Chapter Five

'Shared Memories' of the Wars of Resistance in Limpopo Province

"To remind ourselves that we are a united nation." Lyn Spillman, *Nation and Commemoration*

5.1   Introduction

Collective memories are about shared experiences. In political philosophy shared values are often seen as a product of social unity. This chapter will demonstrate that the Warrior Traditional Leaders' Monuments are not only commemorative, but more than anything, they represent an attempt at fostering the unity of the community of Limpopo as a province. The chapter will briefly explore the formation of Limpopo as a province in 1994 and the challenges inherent in that processes that seemed to threaten the very fabric of unity in the province. The chapter will also reflect on the selective representation of prominent traditional leaders and ethnic groupings in the province. Limpopo's conception as a united province made a profound impact on the life of diverse ethnic groupings and thought.

Chapter Three has illustrated that indeed, all the traditional leaders selected for honour have had encounters one way or the other with white governments, be they ZAR, British, or Portuguese. Mokopane suffered at the hands of the early Boer settlers in the siege of 1854; Sekhukhune fought and survived the onslaught of the ZAR in 1876, however, suffered defeat at the hands of the British three years later in 1879; Malebogo fought bravely, however, surrendered to the ZAR forces in the face of defeat in 1894; Makgoba fought the ZAR to the end when he was overpowered and beheaded by Swazi mercenaries who presented his head as evidence to Commandant General Joubert in 1895; Ngungunhane was captured by the Portuguese and exiled to Lisbon in 1895; Makhado died in 1895 after some protracted negotiations with the ZAR and the Venda were eventually overwhelmed in 1898.

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The subjugation of the African chiefdoms was not a coincidence, but rather planned and organised processes which were more systematic and overt. As an example, Bergh demonstrates that after the defeat of the BaHananwa of Malebogo in July/August 1894, Commandant General Piet Joubert's attention turned to the rebellious communities in the Lowveld areas. These communities comprised of the chiefdoms of Modjadji, Mmamatlhola, Moshuti, Tsolobolo, Mogoboya, Maupa, Makgoba, and Maphitha and their followers. Like the BaHananwa, these communities were also unhappy with ZAR government systems, particularly payment of taxes and the beaconing of reserves for them (Bergh 1999: 161; Dicke 1933b: 63; Grimsehl 1955; Kruger 1955; South African Archives 1995; Tempelhoff 1997: 20-22; Tempelhoff and Nemudzivadi 1999: 110). Tempelhoff and Nemudzivadi (1999: 110) even compared the campaigns against these communities in the northern frontier as similar to the colonial wars fought by the British elsewhere in southern Africa during the nineteenth century. Thus, it may be safely postulated that the objective was to create republican authority over the indigenous peoples within the borders of the ZAR state.

It is well documented that for a long time the Balobedu of Rain Queen Modjadji would not pay taxes as was expected of them. Subsequently, when the Location Commission began its work in around 1888, it started in the Houtbosberg and Modjadji areas. The Commission already anticipated problems with Queen Modjadi when it recommended in February 1888 that her reserve not be beaconed in the mountainous parts (Grimsehl 1955). Makgoba was to follow next in October 1888.

Johnson noted that in the Boer Republics, the main source of wealth was land. He believes that such was what the Boers were for—the Boers moved into the interior to find and occupy land. 'For a white, acquiring land in the Transvaal was simplicity itself: he just had to find a piece of vacant land and register his claim.' The claiming of territories by whites brought about difficult questions not only about land but also about taxation and labour dues, both of which African leaders flatly refused to provide for they did not recognise white sovereignty over their lands (Johnson 2004: 73-74,83).

Photograph 21: Rain Queen Modjadji of the BaLobedu (Setumu 2005c)

Indeed, one can claim that the Boers felt that by defeating Mzilikazi and occupying the land, they had won the privilege to demand tribute from the local communities in the form of labour and other taxes. A tribute is wealth, often in kind, that one party gives another as a sign of respect or, as was often the case in historical contexts, of submission or allegiance. Historically, states exacted tribute from the rulers of land which the state conquered or otherwise threatened to conquer. Before subjugation, African traditional leaders in the Transvaal resisted the exaction of tribute by white governments. They (warrior traditional leaders) did not recognise the sovereignty of the white governments over their own subjects. Neither did they recognise their political submission or allegiance to the white governments. The demand for tribute by white governments was therefore not acceptable to the African leaders. Hence, there is no doubt that this would have contributed to the causes of conflict between these cultural groups.

Many of the available historical accounts on the wars between white governments and African chiefdoms in the Transvaal have cited these as the real causes of the problems in support of the processes of subjugation of the Africans. Bergh (1999) observed that after the whites settled north of the Vaal River, there were often skirmishes and quarrels with the African communities residing in the area.

> Verskeie faktore was hiervoor verantwoordelik, onder meer botsende grondaansprake, die blanke boer se behoefte aan arbeid en sy pogings om dit te bekom – onder meer die inboekstelsel waardeur swart arbeid deur Boere op 'n gedwonge basis verkry is, die heffing van belasting op swart gemeenskappe en probleme met die invordering daarvan, die verkryging van gewere en ammunisie deur swart gemeenskappe en die blankes se pogings om dit te verhoed. Veediefstalle oor en weer en die stryd oor die algemeen om oppergesag en die behoud van onafhanklikheid.

> [Various factors were responsible, among others differences in land claims, the white farmer's demand for labour and his attempt to access it –   amongst others the induction system by which black labour was obtained in a coercive way, the imposition of tax on black communities and problems obtaining such, the acquisition of guns and ammunition by black communities and white attempts to prohibit that, consistent livestock thefts and the struggle in general for power and the maintenance of independence.] (Bergh 1999: 153)

Bergh simply divided the territory north of the Vaal River into four districts/parts, namely western, central, eastern, and northern districts to deal with the narrative in a more convenient manner. This also confirms that indeed, the objective was the same for all the African chiefdoms resident north of the Vaal River. This is also confirmed by Maylam who concluded that 'the last of the traditional chiefdoms of South Africa was conquered just a year before the white people fell out among themselves' (Maylam 1986: 13). The conquest of the Venda marked the end of the process of colonial subjugation in South Africa.

