdullah, "Space, culture, and agency in contemporary Freetown: The making and remaking of a postcolonial city", in: Okwui Enwezor et al., (eds.), *Under Siege: Four African Cities – Freetown, Johannesburg, Kinshasa, Lagos*, Ostfildern-Ruit, Hatje Cantz: 201-212 (201).

[20] Wallace, *Health*: 23.

further argued that Windhoek "was a site for continual reconstruction of the dominance of white elite; it was also the base from which control was exercised over the territory of South West Africa."[21]

However, Windhoek has a long history of precolonial occupation,[22] although it is often argued that it was a colonial creation. This indicates that it is organic and not entirely artificial as it is present in the histories of the indigenous peoples who have lived there longer. The Herero and the Nama had long connections with the site; during colonial rule the Owambo also came there as migrant labourers where they lived in locations. It is not clear when the latter first came to Windhoek, but certainly from the German period.[23] Wallace highlights that by 1915 when the South Africans took over, "the black population of Windhoek was concentrated in the main location to the west of the town and a smaller settlement in Klein Windhoek". She further states "Apart from these locations there were 'compounds' (in reality, collections of huts or sheds) for Owambo contract workers".[24]

The first occupiers of SWA, the Germans, were very keen on the use of Owambo as labourers on the extensive white-owned farms, and in the new mines and other industries, even though Owambo as an area had not been subjugated at the time. The labour force was initially drawn from indigenous communities further south, but with the opening of Tsumeb copper mine in 1906 and the Luderitz diamond mine in 1908, more Owambo and other northern peoples were recruited on fixed term contracts. With the coming of South African rule, Hayes argues that "for the [South African] colonial administration in Owambo, the period of 1915-21 showed dependency on existing mechanisms of labour organisation".[25] Basically their colonial strategy in Owambo was concerned above all with securing an abundant and reliable migrant labour force especially for central and southern Namibia. This was one of the major features of the economy, which channelled large numbers of men from Owambo to the mines and farms of the Police Zone.[26]

People tend to migrate in search of work in response to specific issues and this case was no exception. Moving to the white controlled areas as migrant labourers was thus presented in earlier studies as the only viable solution to the problem of population pressure and limited natural resources (land shortage and deforestation were acute

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[21] Ibid.: 23.

[22] Ibid.: 40.

[23] See Miescher, Giorgio, *The Ovambo Reserve Otjeru (1911–1938). The Story of an African Community in Central Namibia*, BAB Working Paper No 1, 2006: 7. Miescher looks at Owambo migration to central Namibia (not necessarily Windhoek) in historical perspective. He claims that written sources date the migration of men to central Namibia around 1880.

[24] Wallace, *Health* : 39.

[25] Hayes, *History* : 280.

[26] Ibid.: 26.

problems by the mid twentieth century).[27] However, recent studies on the contract labour system show that the greatest motivation for migrant labourers to move to white controlled areas was *oluhepo* : hardship or poverty.[28] In a similar case of migration to colonial cities occurring in response to development, in Freetown (Sierra Leone)

> The two World Wars and the decisions to abolish slavery in 1927 were the major developments that shaped the history of the city in the colonial period [...] the numerous construction projects during the wars created job opportunities for both skilled and unskilled labour.[29]

Abdullah further emphasizes, "The boom in construction meant that more people left the hinterland for Freetown in search of jobs".[30] Like Freetown and other colonial African capitals, Windhoek was seen as a viable option to find contract work, especially for Owambo and Kavango men in those years. Although, their work was heavily controlled by the labour bureau South West Africa Native Labour Association (SWANLA),[31] Windhoek was a desirable destination, and people tried to 'work the system' to get there even when sent elsewhere.[32] Thus, Windhoek was very much an intersection between north and south and the coast, with labour coming from the north to the mines, harbours and farms in the south.

Windhoek was therefore strategically located in the centre, and almost everything passed through it whether bound for the sea, export or elsewhere. The building of railway systems evolved out of economic and military needs which also brought the establishment of telephone and telegraph communication systems to the country. This development contributed to a more rapid expansion of mining, farming and other activities in the territory. By examining these viabilities tied to Windhoek at that time, our intention is to show how Kwanyama or Owambo came to live or pass through Windhoek. Since Windhoek is the centre and hub of facilities such as railways, Owambo had to pass through the capital to reach their work places. We contend that this was instrumental in propagating the belief that Mandume's head was buried under the monument in Windhoek. Thus, as Owambo who shared this belief did not originate in the city, but ended up there as migrant labourers, claiming the monument was, in effect, an act of claiming space within the capital city (a white controlled area).

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[27] Richard Moorson, "Underdevelopment, contract labour and worker consciousness in Namibia 1915–1972, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 4 (1), 1977; 53-87.

