

Postcolonial Architecture Through North Korean Modes: Namibian Commissions of the
Mansudae Overseas Project

By

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Abstract:

Since the 1970s the North Korean design firm, the Mansudae Overseas Project, has completed commissions for public sculptures and buildings in eight different African nations. Though these commissions incorporate subject matter specific to their respective locations, the works replicate an aesthetic that is distinctly North Korean. Examples of this visual parallel may be observed in iconic Mansudae works found in Windhoek, the capital of Namibia: the new Namibian State House (2006), the Heroes' Acre Memorial (2002) and the Independence Museum (begun 2009). This thesis argues that the decision by Namibian leaders to award architectural tenders to the Mansudae Overseas Project was not based on economic concerns or preference for Mansudae designs, but was instead motivated by a desire to emulate the authority, cohesiveness and directed nature of a visual culture specific to Pyongyang. In Namibia, the construction of Mansudae-designed buildings and monuments asserts a decisive break with architecture and memorials associated with colonial regimes, and in doing so foregrounds the authority and modernity of the postcolonial government. Thorough consideration of commissions of the Mansudae Overseas Project in urban capitals such as Windhoek expands the limited body of research on the establishment of a postcolonial vernacular in African urban settings.

I. Introduction

In September 2009 construction began on the Independence Memorial Museum in central Windhoek, the capital of Namibia (Fig. 1). ** The new museum marks the fourth major architectural tender awarded to one North Korean design firm, the Mansudae Overseas Project, by the Namibian government within the past ten years. Art historians have not examined the appearance of North Korean-designed works in Namibia and in other African nations,¹ nor have they considered the hiring of North Korean architects over other Western or African professionals as an assertion of the authority and modernity by post-colonial regimes. This paper aims to do both. It discusses these monuments as strategic adoptions of aspects of North Korean visual culture, ones intended to symbolically inscribe the capital city with a founding narrative favorable to the postcolonial government, and to provide a visual break with colonial antecedents. This will be accomplished through a comparative visual analysis of photographs taken by

**The author would like to thank the members of her committee for their guidance during this project: Dr. Marsha Haufler, Dr. Gitti Salami and Dr. Elizabeth Macgonagle. In addition the author would like to thank the Morris Family, without whose scholarship assistance this research and my studies at the University of Kansas would not have been possible.

¹ Important work on public monuments commissioned by postcolonial governments has been done by scholars such as Mary Jo Arnoldi, but this research does not address the parallels between African monuments designed by North Koreans and extant works in North Korea, nor does speculate on the motivations for commissioning the Mansudae Overseas Project. See: Mary Jo Arnoldi. "Symbolically Inscribing the City: Public Monuments in Mali, 1995- 2002." *African Arts* 36 (Summer, 2003): 56-65; Mary Jo Arnoldi. "Bamako, Mali: Monuments and Modernity in the Urban Imagination." *Africa Today* 54 (Winter, 2007): 3 -24.

the author at the Namibian sites with images of corresponding works in North Korea taken from internet resources.

The Mansudae Overseas Project is the international division of the Mansudae Art Studio, which produces the majority of official public monuments and buildings in Pyongyang, the capital of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). In Namibia, in addition to the Independence Memorial Museum, the Mansudae Overseas Project designed and built the Heroes' Acre Memorial (2002), a martyrs' cemetery located ten kilometers south of Windhoek (Fig. 2), a military museum (2004) situated seventy kilometers north of Windhoek in the city of Okahandja,² and the new Namibian State House (2008) (Fig. 3).

Namibia is not the only African nation to award commissions of public monuments and government buildings to the Mansudae Overseas Project. To date, the firm has also completed projects in Senegal, Angola, Botswana, Equatorial Guinea, Benin, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia.³ Projects realized in African

² Of the four monuments commissioned by the Mansudae Overseas Project the least is known about this work. Built in 2004 at an estimated cost of N\$25 million to N\$30 million the museum still remains closed to the public. See: "Military Museum Still Off-limits to Public," *The Namibian*, 3 March 2008.