The approach adopted by Bergh of dividing the Transvaal into districts, in as much as it applied then, it is still applicable to the Limpopo province today. It also brings another dimension to how one should investigate the interpretation of the rationale of launching the "Wars of Resistance against Colonialism and Imperialism" commemoration project.
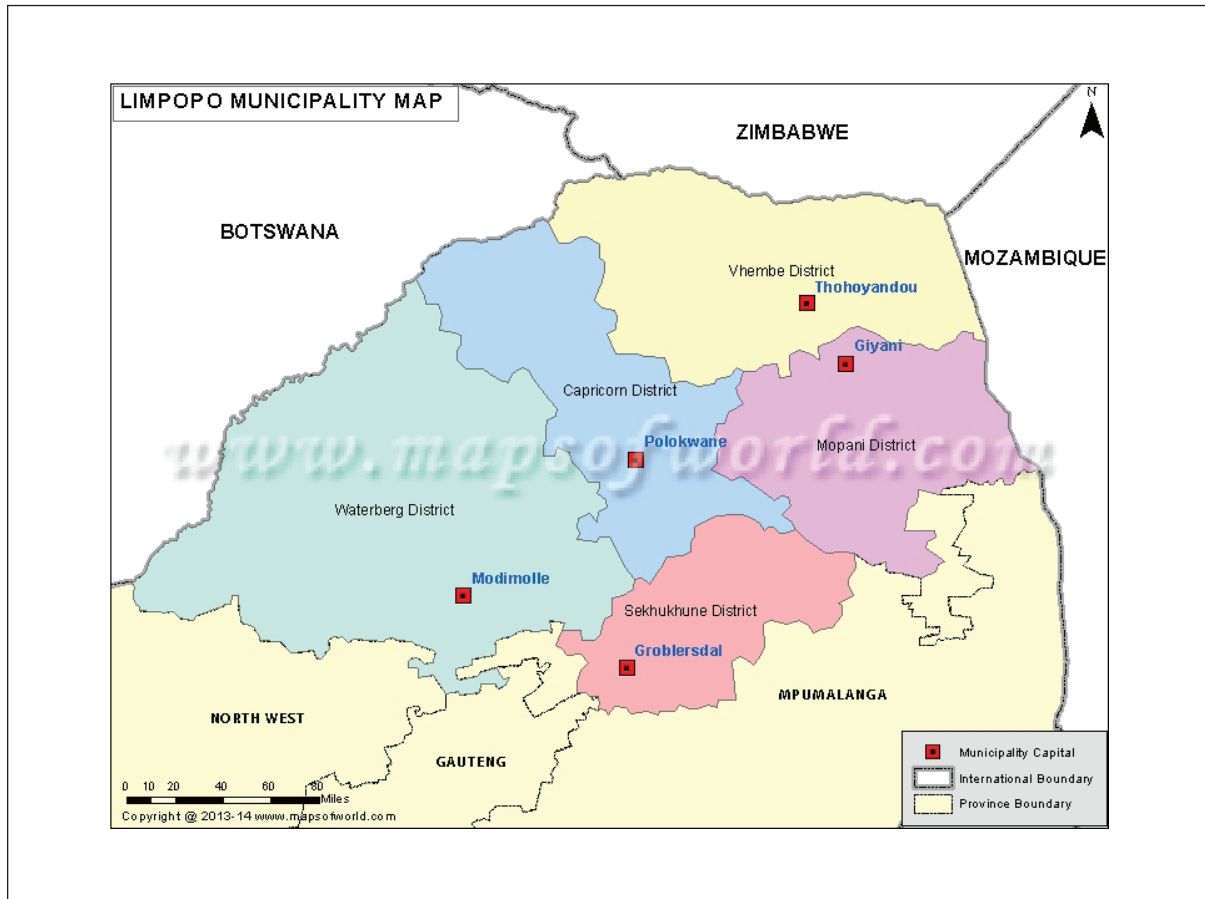
Map 1: Limpopo province showing all the district Municipalities (Maps of World.com n.d.)

Limpopo province comprises five district Municipalities. The selection of the warrior traditional leaders was also strategic along these lines. Each district is represented by at least one traditional leader. Sekhukhune's country is in the Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality; Malebogo in the Capricorn District; Ngungunhane and Makgoba both in the Mopani District; Makhado in the Vhembe District; and Mokopane in the Waterberg District Municipalities. It is thus plausible to constitute that the selection of at least one traditional leader from each district would ensure that no municipal district felt left out.

The location of the monuments as demonstrated above confirms the earlier assertion that the placing of monuments in Limpopo province is not only a social public action, but also a confirmation of space as a territory of groups. Limpopo's monuments to the traditional leaders are visible markings of such collectively stressed territory, in line with the theory of the imagination of nationalistic ideology, that a territory specifically belongs to a certain ethnic group: the term "public space" relates to questions of affiliation and "othering". By all indications, these are political representations and staging in the area that belongs traditionally to the repertoire of (re) presentations of political power. Monuments, like road and place names, as well as the "political" or "heroes" squares are among the most important vehicles of physical memory, since they are in principle, the most durable media of identity-political marking of public areas. The main function of these markings is the manifestation and/or production of wanted forms of collective memory by material inscriptions into public space, the manufacturing of "collective identity" and the marking of collectively claimed territory (J. Duncan and N. Duncan 1988: 118).

