

# Memories, a monument and its meaning: the monument on the site of the Samora Machel plane crash

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The 1986 plane crash of former Mozambican president Samora Machel and the erection of a monument at Mbuzini have raised questions about the transformation of memory as a repository of oral tradition, its conversion into icon, and its role and symbolic meaning in post-apartheid South Africa. The memories of a number of Mbuzini residents are weighed against the agenda of the national government and questions are raised whether local expectations were met concurrently. Certain guidelines and suggestions are offered to save the Machel monument from potential memorial amnesia.

## **Herinneringe, 'n monument en die betekenis daarvan: die monument op die terrein van die Samora Machel-vliegtuigramp**

Die 1986 vliegtuigramp van die voormalige Mosambiekse president Samora Machel en die oprigting van 'n monument op die terrein te Mbuzini het die debat heropen en vrae laat ontstaan aangaande die transformasie van geheue as 'n bewaarplek van mondelinge oorlewering, die omskakeling daarvan tot ikoon en die rol daarvan en simboliese betekenis in post-apartheid Suid-Afrika. Die geheue van 'n aantal Mbuzini-inwoners word geweeg teen die agenda van die nasionale regering en vrae word gestel of plaaslike verwagtinge gelykertyd aan voldoen is. Sekere riglyne en voorstelle word aangebied ten einde die Machel-monument van potensieële amnesie van nagedagtenis te red.

On 19 October 1986, the Mozambican presidential aircraft, a Tupolev TU134-3, crashed at Mbuzini on its return flight from Lusaka, Zambia. Although a few survived, 25 passengers including the Mozambican leader, Samora Machel, perished in the crash.

Mbuzini is on the plateau of the Lebombo mountains, which form the eastern corner border between Mozambique, South Africa and Swaziland (see figure 1).

The Mbuzini area is occupied by the Mahlalela community, which has residents in all three countries, a dispensation that has been in place since pre-colonial times.

A commission headed by former judge Cecil Margo was established to investigate the cause of the accident and it concluded that pilot error was to blame. A Soviet team,

however, concluded that the presence of a decoy beacon caused the aircraft to stray into the mountainous region.

The event had a number of profound effects on the previously unknown Mbuzini community, as oral testimonies will show hereafter. Firstly, they were swamped by the media, the military, security forces and investigators from across the Mozambican and Swaziland borders. Secondly, these "intruders" frequently combed the area and visited the site, often without considering the local community. Thirdly, a monument (see Photo) to commemorate the life of Machel was constructed apparently with very little involvement of the Mbuzini community. At the time of the crash, Mbuzini residents associated with comrade Samora Machel who

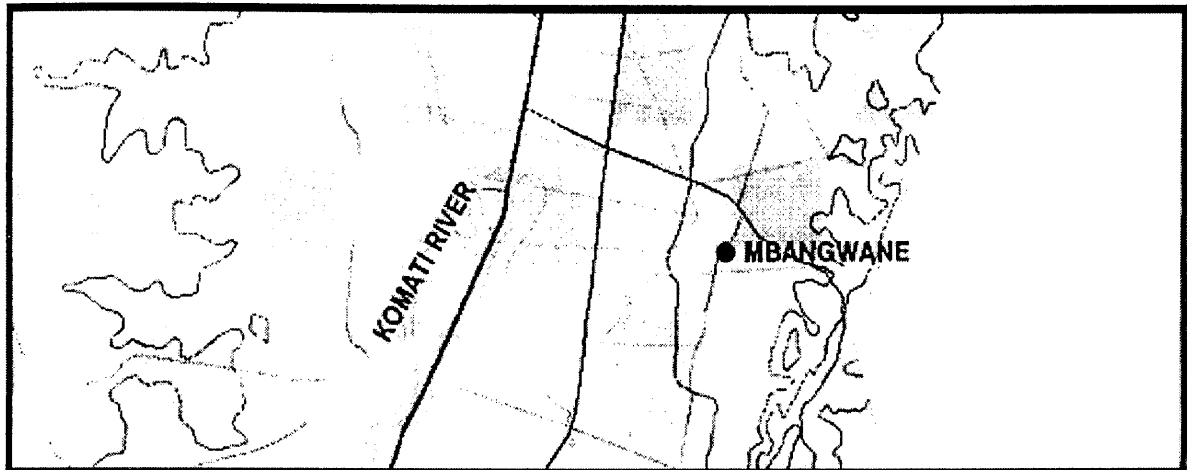


Figure 1: Map of the Mbuzini area.

was a symbol of the struggle and whose territory provided a safe haven and springboard against the local “securocratization” and military operations in the area, which were directed against the local comrade movement in particular.