[28] Kletus M. Likuwa, *Voices from the Kavango: A Study of the Contract Labour System in Namibia, 1925–1972*, unpublished PhD thesis, Cape Town, University of the Western Cape, 2012.

[29] Abdullah, "Space": 205.

[30] Ibid.

[31] SWANLA was responsible for administering, hiring and regulating migratory contract labourers, from May 1943. See Jonathan Crush, Vincent Williams and Sally Peberdy, "Migration in Southern Africa", Global Commission on International Migration, September 2005, https://childhub.org/en/system/tdf/library/attachments/crush_05_mig_south_africa_0408.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=18158 [accessed 14 Mai, 2020].

[32] See Sam Nujoma, *Where Others Wavered: The Autobiography of Sam Nujoma*, London, PANAF Books, 2001, and Vinnia Ndadi, *Breaking Contract: The Story of Vinnia Ndadi*, Bellville, Mayibuye Books, 1974.

Furthermore, with Namibia's transition from a colonial to a post-colonial state, aspects of the city landscape such as public monuments take on particular significance. With the memorial in question, there is a specific meaning in the fact that it serves as a highly symbolic signifier of political and cultural shifts. Thus understanding the dynamics at work in shaping the historical and the contemporary city landscape, acts of memorialisation and the monuments which give tangible expression to them is of great significance. This is especially true where monuments are signifiers of memory which commemorate events or individuals but also mark deeper, more enduring claims upon a national past as part of the present.[33]

The construction of the Owambo Campaign Memorial

The Owamboland Memorial project was born immediately after the battle between British South African troops and Kwanyama king Mandume ya Ndemufayo at Oihole in 1917.[34] The memorial was built close to the railway station in Windhoek. Hayes asserts that it "became a site of visitation for different generations of Owambo passing through or resident in Windhoek" because it "was on the route – at the crossroads even – of migrant workers from the north en route to their contracted work sites".[35] This is consistent with the earlier reference to the monument's proximity to the railway station, the migrant workers always passed it on their way to their work places. This was true both for Windhoek residents and for those from elsewhere in the country as the train passed through the centre (Windhoek) en route to the south e.g. diamond fields and farms.

The office of the Director of Railways[36] in Windhoek played an important role in the conceptualization and in the construction of the memorial by setting up the Owamboland Memorial Fund, and a committee was formed to institute proceedings to erect it.[37] It is interesting that the Owamboland Memorial committee made suggestions on the location and on the blue print for the proposed layout of the site, which was to contribute to the creation of a symbolic landscape. The committee also had protracted discussion regarding the choice of material to be used in the monument. The Director of Works, Major James Nobie Cormack proposed a site lay-out which featured an entrance gate, path, watering taps and seats.[38] The contract for the erection of the memorial was

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[33] Y. Whelan, "The construction and destruction of a colonial landscape: monuments to British monarchs in Dublin before and after independence ', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 28 (4), 2002: 508-533.

[34] This was an official South African memorial to the SA troops who had been killed in the battle.

[35] Patricia Hayes, "The African Threshold", unpublished paper from book project, concerning the colonisation of Owambo kingdoms in Namibia, especially Oukwanyama in 1915-17, p 42.

[36] The Director of Railways was probably chosen because the monument was erected on railway land. It was erected 50 metres from the entry to the train station parking area, in what was the white town.

[37] NAN, ADM, 79, 1915-1920, 1917-1918, file number 1788/4, vol 1. File title: Funds – General Owambo Memorial Fund.

[38] NAN, ADM, 79, 1915-1920, 1917-1918, file number 1788/4, vol 1. Letter dated 28 June 1917.

awarded to a contractor by the name of Martin Brandt. He signed a contract with Major Cormack, representing the committee, on the 16 October 1917. Brandt is said to have

> agreed to erect the memorial in a thorough and workmanlike manner in accordance with proposed plan and specification to the satisfaction of the Director of works or his deputy for the sum of One Hundred and Forty Pounds sterling (£140).[39]

The specifications were highly detailed as the committee went to great lengths to construct the monument in a certain manner. It requested that the Director of Works make sure that

> seats and nosing should have shaped ends of benches and the return faces of stones of same. The top and two sides of coping to back of benches should have a natural coloured stone including the base of monument with a smooth face similar to those on the German Church, on Leitwein Street in Windhoek. The marble tablet should be obtained from the Karibib Marble Company by Public Works.[40]

Throughout the remainder of 1917 to early 1918, a wealth of correspondence is recorded for the construction of the memorial. Much interest was also accorded to the tablet or plaque of names of the fallen troops. It had originally been intended to obtain the marble tablet from the Karibib Marble Company, but it was later ascertained that marble would not withstand the Windhoek climate and granite or copper tablets was used instead.[41]

