

### 1 The inheritance<sup>1</sup>

Late in 1880, after war with Britain, the Boers of the Transvaal won their independence from the colonial authority and proclaimed the Republic of South Africa once again. It was around this time that Frans Lion Cachet, the Dutch clergyman who became embroiled in the church politics of the Boer Republics, made the observation that Pretoria was so full of foreigners one could barely conceive of its status as capital of an independent territory.<sup>2</sup> But, by the following year the independence of the South African Republic had been affirmed and the Boers were masters of their own destinies, for the time being at least.

The first Act of Parliament in the restored Republic dealt with higher education and recommended the erection of a *normaalschool* or college in Pretoria in order to bring 'eene behoorlijke wetenskaplike opleiding binnen het bereik van het blanke bevolking der Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek' [a proper scientific education within reach of the white population of the South African Republic]. The envisaged teaching fields included Pedagogy, Law, Commerce and State Administration, alongside Military Science and Agricultural Science, while Theology was purposely omitted as church affiliations were in flux at the time. However, this grand idea was stillborn, because of the difficulty of finding staff who would not taint the 'zuivere Afrikaansche geest' [pure Afrikaans spirit]. The only suitably qualified teachers would of necessity be Dutch, and there was a suspicion that they would bring their language prejudices with them to Africa.

In the 1890s, the gold rush and the rise of the Uitlander population brought a new threat. On the eve of the Anglo-Boer War, *De Express*, a newspaper based in the Orange Free State, made an appeal for the two Boer Republics to establish a 'zuiver Hollands-Afrikaansche' university to counter the 'zuiver Britische scholen van de Eksteins, Beits en hun bewonderaars aan de Rand' [pure British schools of the Eksteins, the Beits and their admirers on the Rand]. The Anglo-Boer War put paid to that scheme for a while, but we can discern in it all the components that would characterize the University of Pretoria – a city-based, white, Afrikaans tertiary institution serving the needs of a farming community.

It was Jan Smuts who decreed in 1907 that a Pretoria campus separate from the Transvaal University College in Johannesburg be established and that the Arts be moved there. His rationale was that Arts subjects in Johannesburg were not drawing students, because the rural students who generally accounted for most of this enrolment did not find the city appealing. Pretoria would be a better setting for the teaching of these subjects.

By this time the Transvaal had become a Crown Colony under Britain, and the Pretoria campus therefore fell under the educational programme of the newly arrived British colonial masters. The architects who came to work in the colony's Department of Public Works followed Herbert Baker so closely that their architectural idiom became known as the 'Baker school'. Among these young architects was Piercy Eagle, who designed the Faculty of Arts building (1910), the first on the new campus.

Only in 1930, after agitation from staff and students, and under a council which included Gerard Moerdyk, did the University of Pretoria become an Afrikaans-language institution. From then onwards the new buildings on campus would be authored by Afrikaner architects, all concerned in one way or another with Afrikaner culture and identity. The architecture on the campus thus presents, in a fascinatingly concentrated and representative form, elements of a *volkskultuur* produced in relationship to broader international trends. This has much to tell us about the production of architecture in a provincial setting and about aspects of the style of architecture that has been termed 'Pretoria Regionalism'.

*Volk* is a word that does not translate easily into English. Neither 'folk' nor 'people' has the connotational depth of the Afrikaans. As a result, the compounds that are so much a part of the language and the culture it expresses – *volkskultuur*, *volksgeskiedenis*, *volksmond*, *volksvreemd* – become obscure in translation and help to keep the Afrikaner psyche a mystery to English-speakers. Perhaps the language of architecture, spoken by champions of Afrikaner culture in an Afrikaans environment,