³ The exact number of commissions completed within the African continent has not been disclosed by the Mansudae Overseas Project or Mansudae Art Studio officials, though there is broad mention of commissions completed in specific countries as becomes relevant in Korean Central News Agency briefings. See: Korean Central News Agency "Monument Creation Center" <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2004/200409/news09/14.htm>#10. Nonetheless, this information is collected in scattered publications by groups such as the North Korean Economy Watch, reporters for the *DailyNK* and other international news organizations such as the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Wall Street Journal. See: Christina Passariello, "Monuments to Freedom Aren't Free, but North Korea Builds Cheap Ones"

nations by the Mansudae Overseas Project include commemorative portraits of important figures in postcolonial governments (e.g. Democratic Republic of Congo – Statue of Joseph Kasavubu, 2010), revolutionary heroes (e.g. Zimbabwe – National Heroes’ Acre, 1981),⁴ historical figures (e.g. Botswana - Three Dikgosi [chiefs] Monument, 2005).⁵ They also commemorate post-colonial self-determination (Senegal – Monument to the African Renaissance, 2010),⁶ and provide new spaces for government administration (e.g. Namibia – New Namibian State House, 2008). The iconographic programs of these monuments and buildings differ between nations, yet works remain formally similar, effectively emulating the Socialist Realist aesthetic of the art and architecture of Pyongyang.⁷

In fact, the four Namibian commissions of the Mansudae Overseas Project parallel monuments and edifices in Pyongyang to the point that they seem more like Namibian translations of a North Korean design vernacular rather than as original,

Wall Street Journal January 28, 2010; Kim Yong Hun, “Foreign Currency Earning Constructions in Africa,” *Daily NK* June 21 2010.

⁴ For a brief discussion of the Zimbabwe Heroes’ Acre see: Joost Fontein , “The Politics of the Dead: Living heritage, bones and commemoration in Zimbabwe,” 1-27.

⁵ For a brief discussion of the Botswana monuments see: Neil Parsons, “Unravelling History and Cultural Heritage in Botswana,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 32 (December 2006), 680, and Morongwa Phala, Opportunities Missed As Chiefs Tender Is Given Away, *Mmegi*, May 17, 2004.

⁶ For a brief discussion of the Senegalese monument see: Ferdinand de Jong and Vincent Foucher, “La tragédie du roi Abdoulaye? Néomodernisme et Renaissance africaine dans le Sénégal contemporain,” 187-204.

⁷ The term “Socialist Realist” remains problematic as a descriptor of the North Korean scopic regime for scholars such as Jane Portal, who acknowledges that art in DPRK represents a “curious mixture of influences from Western monuments, transferred through Socialist Realist Soviet and Chinese works to a hybrid North Korean monumentalism,” distinguishing North Korean Socialist Realism from its predecessors in China and the Soviet Union. See: Jane Portal. *Art Under Control In North Korea* (London: Reaktion, 2005): 13.

indigenous interpretations. This direct formal relationship between the Namibian commissions and extant works in North Korea prompts us to ask why the post-colonial government would choose designs that so clearly foreground a foreign visual culture for architectural works that symbolize the realization of an independent Namibia.

Clifford Geertz argues that the task of conceiving a nationalist self for postcolonial states shifts between pre- and post-revolutionary periods. Whereas pre-revolutionary nationalistic sentiment builds upon an “easy populism” of freedom and self-determination, the post-revolutionary state faces the task of defining “a collective subject to whom the actions of the state can be internally connected.” The need to foster a collective self within the national unit, thus, motivates postcolonial governments to seek out means of articulating this self, such as through architectural building programs.⁸

Yet, Stuart Murphy notes, though the desire to establish “a bounded, linear and empirical version of selfhood” may find a “set of useful ideological tools” in the sort of nationalism as described by Ernest Gellner, wherein the political and national unit are congruent,⁹ Murphy asserts that such “ideological moves actually produce multiple and often contradictory images of the national self.”¹⁰ Thus, the effort to generate or boost nationalism in the postcolonial state may be antithetical to a postcolonial order characterized by fluidity and hybridity. Nevertheless, the use of architectural programs

⁸ Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 238-40.

⁹ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 1.