It seems that the committee eventually decided to cast the tablet in bronze (Figure 1). In September 1917 work began on preparing the site and the foundations were laid. As the Director of Railways writes, "public works department will arrange to erect the gate and lay on the water supply, which work will now be [...] arrange to have trees planted".[42] The work done consisted of selecting stone from a quarry and carting it to the site in wagons provided by the Administration, dressing the stone and building the memorial including the digging of trenches and laying of concrete, as set in specification and drawings prepared by the Director of Works.[43] In late 1918, a number of palm trees and all kinds of flowering plants were ordered for the memorial by the Agricultural department whose task it was to decorate the site.[44] The monument was formally unveiled in 1919 in "an attractive garden with shady palm trees" and flowers around it amid a display of considerable pomp, ceremony and symbolism.[45]

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[39] NAN, ADM, 79, 1915-1920, 1917-1918, file number 1788/4, vol 1. Letter dated 5 September 1917.

[40] NAN, ADM, 79, 1915-1920, 1917-1918, file number 1788/4, vol 1. Letter dated 16 October 1917.

[41] NAN, ADM, 79, 1915-1920, 1917-1918, file number 1788/4, vol 1. Letter dated 7 November 1917.

[42] NAN, RNG/1/1/207, Owambo Memorial Fund, Windhuk 1917.

[43] NAN, ADM, 79, 1915-1920, 1917-1918, file number 1788/4, vol 1. Letter dated 6 September 1917.

[44] NAN, ADM, 79, 1915-1920, 1917-1918, file number 1788/4, vol 1. Letter dated 29 August 1918.

[45] S.W.A. Fremdenvehrkersverband, *Windhoek memorials – Windhoekse gedenktekens – Denkmäler in Windhoek*, Windhoek: S.W.A. Fremdenvehrkersverband, 1971.

Figure 1: Tablet

Source: National Archives of Namibia, Photo collection number 31307

Owambo Campaign Memorial symbolism

As indicated earlier, the Owambo Campaign Memorial was erected as a tangible symbol of victory, and it served to appropriate public space, not only through the commemoration of the British South African troops, but also through the location and events that went with its unveiling. However, as the political context in Namibia changed, so did the meaning attached to the monument, a trend that became even more pronounced in the post-colonial period.

The 6 February 1918 was selected as the date for the unveiling of the memorial as shown by a letter addressed to 'His Honour' the Administrator on the 23 January 1918, signed by a member of the Committee and Honorary Secretary:

> I am instructed by the Chairman and Committee of the Owamboland Memorial Fund, to invite you to be good enough to perform the ceremony of unveiling the Memorial which has been erected near the Railway Station to the memory of the men who fell in the expedition against the native chief Mandume on the 6th of February last year. It is proposed that the ceremony should take place on the anniversary, i.e. the 6th proximo, at 5.o'clock, if this will meet your convenience.[46]

It is not clear why the unveiling was postponed. The monument was not unveiled until 1919. Unfortunately, archival records do not mention the unveiling ceremony and the speeches made that day. However, there are photographs taken during the event that show massed bands of troops and officials surrounding the monument. We argue that the photos show a whole choreography of events surrounding the ceremony creating a particularly visual spectacle. Furthermore, they highlight the contrast between the landscaped memorial garden with young palm trees, flowers, shrubs etc. and the vast bare background of Windhoek as it was at the time.

Figure 2

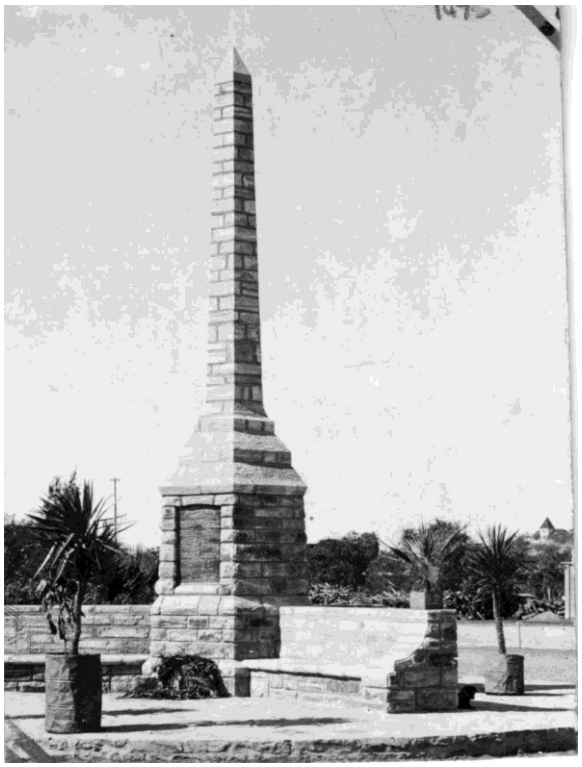
Source: National Archives of Namibia, Photo collection number 09584