This article discusses the direct impact of those events that occurred after the fatal plane crash; it looks at the role of the media at the time (1986), the investigations (then and recently) that took place and the reconstruction of events based on current memories. Questions are raised about the relevance of the Machel monument on the site as reflected in oral tradition and history (remembrance, meaning and symbolism). A number of guidelines and future directions are offered.

The bulk of the material for this article formed one component of a research project on the oral history and related heritage issues in the Mbuzini valley. It was commissioned by the National Monuments Council (now South African Heritage Resources Agency - SAHRA) in 1999 and published by the National Culture History Museum in the same year. Some of the material was presented at the Association of Anthropologists in Southern Africa (AASA) conference in Windhoek,

University of Namibia in May 2000. (Van Vuuren 2000)

### **The media's interpretation of the accident**

It was to be expected that the event of 19 October 1986 would receive global attention in the media. While certain pro-RSA government media were speculating on the possibility of pilot error and mechanical failure, the same newspapers soon began to suspect possible government interference. Compare the two articles found published in the Beeld newspaper: (1987-01-10) "Peutery in Machel se vliegtuig" ("Shenanigans in Machel's aeroplane") and (1987-01-24) "Vrae oor Pik se rol by ramp" (Questions about Pik's role in"); The media made allegations about government involvement during the so-called Margo commission - an official government investigation.

The anti-government (apartheid) media and political opponents of PW Botha's regime outrightly rejected the possibility of pilot error and insisted that the accident was caused by sabotage and deliberate foul play. President Chisano - who later took over in Mozambique - was particularly harsh in his condemnation of the South African government (see The Star 1987-08-15). Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe called the

South African government "boos" (evil) and " 'n heks" (a witch) (Beeld 1988-10-24). It was no surprise that the findings of the Margo commission were rejected by these governments.

Once the ANC government came to power, it was expected that this controversial event would be reinvestigated. To an extent, the relationship between Machel's widow Graca and Nelson Mandela added impetus to the quick reopening of the docket. Too many questions were left unanswered and the new government was urged to straighten the record.

The media also seemed unable to shelve the topic. A former political investigator for Radio 702 in Gauteng, Deborah Patta (now with eTV), opened the files again. She claimed, like others, to have had access to military and aviation operators who have decided to break their silence. No final conclusion has yet been reached.

### **The special investigation in 1998**

In 1998, the South African government published a report entitled Special Investigation into the death of President Machel. To some, it was an extension of the proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The circumstantial evidence presented to the TRC led them to question the conclusions reached by the Margo commission.

The TRC, in its conclusion (par 48) on this matter stated the following:

The investigations concluded by the Commission raised a number of questions, including the possibility of a false beacon and the absence of a warning from the South African authorities. The matter requires further investigation by an appropriate structure. (TRC 1998)

In describing the crash (par 22), the TRC report mentions that "one of the crash survivors walked to a nearby house to ask for help". The author interviewed one of the occupants of this house whom the survivor asked for help. Paragraph 22 also states

"others who arrived to assist, including a nurse, told the Commission that they were chased from the scene". Residents whom we interviewed confirmed that they were prohibited from approaching the accident scene. We managed to interview a man who assisted the nurse who tended to this survivor's injuries at a nearby clinic.

### **What Mbuzini residents remember**

Seventeen years have lapsed (1986-2003) since the accident that made media headlines around the world. In terms of the national context, the period leading up to 1986 marked the second stimulus in the liberation struggle against apartheid, namely the formation of the MDM (Mass Democratic Movement) and allies (e.g. Cosatu), the internal intensification of the ANC's struggle (including sanctions) as well as the intensification of the armed struggle in South Africa and Namibia.

People's memories of events seventeen years ago operate on both local (micro) and national (macro) level. The local struggle or the Comrade movement as it is often called, is closer to Mbuzini residents' intimate experiences (e.g. family members and neighbours who were detained and later died) than events at national level. Understandably, Bantustan politics, in this case the KaNgwane homeland, were also closer to people. A quick tour of Mbuzini reveals many "monuments" of the past dispensation; such development schemes and tribal offices and schools, which were officially opened by homeland leaders.