Further, the analysis above also corroborates another earlier contention that a hegemonic representation of history, shared by all groups within the Limpopo province, was aimed to facilitate a positive correlation between at least provincial, if not national identity and subgroup identities. Hegemonic representations exhibit properties of what Cinnirella (1996: 262) has termed 'positive networking'. That is, when all the subgroups within the province share the same representation of history, it is likely because the history offers an adequate position for each of them. The representation should contain narratives that allow for conflict resolution and subgroup reconciliation, so that the activation of provincial identity may simultaneously activate ethnic identity, and vice versa (Liu and Hilton 2005). The above narrative is indeed consistent with the notion that hegemonic representations of history are associated with positive correlations between ethnic and provincial/national identity. In this specific case, the overall representation appears to be a narrative about the emergence of a province as part of the South African nation from the forces of colonisation. This representation appears to be capable of smoothing over ethnic and provincial differences. Social representations, therefore, appear to be relevant to defining the content of what makes the Limpopo province positively distinct compared to other provinces.

It should, therefore, not be far-fetched to claim that experiences suffered and shared by the black African chiefdoms were collective to the extent that the provincial leaders of the government in Limpopo wanted to unite them around the theme, as demonstrated above that all the districts of the Limpopo province felt the brunt of defeat inflicted by white opponents.

Another philosophical view in the absence of empirical evidence is that the Limpopo provincial government would have gone ahead to present, for instance, Makgoba alone in the Mopani district, since the nature of the struggle and the manner of his death makes a compelling case for such an honour. Had it not been for the existence of Tsonga/Shangaan groups in the district, the above would have remained the case. However, recognising the latter groups and noting that they would not be represented by any traditional leader in the province, the government was then forced to consider using Ngungunhane, even though there was already a representation of the Mopani district and amid uncertainty about him ever been involved in the history of that specific area. It constituted the endeavour to appease the Tsonga/Shangaan groups.

There is perhaps credit to the argument that Modjadji was left out simply because her country is part of the same Mopani District which is already overrepresented with the honour of both Makgoba and Ngungunhane.

Similarly, several historical accounts converged on the fact that the two Ndebele chiefs, Mokopane and Mankopane, had colluded in the killing of twenty-eight white farmers with several of these accounts actually sharing the number of the fatalities equally between the two Ndebele allies (Acutt 1938: 47; De Kock 1972: 478; De Waal 1953: 72; Esterhuysen 2006: 9; Gerdener 1952: 37-40; Law 1955: 1079-1080; Maguire 2007: 39; Theal 1984: 415-420). It is further recorded that Mankopane continued to put the ZAR through torrid times until he was finally defeated *c*.1867. Despite of this clear evidence, the provincial government of Limpopo chose to ignore these facts and honoured Mokopane alone. The point is simple, Mokopane is Ndebele and therefore, represents the Ndebele groupings, hence there was no need to honour Mankopane as well. Moreover, both leaders resided in the Waterberg district.

Indeed, representation according to district and ethnic group seems to have been a determining factor. Makhado who represents the Venda and the Vhembe district seems to have been the only convenient leader to represent the group and district for the period under discussion. The government of the Limpopo province was aware that Makhado had been engaged in protracted negotiations with the ZAR. Chances are that the Limpopo government was also aware that Makhado did not fight in combat against the whites. This explains the justification through war and as such, a fabrication in Premier Sello Moloto's speech at the unveiling of Makhado statue in 2005. Sello Moloto (2005) said:

> By 1867, the Boers had assembled a formidable force under the command of Paul Kruger. A fierce war ensued in which the Boers eventually retreated, abandoning

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Schoemansdal. The Boers retreated to Marabastad in the vicinity of the present-day Polokwane. The humiliating retreat of the Boers in 1867 became a significant victory which was to later inspire other wars of resistance in southern Africa.

While it is true that Paul Kruger mobilised approximately 500 burghers to the area, no records indicate that there was ever a war, let alone a fierce one. In defence of what he called the 'rollback of Boer influence', Braun (2008: 304) stated that it was largely due to Venda pressure that Schoemansdal was evacuated and destroyed in 1867-1868. The pressure came from both Venda leaders Makhado and Madzie who had allied in defending the region (Braun 2008: 304; Tempelhoff 1997: 67). Tempelhoff (1997) considers the deterioration of the white community's relationship with the Venda under Makhado during the 1860s as the biggest setback for white settlement during the era of exploitation (Tempelhoff and Nemudzivadi 1999: 113). The pronouncement by Premier Sello Moloto may be seen as a typical example of fabricating a war in the absence of an actual war, since a war is necessary in the context of the speech and the commemoration, to justify the honour bestowed on the Venda leader with a statue in the Vhembe district. From the perspective of collective remembering as typically providing an essential basis for the creation and maintenance of groups, Moloto's line of reasoning reaffirms the notion that modern states often pursue this agenda by providing its citizens with official accounts of the past.

5.2   Constituting collective memories and shared experiences

The adoption of the theme "Wars of Resistance against Colonialism and Imperialism" was a master stroke—a well thought out, meticulously calculated idea crucial to the concept of a cohesive society. The creation of a collective memory in Limpopo province is very important to the cohesion of the province. Renan (as cited by Keykhah 2003: 31) noted that a nation's identity and stability are centred on what people remember and what they forget, and some of the most powerful memories come from times of war when nations are fighting for their constructed identities. The choice of the theme satisfied this. Maurice Halbwachs' (1980: 34) account on collective memory gives a glimpse into what is necessary for the creation of such a memory and how it is affected by the society that creates it. Every social group holds a certain sway over its members and for all intents and purposes, a nation is just a large social group, within which there are many subdivisions.

As a collective group, it must retain cohesion for it to be successful, and the surest way to keep such cohesiveness, is for members of the group to have shared memories to be able to connect with one another (Halbwachs 1980: 34). It is plausible, therefore, to argue against the background of the above discussions that it was important for the provincial government of Limpopo to forge a collective memory of some sort for the cohesion of their province.