Margo Timm claims that the Owambo Campaign Memorial "consists of an 'obelisk' with six sides, in reference to the date of the Oihole battle (6 February 1917), surrounded by

[46] NAN, ADM, 79, 1915-1920, 1917-1918, file number 1788/4, vol 1. Letter dated 23 January 1918.

nine palm trees to commemorate the number of South Africans killed"[47] (Figure 2). However, based on our count from our own recent visit to the site, there are 12 palm trees. Moreover, the claim that the number of palm trees represents the number of British South African troops killed at Oihole may be inaccurate, as there are 10 graves of British South Africans at St. Mary Odibo and another one near Ondangwa, bringing the total number of fallen troops to 11.[48]Placed between tall palm trees and green lawns, the monument retains its original form with a few alterations i.e. flower beds, seats/benches and stone extensions have been removed (Figures 3, 4 and 5).

Figure 3



Source: National Archives of Namibia, photo collection number 01475

[47] Margo Timm, "Transpositions: The reinterpretation of colonial photographs of the Kwanyama king Mandume ya Ndemufayo in the art of John Mwafangejo", in: Wolfram Hartmann, Patricia Hayes and Jeremy Silvester, (eds.), *The Colonising Camera. Photographs in the Making of Namibian History*, Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press, 1998: 145-150 (147).

[48] 'The Heritage Hunt' project led by the Museums Association of Namibia (MAN) discovered the grave near Ondangwa – and local narratives seem to testify to this account.

Figure 4

Source: National Archives of Namibia, photo collection number 02283

Figure 5

Source: National Archives of Namibia, photo collection number 31308

Mandume's association with Owambo Campaign Memorial

Mandume died in battle with the British South African soldiers who are honoured at the Owambo Campaign Memorial. However, after its installation, "many Kwanyama claimed this monument as memorial to the King himself and an affirmation of his presence within the capital city".[49] The wide acceptance of this belief is surprising. The views of the people we interviewed on the issue reflected a general consensus that the monument was dedicated to Mandume.[50] They all said it was definitely Mandume ya Ndemufayo's monument as apparently his head was buried there. However, there were and still are many different versions of the story. Oral accounts can often give contradictory versions of events, and this case is no exception, particularly on the question as to whether Owambo people were allowed to see Mandume's head or not. Godfrey Nangonya claimed that, "Mandume's head was kept in that monument [...] during South Africa's control, people came to see the head".[51] He stressed that it was only white people who were allowed on the site or to see Mandume's head. However, Emilia Nhinda claims, "I have seen Mandume's head in Windhoek, when I went to school there. They used to show it at that place near the railway station, so when I went to school I saw it".[52] On the same issue, Vilho Kaulinge[53] who was present when Mandume died also claims to have seen Mandume's head when he was decapitated by the British South Africans saying, "I only came to see his head when we brought his belongings to Ondonga".[54] This relates to Mandume's wish that after his death all his belongings be taken to King Martin of Ondonga, which his senior commanders (including Kaulinge) did. The colonial authorities then asked all the senior commanders to go to Ondangwa for interrogation. It was there that they were apparently shown Mandume's head when the colonial officers told them that they could see it if they wanted. Kaulinge further claims

> the king's head was taken to Windhoek where it is kept in a very nice room. If you go there as a visitor you would be allowed to see it. You will be allowed to go inside the yard only, but not inside the room.[55]

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[49] Jeremy Silvester, Marion Wallace and Patricia Hayes, "'Trees Never Meet'. Mobility & Containment: An overview 1915-1946", in: Patricia Hayes, Jeremy Silvester, Marion Wallace and Wolfram Hartmann, (eds.), *Namibia under South African Rule. Mobility and Containment 1915-46*, Oxford, Curry, 1998: 3-48 (10).

[50] Interviews with Godfrey Nangonya, Windhoek, 10 January 2005; Emilia Nhinda, Ondobe, 12 February 2005; Pombili Iipinge, Windhoek, 24 February 2005; Jims Shintango waKarenga, Korokoko village, March 2009; Hinananye Nehova, January 2010.

[51] Interview with Godfrey Nangonya, Windhoek, 10 January 2005.

[52] Interview with Emilia Nhinda, Ondobe, 12 February 2005. The late Emilia was born at Omupanda (in the present southern Angola, Kunene region) on 6 July 1908. Her father was Tomas Nhinda, a close friend of King Mandume ya Ndemufayo. She moved from Omupanda to Ondonga (in Namibia), but she was 9 years old when Mandume died and she claims she knew him well.

[53] The late Reverend Vilho Kaulinge was known as a great authority on Owambo History.