Local events, such as the death of President Samora Machel and his party on 19 October 1986 made national and international headlines. Before the crash, few people had knowledge of the remote Lebombo mountain community in Mbuzini.

For the purpose of this article, we present a selection of the oral memories of a number of residents (for more detail see

Van Vuuren 2001: 66 et seq). Interviews were conducted between 6 and 10 September 1999 in both English and SiSwati. The sections in brackets indicate insertions for missing dialogue, portions of the SiSwati text or colloquial terms. Some interviews were in the form of dialogue. The oral testimonies are indented. The identity of the research participants (interviewees) are not revealed and their real names are substituted by pseudonyms. This decision was made in view of the following: (1) exposure of these individuals pertaining to possible future investigations (de novo evidence and findings) into the mystery of the crash (as suggested by the TRC Special Commission), (2) media and journalistic interferences into their privacy (recently a radio station journalist conducted a private investigation in the area), and (3) our adherence to the Ethical Guidelines for South African Anthropologists (adopted in 1987) (Section iv) of the Association of Anthropology in Southern Africa (AASA).

#### Rosalie Nyembezi (aged 59):

There was a heavy storm that night, more wind than rain, the whole evening the wind was blowing heavily. Then the wind stopped and there was a loud bang, I thought it was the storm once more. My mother was ill at that time. We disconnected the TV. We didn't know what the bang was. One of my cousins was here as well. We smelled something like petrol or diesel. Then one of the boys said someone was screaming at the gate. He went around and said there was someone who spoke in Portuguese and a foreign language asking for (the place) Namache. He thought this was Namache. The boy (called Manuel) could talk Portuguese. He was working for us at that time. He left and came back. He said there was a plane with President Machel in it and that the president is dead. People in the plane cried for help. We asked someone to go to the chief's place and the clinic to get help. They went and never came back. They were told to go and look for the plane. They tried to contact the police and hospital. Later that morning some people came out. At dawn five o'clock we could see the crash. We were not allowed to go there. The police prevented us. They (the injured) were taken to Robs (Rob Ferreira hospital in White River). Then lots of planes from many countries flew around.

Mrs Rosalie Nyembezi is a widow. Her husband was of Portuguese origin. That night, her sister, her mother (who has since passed away), Manuel and an aunt of hers were in the house. Rosalie was born in Mbuzini. They are traders. She is the storekeeper in their shop.

#### Gija Nyando (aged 73) and Mr E M Nyando:

GN: I was a worker at the clinic it was around ten o'clock at night. Then two survivors came to the clinic. They spoke very disordered, a language called "*isingcondo*" (meaning: confusing). Then I helped the sister, called LaNtimane, to tend to their injuries. She phoned the tribal office and they contacted Dr Marais and he arrived. The one guy was seriously injured. Dr Marais said they must take special care of him. I think he died eventually.

Note: Dr Marais and Ms LaNtimane are real people, but are not residents of the Mbuzini district.

EMN: I also came to the clinic, and when I looked towards the site of the crash it looked like an *idolobha* (meaning: town), all the many lights. It was all the little fires and the burning pieces.

GN: The corporal of the plane was seriously injured, the driver not. The driver didn't want to get into the helicopter, which wanted to take them to hospital. SK from Mozambique was the interpreter (he is still around, the sister is at Mangweni). They were very shocked (*babethukile bonke*). The driver was wearing khaki. It was raining a little. It was windy. They government took them away early morning. Dr Marais was from Komatipoort. Sister Ntimane contacted him at Shongwe (Hospital). The corporal passed away. The ambulance took them away at around half six.

EMN: I woke at 3 o'clock. Then one of my sisters said: "Malume look outside there's a town!" "*Kukhanyele*". ("It is shining"). There was [a] petrol smell hanging in the air. When we tried to go there they stopped us, the police and army. There were helicopters everywhere around. And aeroplanes all over, even the week after the crash.

EMN: Machel was popular. I was working at Eskom and when I came here people and cars were lining up at the border. Abilla Nives had a shop on the Mozambican side. People even from Mozambique came to see. The tunnel was here already then. There are two

Mahlalela chiefs on the other side who take care of affairs, Mandlazi in Mozambique and Malungela Naftali in Swaziland.

Note: Mr EM Nyando was born at Mbuzini. He has now retired from employment as a security guard and general worker at the clinic at the time of the accident. EM works at the tribal office and is related to the chiefs' family.