The previous chapter referred to the plurality and subdivisions of Limpopo province that required some qualification (see Chapter 4 pp. 78-79) (Provide Project 2005: 2). Thus, in line with Halbwachs's (1980) theories, for such collection of and subdivided ethnicities to be cohesive, an element of shared memories should be sustained, and that is found only in the past.

Halbwachs (as cited by Keykhah 2003) further asks that if a present society emphasises the past, would that not detach the members of that social group rather than bring them together? He goes on to answer the question when he points out that the present society itself, especially modern society, is heavily involved in the way that we as individuals view the past. Society may even amplify certain memories, attributing to them more importance than was given to them in their own time (Keykhah 2003: 34).

Corroborating Halbwachs' assertions of society's influence on collective memory, Paul Connerton (1989: 1-2) questioned how group memory can be conveyed or sustained, thereafter, considered social memory as a dimension of political power. Connerton continued to indicate that our experience of the present depends on the knowledge of the past. Present experiences are connected to the past events in such a way as to place our present into a certain context, depending on how we remember the past. However, this sort of contextualisation does not necessarily function in one direction. Past events do also influence or even distort our views of the present. It is also the case that present factors distort our views of the past (Connerton 1989: 1-2; Keykhah 2003: 34).

Connerton (1989) is of the opinion that certain images of the past are used to legitimise the present social order. To participate in any social order, presupposes a shared memory. The most powerful of these images are related to war. In efforts to create a community identity, war is quite often a very defining event. In war, a community can define enemies and allies, and it can define its role within the conflict. War also provides the opportunity for a community to come together as a cohesive community under the umbrella of political nationalism. The memory of war and a particular people's role in it, can keep the thread of unity running through the community. The creation of a community's memory is as much a political process as a social one. Connerton maintains, the 'ruling group will use its knowledge of the past in a direct and active way' (1989:

1-2). That is, the community's memory can be manipulated to bring out certain events that can legitimise the way the current ruling group is governing the community (Connerton 1989: 1-2; Keykhah 2003: 35). The question asked by Keykhah then is, how the ruling group can advocate certain memories and events without seeming too heavy handed? The goal is, without a doubt, to create some sort of propaganda, but also make it elegant and sophisticated enough so that it can be more easily accepted and treasured (Keykhah 2003: 35-36).

Connerton (1989: 43) further sustained the argument that, the most successful way to promote such a memory is through commemorative monuments and ceremonies, not only to remind people of certain events and personalities, but also to re-present them and to preserve a certain viewpoint of the situation. A government will want to show and celebrate its national or provincial heroism and to stimulate certain emotive responses that will promote provincial feelings (Keykhah 2003: 36). By creating commemorative rituals and memorials, the provincial government creates 'emotionally and symbolically charged signs of club membership...' (Hobsbawm 1983: 11)— what Hobsbawm terms invented traditions. Something Simon Harrison (1995: 258) refers to as 'innovation contests' involves the invention or competitive creation of traditions and symbolic forms by one societal group to establish and (symbolically) represent a separate identity from

other groups. On the other hand, Marschall (2009: 136), believed that the concept often concerns ethnic minority groups seeking to assert themselves in the face of the dominant power, it can easily be applied in present-day South Africa, where the previously marginalised black African majority is striving to symbolically represent itself through, for example, monuments in competition with the existing bulk of representations inherited from the previous order (Harrison 1995: 255-272).

The construction of a collective memory through such invented traditions, is thus crucial to the development of a cohesive Limpopo community. Without having a past (or creating a past) to legitimise certain views or actions, the leaders of the province would have had a difficult time convincing their people to follow them. This was already confirmed in 2004. However, at the time, simply referring to the public service administration of the new province, MEC for Finance and Economic Development, Mr Thaba Mufamadi in his budget speech delivered at the Provincial Legislature in Lebowakgomo on 26 February 2004, summed up the realities of the challenge:

> Limpopo inherited four administrations [referring to former homelands of Lebowa and Gazankulu, former Republic of Venda and the former Transvaal provincial administration]. Some of the provinces that inherited no such administrations envied us. We, at the time thought we inherited a working civil service while other provinces

had to build theirs from scratch. Later we discovered that the civil service inherited were founded on sand – quick sand at that – and had to be demolished. It was nothing but a mirage. We had to demolish it and start building fast in order to catch up with those that started by building their public service (Mufamadi 2004).

As far back as 1996, commentators could foresee problems such as these. Commenting in an article on the relocation of civil service from the parliamentary offices of the former Republic of Venda, Mary Braid of *The Independent* newspaper said:

As regional government goes, the new Northern province (as Limpopo was called then)—encompassing Venda and the formerly quasi-autonomous homelands of Gazankulu and the heart-breaking poor Lebowa—faces one of the hardest tasks... (Braid 1996)

To create a cohesive community out of the situation described above, Hobsbawm (1983: 11) argues that a nation have a need to create pasts for themselves, and in order to do that, they must invent traditions and practices that are of a ritual and symbolic nature in order to instil 'certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which normally implies continuity with the past'.

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The act of commemoration is important for a society, especially since war calls for sacrifice in the interests of the nation. The commemoration of such sacrifices is meant to encourage future sacrifices to be made when the nation's leaders feel it is necessary for the nation's survival. This was explicit in Limpopo Premier Sello Moloto's speech:

They [the warrior traditional leaders] fought for our freedom even before the formation of political parties. They were in the forefront fighting to free us from those who descended on the African shores to dispossess us of our land. They too must be honoured for what they were, heroes and heroines of the liberation struggle. In honouring them we will be reaffirming our being, our own identity as Africans, confirming the significance of traditional leadership institution and, more importantly, preserving our own heritage (Moloto 2004).