[54] Patricia Hayes and Dan Haipinge, *"Healing the land": Kaulinge's history of Kwanyama / oral tradition and history by the late Reverend Vilho Kaulinge of Ondobe as told to Patricia Hayes and Natangwe Shapange*, transcribed and transl. by Dan Haipinge, Köln, Köppe, 1997: 89.

[55] Ibid.: 93.

Human nature often leads to the construction of a past that is deemed necessary for various situations and different reasons. Luise White in her interpretation of vampire stories, in the context of oral history in Africa, says,

> people do not speak with truth, with a concept of the accurate description of what they saw, to say what they mean, but they construct and repeat stories that carry the values and meanings that most forcibly get their points across.[56]

She continues by emphasizing, "people want to tell stories that work, stories that convey ideas and points".[57] Therefore, we as interviewers or audiences are always at a disadvantage if we have no prior knowledge of the past that is being looked into. The construction of individual memories always employs different types of understanding of the past, each with different claims to the truth and authenticity.

Owambo people generally, and Kwanyama especially, still say it is Mandume's monument and still honour him through this particular memorial. They base this on the idea that they (Kwanyama) also colonised Windhoek because they are not natives there, but rather came as migrants. Recent work in the field has shown that this belief lives on. According to Padrão as cited in Udelsmann Rodrigues, "the South Africans cut his head off and buried it in a secret place in the Southwest [Namibia], based on the assumption that locals only ascribe supernatural powers to that part of the body".[58] However, the central idea of separation remains and is one of the most repeated when asking people in Angola about the king: "the head was taken to Namibia and is still there until these days".[59]

At certain points, this memory issue became more intense. Hayes et al state that

> In 1937 and 1938, the attention of the administration in Windhoek was drawn to the existence of a 'Mandume Memorial Committee', composed of Christianised Oshiwambo-speakers living in the location.[60]

In some ways similar to the 'Otjizerandu' (Red Band Organisation or *Truppenspieler*) of the Ovaherero and the 'Green Band Organisation' of the Damara,[61] the Owambo also had an 'association-Organisation', which held a memorial service in memory of King Mandume ya Ndemufayo at the colonial 'Mandume Campaign Memorial' at the Windhoek

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[56] Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires. Rumor and History in Colonial Africa*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000: 30.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Cristina Udelsmann Rodrigues, "The Kwanhama partitioned by the border and the Angolan perspective of cross-border identity", *African Studies*, 2017: 8, DOI: 10.1080/00020184.2017.1325615.

[59] Ibid.: 9.

[60] Silvester et al., "Introduction": 10.

[61] Otjizerandu is a ritual ceremony (sometimes referred to as movement) that takes place every year at Okahandja during which Herero congregate in large numbers to commemorate and pay tribute to their fallen heroes and heroines. See Klaus Mühlhahn, *The Cultural Legacy of German Colonial Rule*, Oldenbourg, de Gruyter, 2017, and Jean-Marc Dreyfus and Élisabeth Gessat-Anstett, (eds.), *Human Remains in Society: Curation and Exhibition in the Aftermath of Genocide and Mass-Violence*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2017: 208.

railway station.[62] However this particular ceremony with the organisation (the Mandume Memorial Committee) only occurred once, in 1937,[63] and never took place again whereas 'Otjizerandu' of the Ovaherero has taken place every year until now. This one event clearly shows that people really believed that it was Mandume's memorial. Thus, they formed a committee to attend to affairs relating to their king's monument. However, the commemorations and the committee's existence were short-lived. The belief, on the other hand, has persisted to this day.

The committee was made up of eight people, namely: Titus Namuyo, Johannes Kapitira, Johannes Haihumba, Isaac Ndatjapo, Solomon Shitaleni, Gabriel Mbidi, Tobias Shinkupeni and Ananias Shipena.[64] They visited the site and laid a wreath there on 6 February 1937. The following year they were denied access to the site. They reportedly questioned why, having been granted permission the previous year, access was not permitted in 1938. A series of questions were raised at a meeting between the Windhoek Superintendent of Locations, Captain Bowker, and the committee member, Titus Namuyo.[65] The decision to refuse access was taken by the System manager of the railways (on whose land the monument is situated), and the Town Clerk, together with the Superintendent of Locations. Captain Bowker said in a letter to the Town Clerk, "it seems to me absurd that the Owambo should hold their services at a memorial erected to the memory of men who were killed by themselves (the Owambo)."[66] We believe that local people were purposely ascribing symbolic meaning to the monument and knew for whom the monument had been built. Furthermore, we argue that they wanted to reclaim their position in the city by identifying with the anti-colonial Mandume. For the colonial officials it was inappropriate for Owambo to commemorate their King at such a site and therefore they refused the Mandume Committee's request for a second memorial service.