### Stephen Mabuza (aged 20):

I was a boy staying with my grandmother when the news came. We children did not know much. We ran to the (place of) fire (accident scene) but they said we cannot go there. The comrades they knew Machel. That's all I remembered then.

### Lawrence Nyembe:

*Kwakunomsido omkhulu. Kuyakhanya kugcwala ngabantu abaningi. NeSwatini wefalayi bafikile. Amafalayi avele eSwatini neMozambique. Bekukhanya kuthi: kwa-kwa-kwa! Ngiyasaba kungena le. Namanje ngiyesaba kufika le.*

(There was a loud bang/noise. [The sky] was lit up, the place was full of people. And also from Swaziland came aeroplanes. The aeroplanes came from Swaziland and Mozambique. Everything was lit up and noisy it sounded [like]: kwa-kwa-kwa! I myself was afraid to go there. Even now I am afraid to go there.)

### Eni Khuleka (aged 48):

*Ngihlala bengilapha. Ngitwile umsindo esitupeni. Ngabona umlilo. Masinyane ngo 5 indiza ivela Mswati. Amalayiti babengemuva nkuye le. Siyamathi uMachele.*

(I live here [and] I was here [that night]. I heard a bang from my stoep [where I was standing]. I saw the fire. Very soon at 5 o'clock the aeroplane[s] came from Swaziland. And the young men came after that. We knew Machel.)

### Situlo Khubeka:

About the crash:

*Mina bengilapha. Ngo 8 or 9 bafika basitshela. Ukuncethe bakhuluma yimi.*

(I was here. At 8 or 9 o'clock they told us. They called for me and spoke to me.)

I was called by an individual I don't remember his name. One of them (the crash survivor) was short and stubby. I had to translate.

*Lomfishane bamnika ama-drops. Baqhatshini sibuya emhlanganeni. Ithi : du-du- du-du. Bafike umuthi. iPetroli bayiphelele. Umsindo uthi: gwi! Ifalayi ikichika. Ngalala.*

(The short one they gave him drops. [He said]: They were in a hurry we came back from a meeting. [The aeroplane] made: du-du-du-du. Then [they] came [down to] the tree. There was no fuel [they used it up]. The crash sounded like this: gwi ! The plane fell and tumbled. I went back to sleep.

I cannot remember what the doctor did)

About the landmine:

Close to the tunnel the two soldiers were killed. Everybody (at Mbuzini) was afraid to go close to this place in any case. This landmine incident was about one week before the crash.

Note: Mr Situlo Khubeka was born in Mozambique and now earns a living by thatching roofs in Mbuzini. As a Mozambican citizen, he speaks Portuguese. He believes he was called upon because he was one of few in the area who could speak Portuguese.

### Peter Dlamini (aged 30):

I was working in Nelspruit at the time but I was born here.

*Thina ama-comrade siyamati kahulu.*

(We comrades knew him well.)

For us Machel was important. Some of us went to Mozambique. It was difficult times, the army was all over. The news of the crash was bad then

### Comments and analysis

The people who were interviewed can be divided in two categories: those who allegedly have "first-hand" experience of the event (e.g. eyewitness, contact with survivors) and those who heard the crash and observed the accident scene at a distance. The first category comprises a handful of people, some of whom have left the area and others who have passed away. Mbuzini residents are clear about who were so-called eyewitnesses and who are not. We were told in a number of interviews that a certain Mrs X and Mr Y were the only real witnesses who actually had eye-to-eye contact with the survivors. We interviewed these key witnesses right at the start. The profile of the interviewed people is

representative of age (generation) and gender.

The grading of testimonies and eyewitnesses are often problematic in oral tradition. Oral tradition and oral history, in particular, are normally created along two trajectories, the origin of news and/or the interpretation of personal experience (Vansina 1985:3). Both processes have featured since the night of the tragedy. The news of the crash was constructed from eyewitness accounts (eg Mrs Nyembezi who was closest to the site, Mr Nyando who met the survivors) and hearsay evidence of which there were many versions. The later category is transmitted from ear to mouth. It deals with news - indeed with sensational news, since otherwise no rumour would build up. Even if the bare facts of such accounts are true enough, the spectacular parts are always overdone and accounts are cast in a form which directly appeals to other people's empathy with the speaker. (Vansina 1985:6)

Oral tradition is multi-dimensional in its experiential and sensory mode (Finnegan 1992:107). It is possible to argue that senses such as smell and taste are ingrained in any eyewitness account. Think back to the eyewitness accounts recorded above - many of them mentioned the smell of petroleum after the crash.