Barthel (1996: 80) calls commemoration 'an unwritten pact between the dead, the living, and the unborn', enacted through social rituals. The remembrance of such events by future generations is

therefore crucial to the stability of the identity of the community.

Keykhah notes that a nation's identity depends on its memory and that a nation's memory depends on its identity. The author further observes that memory and identity are subjective and selective, and both are tied to the politics of the nation. This notion is supported by John R. Gillis that the relationship between memory and identity is historical, and that such a relationship can be traced through acts and works of commemoration, which are inevitably tied to group or collective memory (Gillis, as cited by Keykhah 2003: 37).

Furthermore, Keykhah (2003) posits that in the quest to forge an identity and create a unique heritage that would be in the interest of the community, there is oftentimes a drive towards the embellishment of events. In constructing a view of the past that legitimises the current and/or future order of things, there is a need to create legends. Both history and legend are socially constructed representations of the past through narrative (Zerubavel n.d.). When a nation creates an official memory of war or conflict, the leaders are in the business of nationalising the war. The creation of these commemorative memorials even presses the dead traditional leaders back into the service of the people by becoming symbols in this case of the "Wars of Resistance against Colonialism and Imperialism". They have become representations of Limpopo province's involvement and commitment to the cause or fight. The effort of the provincial leaders to create such ubiquitous rituals and symbols works towards creating a common purpose and identity for the people of Limpopo (Piehler 1994).

Affecting the collective memory of a nation is indeed a type of psychological warfare, and as Wallace Carroll (1948: 72) states, the effects of psychological warfare extend far beyond the actual battlefield. Such a war of impressions, ideas, and emotions goes on long after victory has been achieved on the battlefield itself (Keykhah 2003: 27). In Keykhah's view, such is representation of a lasting form of propaganda that can be seen in the public memorials that have been created to remember those who fought and died for a certain cause. Memorials can create a national identity based on the grief of families who shared in the similar experience of losing loved ones to a war. Instead of being individual losses, the war dead become the collective national family's loss. Just as defending a nation became equated with defending one's family, home, and way of life, war memorials are also a way of nationalising very personal forms of grief (Clark 1997: 108). As part of a nation's identity is built around a collective expression of grief; it is as if the nation, and in this case the Limpopo province itself, has become personified as the one family from which all the commemorated traditional leaders extended (Castriota 1986: 8). Propaganda images must then be created that induce a sense of patriotism among the populace as provincial leaders try to

maintain the provincial fervour of unity stirred during the war, to create a common identity and an official memory of that conflict, just as posters had done for Europeans and Americans during World War I and II (Piehler 1994: 179).

Physical monuments are very helpful in creating such an image. They are visible, tangible, and they give a form to a nation's role in the specific conflict. Instead of having the monument (theme) dedicated to one man, these monuments have a very democratic feel (Sherman 1994: 187). They must instil in people a sense of belonging to a whole, collective suffering. These monuments prevent certain memories (wars of resistance) from fading into the past, while also encouraging others to disappear. Palonen (2008) has illustrated that place names and statues are some of the ways through which perpetuation of remembrance and forgetting of the unwanted past is done. These place names and statues undergo similar processes as political discourses that are created and regimented through practices of inclusion and exclusion and inscribed through key elements (Palonen 2008). There are a few examples of such exclusions in the post-apartheid commemorative landscape. One such example is the renaming of places and other geographical features. Through the act of renaming, for instance the town of Louis Trichardt and replacing political symbols, for example, removing Louis Trichardt's statue and instead erecting that of Makhado, an attempt was made to make Louis Trichardt's contribution in that region disappear, as simple as that while elevating the Makhado legacy on the memory scale (Thotse 2010: 174; Timothy 2007: 87-107). Scale in commemoration as observed in recent works by geographers (Burk 2006: 41-48; Johnson 2002: 293-298; Mitchell 2003: 442-459) represents an intrinsically important facet of memorialising the past and bringing public attention to the historical contributions of figures from the past. The geographic scale on which memory is produced, or commemoration is carried out, determines in large measure which groups will be touched by the memorial meanings being communicated. By expanding the scale of memory, or by increasing the geographic extent of commemoration, social actors and groups may attempt to make images of the past accessible to a larger public. On the other hand, by having his name removed from the map, Louis Trichardt's retrievability and accessibility is limited (Thotse 2010: 181).

Marschall (2009: 136) stated that the fact that the memory of Verwoerd is extremely offensive to most of the population prompted the newly-elected ANC-dominated (Orange) Free State Legislature to vote for the removal of Verwoerd's statue, as well as renaming the Verwoerd building, the prominent high rise government administration building in front of which the statue was enthroned on a high plinth. Hendrik F. Verwoerd (1901-1966) was a Minister of Native Affairs and then became Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa in August 1958. More than any other

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political figure of the past, Verwoerd is widely perceived by the black African majority in South Africa as the architect and symbol of apartheid. Indeed, Marschall is correct in pointing out that some of the busts and statues that have been removed end up in storage rooms and quickly slip into oblivion. In what Simon Harrison (1995: 258) refers to as an 'expansionary contest', one group in society tries to displace the symbols of a competing group's identity with its own symbols. This may result in the disappearance of the defeated side's identity symbols, not necessarily in the sense of the physical destruction, but in the sense that they are no longer used to present the identity of the group. The aim of suppressing the rival group's identity symbols is not to leave that group without an identity, but 'to integrate or absorb the group by supplanting its symbols of identity with one's own (Harrion 1995: 255-272).