¹⁰ Stuart Murray, “Introduction,” in *Not on Any Map: Essays on Postcoloniality and Cultural Nationalism*, 8.

to promote and support a regime's view of the national collective self should be understood within a framework of nationalist assertions of self.

Attention to the motivations of the individual who facilitated the hiring of the Mansudae Overseas Project for the Namibian projects, Namibia's Founding President Sam Nujoma (held office from 1990-2005) offers insight into the nature of the commissions as efforts to promote a particular view of the Namibian nationalist self. Former President Nujoma was a pivotal figure in Namibia's resistance movement against South African rule. He helped found SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organization Party) in 1960,¹¹ which has held power since Namibia gained independence in 1990, and led in the armed insurgency against the ruling South African government.¹² Nujoma remains an omnipresent figure in Namibia even after his retirement from politics (Fig. 4).¹³ His successor, Hifikepunye Pohamba, another SWAPO founding member elected in 2004, is broadly perceived to be distinct from Nujoma in name only, particularly as Nujoma continued on as president of SWAPO following Pohamba's election.¹⁴

¹¹ The SWAPO party was originally formed out of a group working on behalf of migrant Owambo laborers that wanted to enlarge its concerns from the working conditions of migrants to the ending of South African rule in the country. The new organization was modeled after the South African ANC (African National Congress) and strove to move beyond tribal affinities in favor of a collective Namibian agenda. See: Lionel Cliffe, *The Transition to Independence in Namibia* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1994): 18-19.

¹² *ibid*, 826.

¹³ Former President Nujoma is often consulted for comment relating to the SWAPO party and a disparate range of stories in Windhoek newspapers such as the *Windhoek Observer*. See Andreas Thomas "Nujoma proposes SWAPO TV station," *Windhoek Observer*, August 14, 2010.

¹⁴ See: BBC News, "Swapo Man Wins Namibia Landslide," November 21, 2004.

As Lawrence Vale notes in his writings on the postcolonial architectural environment, “the leadership of newly independent states [has] frequently attempted to use architecture not only to house a new form of government but also to proclaim the worthiness of the new regime and advance its status.”¹⁵ As someone who devoted his life to the cause of Namibian self-realization and served as the first President of independent Namibia for fourteen years, Nujoma naturally had a vested interest in promoting the new postcolonial government and SWAPO’s role in its generation. Thus, even after Nujoma’s retirement, his personal motivations for creating new architectural works remain relevant to a discussion of the contracts awarded to the Mansudae Overseas Project.

In public statements regarding the Mansudae Overseas Project commissions, spokespersons for the Nujoma and Pohamba administrations point to the material support provided by the North Koreans during the period of liberation struggle as justification for awarding them commissions.¹⁶ Although the extent and nature of the North Korean assistance is not publicly documented, it is framed by both nations as a benevolent gesture made in support of the Namibian nation in its nascent stage.¹⁷ For

¹⁵ Lawrence Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity* (London: Routledge, 2008): 10.

¹⁶ Examples of the public acknowledgment of this long-standing relationship appear often in public statements associated with the Mansudae commissions in the Namibian press, but are generally worked into any public discussion of state visits or diplomatic talks between the two nations on diverse topics such as public health and diplomatic consultation agreements. See: Brigitte Weidlich, “Namibia and North Korea 'to strengthen supreme ties,'” *The Namibian*, March 25, 2008.

¹⁷ See: BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Transcript, “North Korean Delegation in Namibia to ‘Promote, Consolidate’ Existing Ties,” March 21, 2002.

example, a 2000 communiqué detailing the events of Nujoma's State visit to Pyongyang notes:

Sam Nujoma said in his speech his current visit to the DPRK was aimed at further strengthening the existing fraternal relations of friendship between the countries. The Namibian people will always remember the material, diplomatic and spiritual support given by the worker's party and the government of Korea to the SWAPO of Namibia, he said.¹⁸

It is important to note that the fraternal relationship between the two nations began with the personal friendship between Nujoma and Kim Il Sung rather than with diplomatic exchange between the two nations prior to Namibia's independence in 1990.¹⁹ During his time in exile, Nujoma traveled to Pyongyang. The details of his visit and what he discussed with the North Korean government are not known, but photographs from the Namibian National Archives show him together with Kim Il Sung, and Nujoma visiting with North Korean military forces, attesting to his cordial relations with his hosts and, from the North Korean view, his admiration for them (Fig. 5-6).