Understandably, some residents' memories and recollections are clearer and more detailed than others. Anthropologists and oral historians are only too aware of the limitations and the contributory factors which influence the quality of human memory. Only some of these are physiological in nature (eg age). There is a body of literature which deals with those factors which influence memory and oral history. Vansina (1986), Hennige (1982) and Finnegan (1992) deal with omissions of detail, telescoping of events, deliberate

manipulations, inventions and innovations for political and personal reasons.

The work of psychologists Neisser and Winograd (1992) deals with "impacts" on memory and they apply the concept of a "flashbulb memory". One is also aware that the unsophisticated and romanticised views of a rote memory, often associated with oral societies, no longer stands (Finnegan 1992:115). What Mbuzini residents remember of that night has become part of a socially constructed process and a refined process of transmission (to next generations). Finnegan describes it as follows: "This (latter) view moves away from the idea of storing verbatim memories to one of people reconstructing and organising on the basis of what they know and do, so that remembering means not drawing on rote memory but a creative and organizational activity by the user". (Finnegan 1992:115)

The interviewees all remember verbatim portions of one event. When talking about it, these portions of data are revealed, organised and arranged as part of the total process of one event in a single community. Collectively, these merge to a single narrative. Associated phenomena amplify the event experience, for example, the heavy storm (Rosalie), the smell of fuel (Gija and EM), a loud bang (Lawrence), etc. and the respective accounts are constructed into a collective single memory.

Vansina (1985:43) compares memory to an active process of creation with its mechanisms of cueing and scanning.

"Cueing, the main mechanism, consists of attaching a cue to every item that is being memorised. This acts as a label on a library book by which the book can later be retrieved. The cues relate to a single master code, the mnemonic code". Vansina created the term "mnemotechnic devices" which we will discuss further on and which is relevant here.

It was decided to interview people at random (village walk about) at their homesteads, or at clinics and shops, some along the road, and not to seek for the proverbial encyclopaedic informant (Vansina 1985:153). This category of informant often presents himself or herself as tempting and the researcher is lured into relying on a single testimony.

During the research, interviewees expressed concern that only those people with so-called first-hand accounts were interviewed by security and police officials. Mbuzini residents expressed mixed reaction to our "intrusion" (in 1999) and revival of the accident. Some clearly stated that they remember little detail after thirteen years. Most residents were surprised that we wished to "open the file" after so many years. Some thought the process was irrelevant in present times, a number were suspicious that "the government wanted the information" and were thus not prepared to be interviewed, while some key witnesses

clearly stated: 'We're tired of journalists over so many years.'

Some were angered by events surrounding the opening ceremony of the Machel monument claiming that Mbuzini people were excluded from the ceremonial pomp and proceedings. Apart from a brief word of thanks to Nkosi Mahlalela, there was no reference in former president Mandela's unveiling speech on 19 January 1999 to the Mbuzini community and their contribution to the struggle. Younger residents in their twenties were angered at the large funds spent to build the monument, as well as the envisaged tarred road to the site, because it is unlikely that any additional funds will reach the impoverished Mbuzini community. Most interviewees perceived the oral documentation of the night of the accident as an important aspect of the area's heritage and that this part of history be preserved for future generations.