Marschall (2009: 136) further highlights as another form of exclusion, the relocation of monuments. The Durban municipality's "heritage department" organised a workshop on monuments and memorials in 2000, attended by various stakeholders within the heritage sector, including representatives of local communities and interested parties from the public. One of the measures recommended in dealing with the commemorative legacy of the past was the physical repositioning of statues and smaller, movable objects away from the highly official, prestigious places, for example, in front of the city hall to less prominent locations and 'community spaces' (Marschall 2009: 136). Marschall, however, also noted that in some cases, the relocation or alignment of monuments was not politically motivated, however, merely the pragmatic result of local town planning measures in which case it would be a mistake to assume that every such move invariably leads to a deflation of the monument's significance or symbolic authority (Marschall 2009: 136).

Marschall observed that questions of exclusion and inclusion particularly in terms of ideologically charged structures, often virulently contested identity symbols, posed unique challenges for the newly elected ANC-led GNU in South Africa. These questions occupied debate even before the official beginning of the post-apartheid era (Marschall 2009: 136,142).

The above discussion does illustrate that indeed physical monuments propagate a certain image of the history of a nation to its future citizens. Instead of having individual benefactors, the government itself becomes the patron. Provincial leaders in Limpopo hired artists to create images of the traditional leaders that will last into the future, giving the province a certain image of heroism and righteousness. '[I]f war is politics by other means, preservation is also politics continued by other means. These "means" revolve around the act of commemoration.' (Barthel 1996: 80). Such historic preservation represents the attempt to revalue and re-present the past through the

heightened public awareness of certain things and their ignorance of others. Through the creation of war memorials, the province wishes to preserve certain ideologies, creating a visual image of the past (Barthel 1996: 2,5). What better way to propagate a certain image than by creating an artistic, physical representation? Such commemorative monuments are usually attractive, and the advantage of such memorials is that they can only present one idea and one image of a collective identity that permeates through a society and through history. A common and clichéd phrase states that one picture is worth a thousand words. Such is the case for propaganda art throughout history. A picture, poster, painting, or statue appeals at the very basic level to the emotions, as does propaganda, and put together, they have been used to shape national histories and identities (Keykhah 2003: 29).

5.3   Collective inscriptions of shared experiences

The collective memories of the "Wars of Resistance against Colonialism and Imperialism" are well captured on the inscriptions for the monuments in Limpopo province. This brings a different dynamic to consider in the analysis of the commemorative war monuments: that of the relation between text and image. Two broad elements emerge that have potential meaning; both the physical form of the inscriptions, such as the font style, and the conceptual structures they express in written language. In terms of their ability to create meaning through their physical characteristics, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 231) view inscriptions as: '...a culturally and socially produced resource for meaning-making'. An inscription is a significant producer of meaning. This chapter also considers the inscription of the monuments to the warrior traditional leaders of Limpopo province to determine the meanings they carry and the collectivity of the message. Apart from the physical structure or the form of the inscriptions, the conceptual content of the written language can also be analysed to assess their contribution to the meaning of the whole monument.

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Kress and Van Leeuwen base their analysis of the conceptual structures that the written language component of a text communicates using Halliday's (1985: 331) concept of 'relational' and 'existential' processes. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) were influenced by Barthes (1977) who argued that the visual image is related to written text; that a linguistic message is a technique which pulls together the various signifiers, that is, intended meanings expressed in language in an image to anchor or extend the meaning of the image. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 231) argue

that the visual component of a text does not depend on written text for its meaning; instead, it exists as an 'independently organized and structured message'. Although Kress and Van Leeuwen deal with the relationship between the word and the image in some detail, acknowledging the defined role that can be played by each in a single text, Abousnnouga (2012: 99) views their application of Halliday's theory as limited for the purpose of the analysis of the commemorative war monument data and further argues that a blending of a critical discourse analysis-based linguistic theory with semiotic multimodal theory will allow for a greater uncovering of meaning from the commemorative war monument data.

The shared experiences of Limpopo's warrior traditional leaders are no more explicit than in the inscriptions of each monument. These monuments share the same inscription; word for word and with that, the same message. Inscriptions are written forms of communication that are intended to be read alongside the non-verbal image. They appear on all four of the warrior traditional leader's commemorative monuments. Inscriptions at these monuments were placed in positions that allow the viewer to easily read them. From an interactive viewing perspective, this positioning should impress that the artist intended that the inscriptions should be integral to the message communicated by the monument. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 231) emphasise that it is the relation between text and the image that is crucial to the meaning of the whole.

The importance of inscriptions as written text to the Warrior Traditional Leaders' Monuments is exemplified well in all the four monuments under discussion:

Photograph 22: Inscription for Kgošikgolo Sekhukhune statue at Tjate. Photo by Mahunele Thotse.

The Warrior Traditional Leaders' Monument relies on the common written inscription to define its purpose. The inscription in each case informs the viewer that:

> This monument was officially unveiled by the Hon Premier ... Sello Moloto ... in honour of ... for his leadership during the Wars of Resistance against colonialism and imperialism.[14]

14   See all four inscriptions on the monuments of Sekhukhune, Makhado, Malebogo and Ngungunhane.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) propose that as a significant signifying system, inscriptions should be considered as product of meaning separately. To fully expose the potential meaning of commemorative war monuments, Abousnnouga (2012: 336) argues that 'we need to employ a discourse analysis method suited to the analysis of the inscriptions' conceptual content (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006). Abousnnouga (2012: 337) adopted Philosopher Arthur Clutton-Brock's contention on inscriptions on war memorials:

> A good inscription 'says what it means simply and finely', and the lettering is also simple, fine, clear and permanent...good lettering performs its function well, like a good motor car.

Indeed, looking at the inscriptions of Limpopo province's Warrior Traditional Leaders' Monuments, there is no doubt about what it says, as it is written in simple and fine language; the lettering is also clear and permanent on granite stone mounted on the monument's pedestal. However, one cannot but agree with Marschall (2009: 150-151) who suspected that many aspects of South African history and its commemoration mirror examples of the United States.