It is worth examining the colonial authorities reasons for not allowing Owambo access to the memorial the second time. The idea of protecting colonial space is the key here. One must also understand why this memorialization emerges in 1937 – after the depression and at a time of increasing colonial control.[67] We argue that the reason the colonial officials refused the Mandume commemoration at the site was to protect their colonial space. At the time, knowledge of the colonial space depended on official documentation

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[62] Klaus Dierks, *Chronology of Namibian History from pre-Historical Times to Independent Namibia*, December 2000, http://www.klausdierks.com/Chronology/90.htm [accessed May 14, 2020].

[63] More combing of the National Archives in Windhoek is necessary for further manifestations of this, but from our own searches, there was nothing showing the contrary.

[64] NAN MWI 36/1/37 vol. 14, 'Interview with Titus Namuyo', 2, 14 February 1938.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

[67] This was because due to drought and the Great Depression the first phase of white settlement was brought to an end in 1932 and only resumed in 1937. See Wolfgang Werner, "A brief history of land dispossession in Namibia", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19 (1), Special Issue: Namibia: Africa's Youngest Nation, 1993: 135-146.

and the colonial archives. Thus, we think it would be worth examining files on the Owambo compound(s) at that time for a broader context because in the colonial heartland, in this case Windhoek, black people, if not in a reserve, were only tolerated as dependent labour on farms, in mines or in the domestic sphere, in keeping with the recommendations on the spatial segregation along racial lines of the late 1930s.[68] Hayes et al claim that "the sudden surfacing of the Mandume Memorial Committee in Windhoek represented a collision with colonial history and a competing claim to the public space"[69]. Furthermore,

> In doing so, and in trying to reclaim a monumental space to commemorate Mandume, urbanised Owambo were drawing on 'tradition' to mobilise some form of self-constituting unity, which they could present not only to the colonial authorities, but also to other emerging ethnic identities in Windhoek such as 'the Herero'.[70]

In addition to that, it was probably also an indication of intention, a political gesture and also a gesture of defiance. One could say that the monument was being used as a tool as it stoked anti-colonial sentiments. Another reason may have been the spatial separation of local people and colonisers, a physical manifestation of the need to prevent the mixing of these peoples. Lastly, as said before, the fact that the monument was ostensibly erected for the fallen South African troops and not for King Mandume ya Ndemufayo was also a major factor.

It is also important to mention the officials who were responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the monument after its erection and unveiling. After the unveiling in 1919 there is no reference to any official commemoration held at the site besides the Mandume Committee commemoration in 1937. It is interesting that the South African authorities hold no commemorations on the site. They must have had reasons for not wanting to draw attention to it. Archival sources indicate that the Railway Department was made liable for the maintenance and upkeep of the site.[71] Furthermore, a meeting of the remaining members of the Owamboland Memorial Fund decided to hand over the remaining balance of £10.19.9d to the Director of Railways to be utilised for the upkeep of the memorial. The chairman Mr R. C. Hooper was authorised to sign the necessary cheque.[72] It is interesting to note here that the office responsible for railways, now called TransNamib, is still responsible for the maintenance of the monument.

The posting of a guard at the monument is also of interest. Apparently the colonial government had a guard by the monument at all times.[73] It is widely believed that

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[68] See Giorgio Miescher, "Facing barbarians: A narrative of spatial segregation in colonial Namibia", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 38 (4), 2012: 769-786.

[69] Silvester et al., "Introduction": 11.

[70] Ibid.

[71] NAN, ADM, 79, 1915-1920, 1917-1918, file number 1788/4, vol 1. Letter dated 21 July 1923.

[72] NAN, ADM, 79, 1915-1920, 1917-1918, file number 1788/4, vol 1. Letter dated 21 July 1923.

[73] Interview with Godfrey Nangonya, Windhoek, 10 January 2005.

> from the time when Mandume's head was put in that monument, there was a guard outside its gate, and he only moved when Namibia got independent. That time if you are passing by the railway station on your way to the township, you have to walk very far away from the monument. Blacks were just not allowed, you could even find out from other people who have been here that time, they will tell you the same thing. I cannot believe that there were some black people allowed near the site…or maybe it changed later because I also left the country. But I have been in Windhoek for a very long time.[74]

Jims Shintango waKarenga, a former contract labourer from Kavango who worked as a guard at the Owambo Campaign Memorial site in Windhoek in the early 1960s provides an account which corroborates Nangonya's narrative:

> After the 1964 strike by spoorweg (railway) workers in Windhoek, I was lucky not to be repatriated but was posted to work at a post office near the train station. The day after I arrived there for work, an Owambo worker who used to guard the 'graveyard' of Mandume was beaten up the previous night by the criminals. Mandume's 'graveyard' was at the train station, right where the palm trees are planted. Mandume's head was buried there and every time when the whites wished to see the site for Mandume's head they visited the place. So, after an Owambo worker was beaten by criminals, I replaced him and began to guard the grave. So, I had to guard Mandume. I was given the uniform and the handcuffs. My duty was to ensure that nobody littered around the place. There was a green lawn for the whites and even blacks to sit and relax. It was situated near a police station. The train station was not far from the police station. My task was to sit quietly in Mandume's grave yard and then to blow the whistle if there was any sign of danger, then the police would run and come to ask if anything dangerous happened.[75]

Shintango's claims that guards like himself were posted to guard the site, show the colonial administration's interest in controlling the site. Furthermore, the beating up of guards by 'criminals' and the threats to guards from the Ovambo workers who passed the site can be read as a sign of a dispute over the control of access to the monument space between the Owambo workers and the colonial administration.

It is thus surprising that there was a need to have someone looking after the monument at every hour. Was there fear that the Owambo people would come and destroy it? We doubt that Owambo would have destroyed something that they considered Mandume's as Owambo had felt an affiliation with it from the start. This clearly shows that even though people were not allowed onto the site, they still believed that the monument honoured Mandume. Shintango's account attests to how contract labourers' viewed the memorial site as a 'grave yard of Mandume' rather than as simply a memorial site. The fact that people passed and saw the monument every day fuelled the belief. There was no need to see the actual monument up close to believe that it was for Mandume. It seems that even without any public memorialization – these beliefs have endured and perhaps grown even stronger.

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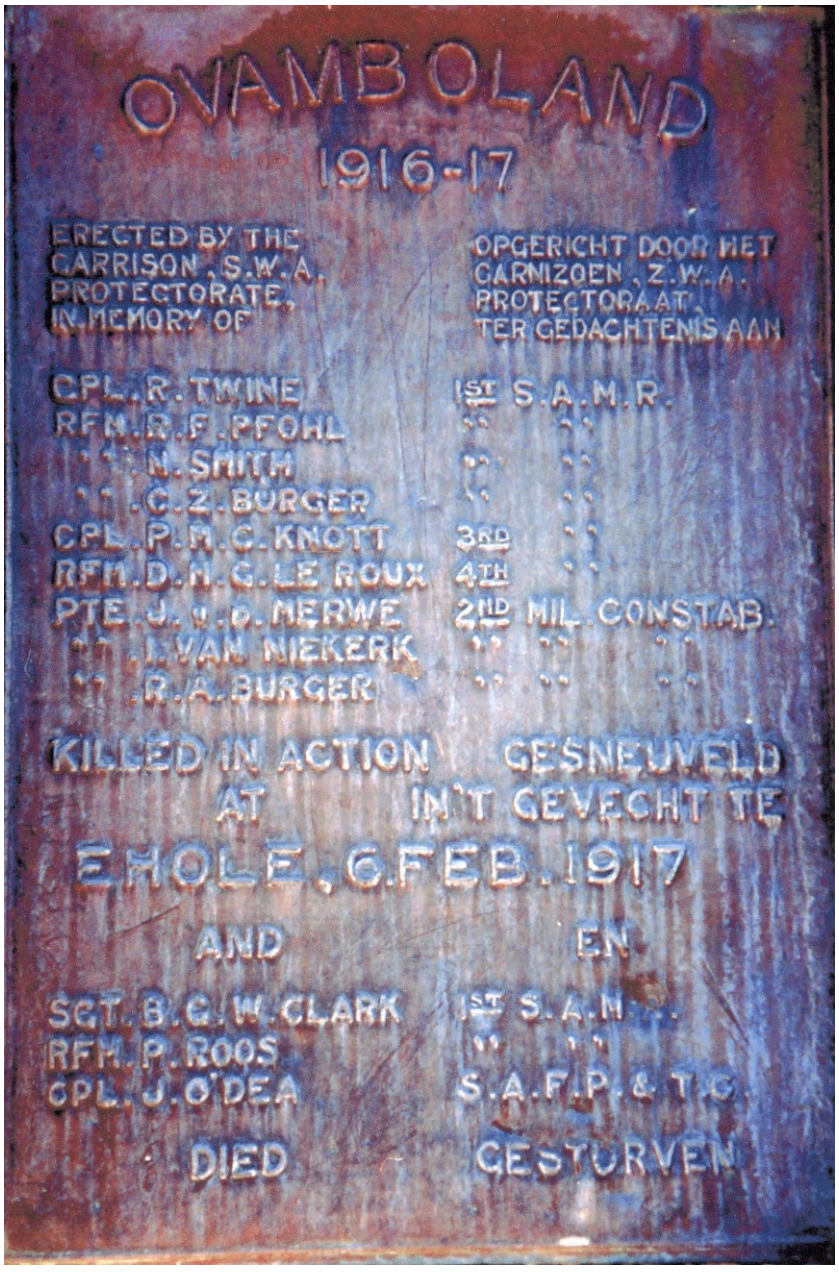
[74] Interview with Godfrey Nangonya, Windhoek, 10 January 2005.