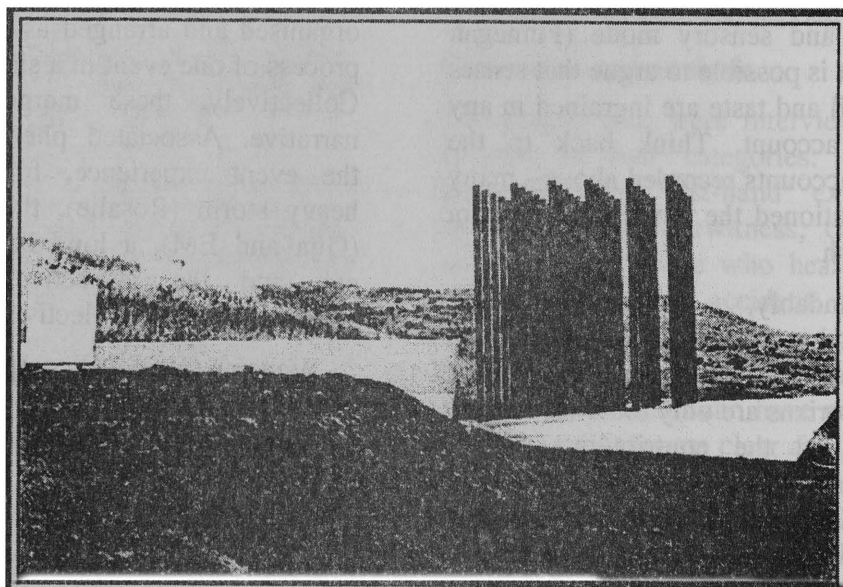


Figure 2: View of the Machel monument (National Culture History Museum 1999).

Certain recurring themes emerged: almost everyone remembered the weather conditions (windy), Samora Machel was popular and closely associated with the struggle, most heard the unusual bang (explosion) of the plane hitting the ground, some recalled the strange smell of burning fuel, and almost everyone recalled the intrusion by and invasion of scores of security personnel and fly-over aircraft immediately after the accident. The above-mentioned themes were repetitive in almost every other interview. Our investigation was not a quest for the extraordinary in human memory, but simply an effort to collect oral history as it was constructed over seventeen years and to allow Mbusini residents to reconstruct whatever they remembered. Vansina's remark reminds one that "memory reorganizes the data it contains. It will put these in a sequential order which resembles an expression of measured duration, but in fact it is a creation of memory: the epoch".(1985:176-8)

Thelen (1992:4) also reminds us that:

the distinction between history and memory is the distinction between whether the beholder feels something from the past to be immediate or remote.

### **Transforming memory into monument**

The debate which looks at the need to evaluate and redress past national and regional policies and imbalances in terms of monuments and museums has been almost exhausted. Such an example was the well-known Wits History Workshop, Myths, Monuments, Museums of July 1992 (see Mzinga et al). The Southern African Museums Association (SAMA) has also debated the issue of colonial and apartheid paradigms in museum exhibitions and policy. The debates looked primarily at the disciplines of art history, anthropology, archaeology and history. Although the table

is set for new representations and ideologies, concern was expressed that the apartheid type ethnic paradigm might re-emerge in a new mutation, namely that of multicultural rights (see Rankin and Hamilton [1999] for more detail) or ethnic particularism in disguise. The mushrooming of the phenomenon of cultural villages for tourism purposes is one such example (Tilley 1999:239)

When abstract memory transforms itself into place and object, the latter are referred to as the mnemotechnic devices of the memory. Mnemotechnic aids consist of landscapes and places, objects and verbal expressions (e.g. music) which enhance quality and significance of memory (Vansina 1985:44- 46). The site of the plane crash has for the last seventeen years served as the mnemonic device of Mbusini residents and others who visit the site. The monument, its concrete structure, the steel pipes and plaque, will probably have a lesser mnemonic impact on Mbusini residents than the wreckage in the pit, since the wreckage was their first clear recollection of what really happened.

The Machel monument was designed by the architect Dr Jose Fortaz. It is a concrete structure which consists of a plaque (in Portuguese and English) with the names of the 25 deceased, a pit which houses the wreckage of the aircraft, and a set of 63 steel pipes resembling organ pipes which represent the deceased. The pipes amplify the wind and symbolise the voices of pain and suffering of the victims and their families. The decaying wreckage symbolises the healing process (and forgotten memories) and a move towards nation building. (See Figure 2)

The Machel monument serves as one of the first examples of the history making process in the new South Africa. Considering the image of Machel as custodian of the anti-apartheid and anti-



colonialism struggle, and the betrothal of his widow to the other global icon of the struggle, it is to be expected that Samora Machel's martyrdom will be immortalised. In his address during the unveiling of the monument, Nelson Mandela. (Office of the President 1999:1), stated:

We have gathered on the soil of a democratic South Africa, at the site that was once drenched with Mozambican blood. We have come to unveil a monument that will forever declare our homage to the life and vision of Samora Machel and those who lost their lives on that fateful day.