The founding President's desire to honor the support given by the North Koreans to the liberation movement may have been one motivation for the commissions, yet the hiring of the Mansudae Overseas Project for four major cultural landmarks demands more thorough justification. For while the founding president had clear reason to support his allies, the SWAPO leadership also had a commitment to support their economically disadvantaged base, many of whom would have benefited financially and

¹⁸ Korean Central News Agency. "Namibian President here."
<http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2000/200011/news11/28.htm>.

¹⁹ Korean Central News Agency, "Namibian President on Relations with the DPRK"
<http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2002/200208/news26/2002.htm>.

experientially from receiving a greater share of the lucrative government contracts associated with the commissions.²⁰ Similarly, the astronomical costs associated with the construction of the Windhoek monuments challenges the notion that North Korean works offered an economical alternative to awarding contracts to regional architects.²¹

While previous relationships with North Korea may have been a factor, I believe it safe to assume that African leaders, such as Nujoma, who commissioned the Mansudae Overseas Project to erect national monuments did so for strategic political reasons. I assert that they recognized the bold, dynamic, and monumental works characteristic of the Mansudae Overseas Project as decisive, modern and authoritative means of expressing their nationalistic content. Moreover, I believe that the Namibian government viewed Mansudae works as expressions of a type of Socialist Realism by then extinct elsewhere that would be an effective in signaling their own triumph over colonial rule.

To support this argument I will first discuss Founding President Sam Nujoma's 2000 visit to North Korea to establish his familiarity with Pyongyang and his knowledge of the ways monuments and buildings designed by the Mansudae Art Studio

²⁰ For a discussion of the 1992 Labour Act See: Bauer, "Namibia in the First Decade of Independence: How Democratic?" 40-41.

²¹ One of the reasons advanced by the Namibian government for their decision to use North Korean architects for the commissions was that there were no local Namibian architects capable of completing the jobs. See: Lindsay Dentlinger, "More Questions on New State House Complex," *The Namibian*, April 21, 2006. This assertion has been rejected by the Namibian Institute of Architects, who evidence the variety of commissions completed by their members requiring similar levels of expertise. See: Nina Maritz, Personal Communication, 10 August 2010 and Jacob Wasserfall, Personal Communication, 13 August 2010; Christof Maletsky, "Architects say move of Monument Flawed," *The Namibian* July 17, 2008.

aesthetically unify the city and project state ideology. Second, through a comparative analysis of extant monuments in Pyongyang and the Namibian commissions I will identify the formal devices common to both and assert that the Namibian works are Namibian in content only. Finally, I will discuss the circumstances of the most recent commission, the Independence Memorial museum, and identify it is an attempt by the Namibian government to symbolically inscribe public memory in favor of the post-colonial regime. In sum, this paper will show that the Namibian leadership embraced the Mansudae-designed works as a means to assert their authority, modernity and secure their legitimacy.

II. President Nujoma's 2000 visit to Pyongyang

The visual culture of Pyongyang is defined in large part by the public artworks and monuments created by the Mansudae Art Studio to honor the achievements and legacy of the Great Leader Kim Il Sung. In addition to monumental sculpture, the studio specializes in large-scale mosaics, paintings, and bronze reliefs. The prominence of the Mansudae Art Studio in Pyongyang cannot be overstated. Founded in 1959, it employs 3,700 workers, one quarter of whom are artists, most graduates of the Pyongyang University of Fine Arts.²² The Mansudae Art Studio prides itself on its production of diverse works that commemorate the resistance against Japanese colonization.²³ Mansudae monuments such as the Juche tower exemplify the ways in which Mansudae works are highly symbolic and meticulously conceived to relay a programmatic intent

²² Jane Portal, *Art Under Control in North Korea*, 127.