The uniformity of the content on Limpopo's Warrior Traditional Leaders' Monument inscriptions, demonstrate how the monument's sponsors devoted even more attention to their inscription than to their design. Upon analysis, a set of conventions and repeated formulations emerged and are shared. It seems that the most basic purposes of the inscription were to identify its originators or sponsors and those to whom it was dedicated.
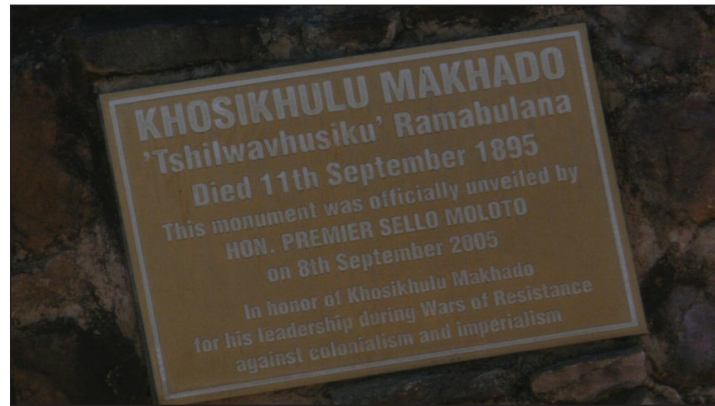
Photograph 23: Inscription for Khosikhulu Makhado statue in Louis Trichardt.
Photo by Mahunele Thotse.

Inscriptions on the Warrior Traditional Leaders' Monuments always identified the sponsors. An explicit statement of sponsorship was seemingly crucial to the idea of Limpopo's provincial monuments:

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> This monument was officially unveiled by HON. PREMIER SELLO MOLOTO on ...[15]

When circus promoter Dan Rice had his name chiselled into a monument that he presented to Erie County, Pennsylvania, in a highly publicised spectacle in November 1865, a local newspaper asked whether the obelisk was 'a memorial to the dead, or an advertisement of the living' (Brown 2004: 36). This study argues that the same question could be asked if it was necessary for the statues of warrior traditional leaders in Limpopo province to be advertising the Hon. Premier Sello Moloto, particularly considering that it was government and not an individual as patron. By virtue of his name entrenched, Sello Moloto has succeeded in having himself memorialised. He will always be linked with the "Wars of Resistance against Colonialism and Imperialism" in the province of Limpopo.

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15   See all four inscriptions on the monuments of Sekhukhune, Makhado, Malebogo, and Ngungunhane.

Another observation is that each monument honoured the traditional leader from the district, town, region, or even tribal group in which the monument was erected. Sekhukhune's monument is at Tjate where he used to reign; Malebogo's is in front of the BaHananwa Tribal Authority Offices; Makhado's among the VhaVenda in Louis Trichardt, and Ngungunhane in Giyani, supposedly among his descendants although this has been contested.

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Photograph 24: Inscription for Kgoši Malebogo statue in Blouberg. This inscription is now detached from the statue and was reportedly taken to Polokwane by government officials. Photo by Mahunele Thotse.

However, beyond the common goals of identifying sponsors and those whom the monuments honoured, the inscriptions also expressed the exact same sentiments. All the monuments quoted or shared the same adage: 'IN HONOR OF … FOR HIS LEADERSHIP DURING THE WARS OF

RESISTANCE AGAINST COLONIALISM AND IMPERIALISM'.[16] This adopted verse suggests the framework through which the Limpopo provincial government sought to comprehend the role played by these traditional leaders during the specific wars.

Abousnnouga (2012) concurs with King (Traditional Leader, A 1998) that those are the principles followed by several artists, which originated in the nineteenth century. The question that remains unanswered is, how to establish what an inscription says exactly and what it means? To answer this question, Fairclough's (2003) approach to uncovering ideological implicitness and assumptions in a text will be employed to achieve a close analysis of the ideological significance on the inscription found in the commemorative monuments of the warrior traditional leaders. Of the relationship between ideology and assumptions, Fairclough (2003: 58) says:

> Assumed meanings are of particular ideological significance—one can argue that relations of power are best served by meanings which are widely taken as given.

Subsequently, Abousnnouga (2012) asks the following question: Are monuments purely symbols of grief and commemoration of the loss of loved ones, or do they have multiple roles tied to the individual's banal participation in nationalism? Put in more specific terms: Are the Warrior Traditional Leaders' Monuments in Limpopo province purely a symbol of grief and commemoration of the loss of the loved traditional leaders and with them the land, or do they have multiple roles tied to the individual traditional leader's banal participation in nationalism? (Abousnnouga 2012: 337). Raivo (1999: 337) claimed that nationalism, the ideology of belonging to the nation, was an essential part of war remembrance, but to what extent are the "given" meanings of nationalism, warfare, and sacrifice explicit in the commemorative Warrior Traditional Leaders' Monuments of the Limpopo province? At a basic level the Warrior Traditional Leaders' Monuments inscriptions appear to fulfil the latter function, that is, an expression of commemoration of the individual traditional leader's participation in nationalism:

> … For his leadership during the Wars of Resistance against colonialism and imperialism.[17]

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16   See all four inscriptions on the monuments of Sekhukhune, Makhado, Malebogo and Ngungunhane.

17   See the inscription dedicated to Kgošikgolo Sekhukhune, Khosikhulu Makhado, Hosinkulu Ngungunhane, and Kgoši Malebogo.

This study argues that this inscription does its ideological work for nationalism through the inclusion of the words "leadership during the Wars of Resistance". Leadership represents a position held, that of traditional leadership; leader of a people; particularly, their positions as traditional leaders of their respective black African chiefdoms.