The most important criticism of the Machel memorial is that it failed from the outset to democratise and communicate its message on the local level. However profound its national and regional (South Africa and Mozambique) importance, Mbusini residents were hardly drawn into the iconographic process, that is, its design, location and integration into the local struggle. ANC leaders such as Mathews Phosa and others' location and struggle activities on the Mbusini South African-Mozambican borders were well-known to Mbusini residents at the time of the plane crash. Worst of all, Mbusini residents will ask why their local heroes, or sons of the struggle who perished, such as Dobie Magagula and others, have not been honoured at the monument. Local poet, NMM Silombo, venerated Dobie in a poem. The following (Moifatswane 2001: 97) is an extract, translated from SiSwati:

We will forever remember you  
Your foot is known  
In Angola, in Namibia they know you,  
Even in Africa they know you,  
You are not dead Spear you are sleeping

Among the symbolic voices of the dead which emerge from the sixty-three steel pipes at the site, those of local heroes are absent. As stated earlier Mbusini residents' memories of the struggle years, one could argue, operate on two levels. On the macro level figures such as Machel and the

imprisoned Mandela served as large international symbolic icons of the struggle. On the micro level a number of present political figures were local heroes to everyone. Mbusini residents provided shelter to people such as Mathews Phosa, the late Joe Modise and Chris Hani at the time (Moifatswane 2001:39) and risked their lives in the process. The local struggle was called Shosholoza and Mzabalazo (names which emerged during late 1980s), lead by locals such as Dobie Magagula, John and Elliott Nkuna, Maria Malati and Fish Mahlalela (Moifatswane 2001: 43). Ironically and by gross neglect, these names and what they represented do not appear on the monument. During our presence there, hardly any Mbusini residents visited the site. Herbert's comment (1995:xii) in this regard applies:

In what ways and to what extent is it permissible to 'build' a story around these stones (e.g. Dobie Mahlalela's story) in order to provide a heritage attraction?

The only evidence of visits was the garbage at the bottom of the symbolic wreckage pit. As a national heritage site of the new order and paradigm, one would imagine that both the national and provincial governments hope to see the monument taking its rightful place on the tourist agenda. The Machel monument's geographical isolation is its greatest drawback. If it were to be included in a tourist package and fully developed with other potential attractions (eco-tourism, curio and living cultural markets), the site might start to occupy its rightful place on the South African tourist circuit. The development of Mbusini in terms of its heritage and tourism potential have been investigated (Van Schalkwyk 2001:100 et seq). Opportunities such as community-based tourism and craft development could be lucrative providing that these be constructively managed, and as a combination of both natural and cultural heritage resources. The region is generally

isolated and off the beaten track for most tourists, but certain local activities might be unique as a tourism experience such as 'crossing the border through the tunnel for a drink or a shopping trip on the Swaziland or Mozambique side of the border' (Van Schalkwyk 2001:107). On the itinerary of a typical village tourism programme visitors might find the casting of aluminium pots enlightening as well as other manufacturing processes which utilise indigenous technologies. Perhaps MacCannell's warning that tourism is not to be perceived as an aggregate of commercial activities is true; and that a monument such as the Machel's rather serves as "an ideological framing of history, nature and tradition; a framing that has the power to reshape culture and nature to its own needs" (1992:1).

Within its own context, the monument also needs to be realigned and its designers to be 'self-critical'. In his reflections of idealistic and successful monument policies, David Thelen (1992:30-40) gives the following guidelines about curation and management: Observe and listen to potential visitors. A visit to a monument can become a conversation that actively engages visitors. Commemorations should portray the range of experiences and choices members have faced and still face across time. Show how different groups of people remember the same event differently. Here it is not important who "won the battle", but how different people remember it differently. It is always possible to add missing voices to monuments (eg with shows, films, brochures). One can build monuments around relationships, not celebrations. Visitors can be challenged on how they deal with legacies (even embarrassments, defeats). Monuments should illustrate how the construction of memories have changed over time: what is omitted, distorted and romanticised. Monuments can invite

readers/visitors to explore how their individual memories are and are not part of major national events (also see Herbert 1995:10).

### Conclusion

The site of the Machel plane crash and its monument might face the fate of similar landscapes elsewhere in the global fold: counter-propaganda, vandalism and eventually, total destruction, as Maré (2003:2) alerts us. Mzinga (1992:7) warned against forms of propaganda:

Recording the oral traditions of the ruling class, the notable, spiritual leaders - results in the reproduction of myths or the creation of new myths.

At present, the site is under-utilised and under-resourced and its stands to fail in its cause both on a local and national level. It might soon be void of meaning and fail to occupy a place in the memories and oral history of the post-struggle generation in South Africa.

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