²³ www.mansudaeartstudio.com/.../en/the_mansudae_art_studio.pdf

(Fig. 7 and Fig. 8). This 170 meter high tower celebrates Kim Il Sung's Juche philosophy of self-reliance, which stresses self-sufficiency without outside assistance.²⁴ Built on the occasion of Kim's seventieth birthday in 1982, the tower is covered with 25,550 pieces of granite, each representing a day in the life of the Great Leader.²⁵

Mansudae buildings and monuments arose in the North Korean capital following the near total destruction of the city during the Korean War (1950-53). As Peter Atkins notes, North Korean planners had a tabula rasa on which to ideologically inscribe the physical landscape on a grand and unified scale.²⁶ Indeed, major avenues, government buildings, large-scale monuments were conceived within a short period by a relatively small group of individuals and one major design firm. The resultant cohesion within the urban capital and geomantic placement of Mansudae monuments are defining characteristics of the Socialist Realism specific to North Korea.

Outsiders have interpreted the Pyongyang cityscape as a metaphorical mirror for the Great Leader, conceived solely to fuel his personality cult. Suk-Young Kim suggests comparisons between modern Pyongyang and Albert Speer's unrealized Germania, and argues that Pyongyang functions as a theatrical set, where inhabitants exist as props in an endless production glorifying Kim Il Sung.²⁷ While the visual character of the city is arguably one-tracked, it is overly dismissive to perceive the modern city of Pyongyang as

²⁴ For further reading on Kim Il Sung's Juche philosophy see: Jane Portal, *Art Under Control in North Korea*, 77-79; B.R. Myers, *The Cleanest Race: How North Korean See Themselves and Why It Matters*, 46-47.

²⁵ The name "Great Leader" is used to refer to Kim Il Sung, while "Dear Leader" references his son and successor, Kim Jong Il.

²⁶ Atkins, "'A Séance with the Living: the Intelligibility of the North Korean Landscape," 199.

²⁷ Suk-Young Kim, "Springtime for Kim Il Sung in Pyongyang," 24.

simply a stage with a central actor and an audience. In his book *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves—And Why It Matters*, B. R. Myers comments on the popular misconceptions about Kim Il Sung's personality cult:

The regime in Pyongyang is often accused of 'brainwashing' its subjects, as if the former secretly believed something very different, and the latter were passive or even unwilling victims of indoctrination. Perhaps this misconception derives from the mistaken belief that the personality cult...forms the basis of the official worldview. In fact...the personality cult proceeds from myths about the race and its history that cannot but exert a strong appeal on the North Korean masses.²⁸

Myers observations suggests that, rather than interpreting the visual landscape of Pyongyang as just a mirror for the sole benefit of its leadership, we can understand Pyongyang as an orchestrated system supported by a unified, omnipresent visual culture, wherein monuments and visual references to the Great Leader serve to remind citizens of their leaders' legitimacy and achievements towards North Korean self-definition after a period of Japanese colonial Rule.

In November of 2000 Namibian President Sam Nujoma made a diplomatic visit to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in response to a state invitation from Pyongyang. Nujoma had recently begun his third term as President, bypassing the constitutionally stated two-term limit on the grounds that he had initially been elected by the Constituent/National Assembly and thus had only once been popularly elected.²⁹ At the time of his visit, SWAPO controlled both the executive and legislative branches of the

²⁸ B. R. Myers, *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters*, 75.

²⁹ Christopher Saunders, "Recent History," 828; Bauer, "Namibia in the First Decade of Independence: How Democratic?," 37.

Namibian government, and had been without significant opposition from other political parties for over a decade, prompting concern for some that Namibia could develop into a single party state.³⁰ The trend towards single party rule and the potential loss of democracy is noted by Gretchen Bauer, who has pointed to constitutional amendments, such as the presidential term extensions, and to the increasing concentration of power in the Office of the President as concerns for the evolving political climate of the young nation.³¹

The Korean Central News Agency, the official North Korean news organization, issued a detailed account of Nujoma's November 2000 visit to Pyongyang.³² Through these descriptions we know what monuments and buildings Nujoma visited, and thus can speculate on his impressions of the city. Visits to the Kumsusan Memorial Palace and the Revolutionary Martyrs' Cemetery are of particular note as they familiarized him with the ritual experience provided by sites in Pyongyang. Nujoma also visited the Mansudae Art Studio, giving him a firsthand sense of the magnitude of this art factory.