The inscription also does the ideological work of bolstering nationalism by its repetition at all four of the monuments. Similar, or in fact identical assumptions regarding "leadership during the Wars of Resistance" are seen in the inscriptions of all four monuments, since they were presumably all engaged in one and the same collective—"Wars of Resistance", all of them as traditional leaders and leaders of their polities. The choice of the same inscription for all four monuments, suggests a consentient group of people led by these four traditional leaders (and others) in the province that honours these traditional leaders in the same way. This view was confirmed by Premier Sello Moloto in his speech in 2004 at the unveiling of Kgošikgolo Sekhukhune's statue at Tjate:

> Sefako Makgatho [the second president-general of the ANC, 1917-1924] ... was following in the footsteps of the generation of warrior traditional leaders like Shaka, Bambatha, Hintsa, Makhado, Malebogo, and Ngungunhane who fiercely fought colonialists in defence of the heritage. They fought for our freedom even before the formation of political parties. They were in the forefront fighting to free us from those who descended on the African shores to dispossess [us] of our land. (Moloto 2004)

The suggestion of a consentient group of people led by these traditional leaders (and others elsewhere) in the province and in the rest of the country represents an 'Existential Assumption' in Fairclough's terms; one which implicitly refers to the community of the nation (Fairclough 2003: 58) and perhaps in this specific case of the community of the Limpopo province.

In more simple terms, the assumption is that people of Limpopo share a common history that unites them. Thus, South Africans could observe statues of Limpopo's warrior traditional leaders sharing space with other national heroes on the cultural landscape all incorporated into a story of at least provincial, if not national identity and historical progress.

The narratives on the inscriptions which were referred to above all point to key themes characteristic of a large body of work that highlights the tendency of war-related discourses to become shaped by the ideological positions of elites who participate in their distribution.

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Photograph 25: Inscription for Hosinkulu Ngungunhane statue in Giyani. Photo by Mahunele Thotse.

It is therefore argued that these monuments that have been commissioned to stand in public spaces as a memorial to the *'Warrior Traditional Leaders who fought the Wars of Resistance against Colonialism and Imperialism'* in Limpopo province are a key communicative tool that has been used to realise certain discourses of war. They may also be interpreted as an area where discourses of war are disseminated in society and offer one very useful site for understanding the processes of the legitimisation of and sacrifice to war.

5.4   Political iconography in Limpopo province

An important idea behind a war memorial is to instruct posterity. The proliferation of government constructed memorials in Limpopo province, like in many other countries, reflects the construction of political iconography. If a war memorial is indeed an affirmation of the patron's unstated intention, then the Limpopo provincial government, as a patron in this case, has commissioned the construction of the Warrior Traditional Leaders' Monuments as works of art to promote a certain image and to "instruct" future generations. Such public art is powerful since it stands for the 'powers that be' (Sennie 1992: 243). This sort of image of the past ties in heavily with war memory, since the "Wars of Resistance against Colonialism and Imperialism" represent the struggle to create or maintain both provincial and national identities. Tying with the last statement, Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper (2000: 8) identify two paradigms in the functioning of war memory. The first, is the political motivation that memories and rituals surrounding them are symbols for national identification that also binds the citizens into one collective identity. The second functional paradigm is a psychological one. Ashplant et al. (2000) in this regard, cites Hobsbawm and Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition*, in which they state that constructed versions of the past enable the establishment of social cohesion, legitimated authority and a common culture.

In his book *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson (1991: 199-200) further highlights that the living generations of a nation feel a connection to the nation's dead, which thus secures the 'nation's imagined continuity and transcendence of time'. The symbolic value and national contribution of the venerated traditional leaders are marked by the monuments, which are an arresting emblem of the modern nation. While these monuments are simply works of art, they are also emblems 'saturated with ghostly national imaginings' (Anderson 1991: 9). What is also important about those traditional leaders is that their national sacrifice becomes a tragedy of fratricide. Further, Anderson, considers fratricide to provide reassurance for the formation of modern nationalism. Thus fratricide 'turns out to be a characteristic device in the later construction of national genealogies' (Anderson 1991: 199-201).

The proliferation of monuments and other narrative references, such as place and street names to the dead traditional leaders have important implications for the Limpopo province, since the dead traditional leaders are not 'a random assemblage of forgotten, anonymous dead' (Anderson 1991: 199-201). Their death acquired a significant meaning since it is inextricably linked with the sacrifice

through which these traditional leaders are transformed into heroic figures. The significance of the ground in Limpopo province is largely attributed to their sacrifice, just as much as pointed out by Abraham Lincoln (1863) in his Gettysburg Address:

> The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it [this burial ground], far above our poor power to add or detract. (Chronis 2005: 386-406)

Keykhah (2003) contends that war commemoration is a combination of politics and psychology, which enables governments to form the opinions of citizens regarding history and their role in it. Nora (1998: 616), however, notes that the politicisation of commemoration, which has been partly responsible for the proliferation of monuments, has transformed the entire system, which has been secularised, democratised, and turned into something closer to political demonstration by the government. This has had two contradictory consequences, Nora observed further: on the one hand, control of the interpretation and meaning of commemoration has passed into the hands of private groups, political parties, trade unions, and other organisations, with concomitant potential for internal conflict and controversy over the staging of every ceremony, as each detail affects the overall symbolic signification; on the other hand, commemoration at the national level has become less a matter of militant expression of unity of a single group and more of pluralistic unity of many groups with conflicting agendas that constitute a democratic polity (Nora 1998: 616).

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   Pierre Nora deemed the commemorative phenomenon as the concentrated expression of a national history, a rare solemn moment, an invariably difficult form of collective return to the sources, a symbolic affirmation of ancestry, a choice of heritage for a form of transmission, and a bridge between the past and the future. However, this has now been atomised to the point where in Limpopo province, it has become, for each of the ethnic groups concerned, a search for the one thread in the social fabric of the present that will permit direct contact with the irrevocably dead past (Nora 1998: 616).