

## PREFACE

In South Africa, commemoration of both the Wars of Resistance and the liberation struggles by both whites and blacks have inspired singular energy and purposefulness. South Africans of either the previous white government or of the current black-led government, have struggled over how to memorialise these convulsive experiences. Since then, remembrance of these struggles has produced a vast set of monuments, speeches, poems, re-enactments, photographs, memorial lectures, motion pictures, and other works of art, to mention a few. Through commemorative activities, South Africans have created a kind of public art that addresses issues of nationhood, race relations, gender roles, and cultural continuities in time of upheavals.

Both white and black South Africans have used commemoration to tell stories of the Wars of Resistance and the liberation struggles of their diverse histories. Often these stories have clashed, combined, and changed. Such stories speak of the Wars of Resistance and the liberation struggles; however, they also reveal something of the period and place in which they are told. The commemoration of the Wars of Resistance in Limpopo province provides just one example of the commemoration that calls for examination of the past in the present. Indeed, to examine the public art, for example, statues that commemorate the warrior traditional leaders who fought the “Wars of Resistance against Colonialism and Imperialism” in Limpopo province, is not only to understand a single historical event or to explore just the construction of collective memories in Limpopo province; it is also to recognise issues that continue to play a dynamic role in the South African society to this day. Understanding how the stories of the Wars of Resistance and of the liberation struggles are told and retold, often with different emphases and different goals, sheds light on the issues and ideas that have affected South African society and intergroup relations over time.

This study is centred on commemorative public art, particularly statues to illuminate the construction of collective memories in Limpopo province and its subjectivity as a cultural historical process. This is also a collection of primary texts sometimes in their author’s language of origin (verbatim, to maintain authenticity), however, translated to English in the next paragraph to allow for readers of a different language including students and tour guides, to understand these texts and narratives. A brief introduction outlines the phases of commemoration in Limpopo, while describing the most influential forms of shared memory.

Following the introduction, five chapters—focused on commemorating warrior traditional

## The Public Art of Commemorating the Wars of Resistance: A Brief Limpopo Chapter

leaders through public art; “warrior” leaders and the Wars of Resistance; sculpting the warrior traditional leaders; shared memories of the Wars of Resistance in Limpopo province; and unveiling and dedicating the monuments—use rich visual and textual sources to illuminate relations among social groups and contests over values. The illustrations should be seen by students as important documents that enable them to consider works of art as historical evidence. Each image is discussed at length within the narrative, and all captions contain a thought-provoking question to assist students analyse the artwork. In a similar manner, the headnotes to the textual sources provide specific background material for each document and suggest starting points for interpretation. The last chapter shares the author’s final thoughts, recommendations, and conclusions.

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