³⁰ Bauer, "Namibia in the First Decade of Independence: How Democratic?," 43.

³¹ According to Bauer, this concentration of power can be seen, for example, "in President Nujoma's insistence on making political appointments himself, his practices of keeping political rivals at bay with periodic Cabinet reshuffles, of choosing the bulk of the candidates for Swapo's list in National Assembly elections and of retaining most of the pre-independence Swapo leadership in key Cabinet posts." "Namibia in the First Decade of Independence: How Democratic?," 37.

Also, throughout her article Bauer acknowledges a growing resistance to criticism and dissent towards actions taken by SWAPO leaders, see: "Namibia in the First Decade of Independence: How Democratic?," 46; Absalom Shigwedha, "Pohamba, Nujoma, Geingob lash out at critics of Swapo," *The Namibian*, July 1, 2008.

³² B. R. Myers acknowledges that the English language Korean Central News Agency releases do not represent the level of propaganda about North Korea and its leaders that domestic audiences receive. See: B. R. Myers, *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters*, 17-18.

Some of his staff members visited the Pyongyang Maternity Hospital. Visits to the Grand People's Study House and the Juche tower are not mentioned in the Korean Central News Agency account of his visit, but they are prominent, centrally located buildings and Nujoma could not have failed to see them as he was driven around the city. Thus, they may be counted among the North Korean experiences that influenced his decisions regarding the Mansudae works in Namibia.³³

Nujoma began his goodwill visit to Pyongyang on the twenty-eighth of November, 2000 and, according to the Korean reports, he was welcomed with much celebration, as is customary upon the arrival of foreign leaders. Crowds of Pyongyang citizens waved the flags of both nations, cheered and raised bouquets when his plane landed.³⁴ The anthems of both nations were played at the airport before the Namibian President left in a limousine for downtown Pyongyang. The route was decorated with the flags and slogan boards welcoming Nujoma and a sea of dancers sprang to life when the limousine reached the plaza of the April 25th House of Culture.³⁵ These accounts not only highlight the elaborate welcome extended to Nujoma, but also document his

³³ Following this visit in the year 2000 other diplomatic visits to Pyongyang were made in 2007, 2008 during which reports document visits to the Arch of Triumph, the Three Revolution Exhibition, the Mangyongdae and Pyongyang 326 Electric Wire Factory are mentioned. Though these visits will not be included in the context of influences of to the Heroes' Acre and new Namibian State House they nonetheless enter into the sphere of influence for the Independence Museum and further support an awareness on the part of the Namibian government to how North Korean works function in their environment. See: Korean Central News Agency, "Namibian Government Delegation Leaves," <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2008/200810/news25/20081025-17.htm>

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ Korean Central News Agency. "Over 100,000 Pyongyangites welcome Namibian President." <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2000/200011/news11/28.htm>

observation of a coordinated citizenry acting in support of the government's diplomatic intent.

On the second day of President Nujoma's visit to Pyongyang he paid visit to the Revolutionary Martyrs' Cemetery, a site that prefigures the 2002 Namibian Heroes' Acre. Established in 1975 and remodeled in 1985, the Martyrs' Cemetery commemorates over 170 revolutionaries who died fighting against the Japanese occupation forces during the colonial period between 1910 and 1945.³⁶ The site is part of a larger park complex, which, as Peter Atkins notes, serves to unite reverential and recreational contexts within the Martyrs' Cemetery.³⁷ Newlyweds are said to make this site their first destination after the marriage ceremony, and it is a commonly visited by school groups, further expanding popular use and interaction with the memorial.³⁸

As is customary of any visiting dignitary, during his official excursion to the Mount Taesong monument Nujoma laid a wreath at the pedestal before the monument and, together with the Korean officials present, including Kim Yong Nam, President of the Presidium of North Korea, observed a moment of silence in memory of the anti-Japanese revolutionary fighters.³⁹

It is important to emphasize the significance that this monument and ritual would have had for Nujoma. Like Kim Il Sung, who as a young man assumed a leadership role of a guerilla group in the Northeast Anti-Japanese Army, Nujoma also led in a

³⁶ Portal, Jane. *Art Under Control in North Korea*, 145.