[75] Interview with Jims Shintango waKarenga, Korokoko village, March 2009.

Figure 6: Ovambo Campaign Memorial plaque



Source: photo taken by N. Shiweda 2005

In the years after erection, there was no fence around the monument; but it was surrounded by an attractive garden with palm trees and beautiful lawns. Now, there is a fence and a locked gate. But this is a relatively recent development. In 2000, concerned students from University of Namibia UNAM (history and visual history students) approached the City of Windhoek municipality with their concerns about the state of the memorial site. With its beautiful lawns and shade provided by the palms trees, the site was being used as a recreational area. People were eating and drinking there, littering it with beer bottles and rubbish. This was seen as disrespectful towards those honoured there. In response, the municipality constructed a fence topped with an electric wire around it and locked the gate. Although this was done in good faith, it is now proving to be very difficult to get access to the site. We recently found out that the space is still used for recreation and is making money for the TransNamib, and not the City of Windhoek/Municipality as previously believed.[76] For use of the site the TransNamib Property Office charges N$1650 per day. It could well be that the inaccessibility during the colonial period helped to maintain the belief in the 'Mandume memorial' in Windhoek. However, despite the limitations on access in the past and in the present, the local people seem to interact with the site. They see it from afar when they are passing and they still view it as Mandume's. As indicated earlier, the fact that the site has since been enclosed fuels the belief in it as a monument to Mandume because nobody sees the plaque with the names of those to whom the monument is 'really' dedicated (Figure 6).

Conclusion

It is only now that people, ourselves included, are finding out that the monument was actually erected in honour not of Mandume but of other people. This is also seen in Pombili Iipinge's account when he states

> when I was growing up, I used to hear people saying there was a Mandume grave here in Windhoek, but when I came I found out that memorial is not commemorating Mandume at all, it was commemorating the soldiers who died fighting him.[77]

It is widely believed that after Mandume's death, his head was separated from his body, taken to Windhoek, and buried under a monument. It is surprising that this belief still persists because there is no mention of Mandume or the Kwanyama troops who died with him at the monument. We conclude that the inaccessibility of the monument helped in its appropriation. Therefore, we believe the formation of the Mandume Memorial Committee and associations was probably way of establishing stability and identity for those concerned at the time when their chief had died and the colonizers were in charge. They wanted to reclaim their position in the city by identifying with Mandume

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[76] Shiweda, *Mandume* .

[77] Interview with Pombili Iipinge, Windhoek, 24 February 2005. He is the acting site manager and curator at the Heroes Acre, Namibia.

who was anti-colonial. Association with Mandume gave them courage, in other words it inspired them to continue the fight against colonialism. People chose to represent him as a brave, defiant leader irrespective of his shortcomings. The stories of Mandume's resistance and bravery are thus of value to the people as Paul R. Thompson argues, "[o]ther stories may be of value for their incidental details, or for their symbolic meaning, rather than for the narrative itself".[78]

This could be seen as symbolic in the sense that it was an anti-colonial tool directed at the colonial British South Africans and it was also a means of making the brutalities of the colonial system visible and unforgettable. Luise White in analysing stories of vampires, fire stations and injections, claims that these stories "allow historians a vision of colonial worlds replete with all the messy categories and meandering epistemologies many Africans used to describe the extractions and invasions with which they lived".[79] This serves to explain that although these stories cannot be substantiated and contain inconsistencies; one should probably look at them closely and not just disregard them, because they report the colonial aggression and ascribe potent and intimate meanings to them.[80] As indicated earlier, we believe this is the case for the Mandume belief, as it is probably a reaction to the colonial officials' brutality (it was believed) in severing Mandume's head.

Thus, while memorials such as the Owambo Memorial Campaign might not be considered central structures in the organization of society, we must not underestimate the role they play in creating a space in the city's symbolic landscape with a new layer of postcolonial narratives to overwrite the inscribed colonial identities, memories and meanings. The Owambo Campaign Memorial is an important site for understanding the change process in the meaning attached to monuments dedicated to colonial heroes. Today, we believe, the site is not regarded as valuable as other colonial memorial sites, judging by the recreational activities taking place there. While it may have been erected to honour individual British South African troops, the space has been appropriated to commemorate the king that fought them and its meaning is thus not static.

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[78] Paul Richard Thompson, *The Voice of the Past. Oral History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press 1978: 107.

[79] White, *Speaking with Vampires* : 5.

[80] Ibid.

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