³⁷ Peter Atkins, "A Séance with the Living: the Intelligibility of the North Korean Landscape," in *North Korea in the New World Order*, 204.

³⁸ Jane Portal, *Art Under Control in North Korea*, 146.

³⁹ Korean Central News Agency. "Greetings to Barbadian Prime Minister." <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2000/200011/news11/28.htm>

revolutionary struggle through his leadership position within SWAPO.⁴⁰ Nujoma was likely aware of these parallels, and thus, appreciated the reverential treatment given to the revolutionary leaders as meaningful practice for any nation borne out of struggle.

Ritual practice at the Martyrs' Cemetery evokes the memory and legacy of the Korean revolutionary heroes, and prevents the space from becoming frozen in a previous era, and thus removed from contemporary audiences. James Young writes on the use of ritual practice to forestall the potential of memorials to become anachronisms. He notes: "Monuments depend on the public for their very lives: as long as the public sphere shares a regime's desire for permanence of its formal self-idealizations, it suspends disbelief in the monument's own impermanence and thus makes the regime's monument its own sacred space."⁴¹ Similarly, Carol Medicott notes: "States' sovereignty and their coercive power only become real and meaningful through symbol and performance."⁴² The observations of both scholars on the importance of ritual practice in motivating a shared performance of collective history provide insight into the appeal of the Mansudae-designed works for African leaders looking to foster a similar reverential relationship between their populations and revolutionary heroes.

That certain features of the Martyrs' Cemetery likely stood out to Nujoma is suggested by their parallels in the later Namibian Heroes' Acre monument. To access the Pyongyang monument a visitor must pass through nineteen-meter high Korean-style gate with a green-tiled roof (Fig. 9). The gate frames a series of 348 stone stairs that

⁴⁰ Michael J. Seth, *A Concise History of Modern Korea*, 88.

⁴¹ James Young, "Memory/Monument," 244.

⁴² Carol Medicott, Medicott "Symbol and Sovereignty in North Korea." 71.

ascend Chujak Peak and symbolically marks the passage from the urban environs of Pyongyang to the sacred, reverential space accorded to the Martyrs' Cemetery. At the top of the stairs a wide stone avenue, flanked on either side by sculpture groups of soldiers emerging from rusticated stone, leads to the base of a terraced cemetery (Fig. 10 - Fig. 13). In addition to the sculpture groups, on the left side of the avenue a stone placard displays an inscription in Kim-Il-Sung's handwriting that proclaims: "The noble revolutionary spirit displayed by the anti-Japanese revolutionary martyrs will dwell forever in the hearts of our Party and our people. October 10th, 1985." (Fig. 14)⁴³ At the end of the stone avenue a granite pedestal, raised against the incline of the hill, serves as a polished backdrop for a large bronze medallion and wreath motif (Fig. 15). Set against the maroon stone, the gold symbols project toward the viewer, reflecting ambient light and echoing the metallic glow of the copper busts atop the distant gravestones. Taken together, the pedestal and medallion metaphorically announce the viewer's arrival at the central area of importance, the sacred ground where the legend of North Korea's revolutionary heroes is continually recalled.

The gravestones, spaced evenly in rows conforming to the terraced hillside, lead to a granite red flag at the hill's apex (Fig. 16 and Fig. 17). The busts display individual likenesses of revolutionary heroes, and their size, viewing height and descriptive features serve to animate the gravestones in a manner not typically achieved through written inscriptions. As such, the Martyrs' Cemetery transcends the viewing experience traditionally accorded a burial ground by invoking associations related to shrines or

⁴³ Korean Central News Agency, "Kim Il Sung's Calligraphic Style, Treasure of Korean Nation," <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2010/201004/news12/20100412-13ee.html>

commemorative monuments, where replica statues and established environments encourage reflection and recreation within the public sphere.

Another official excursion took Nujoma to Kumsusan Memorial Palace, a former palatial assembly hall reconstructed as Kim Il Sung's mausoleum upon his death in 1994 (Fig. 18), and to the Mansudae Grand Monument (colossal bronze Kim Il Sung statue) erected by the Mansudae Art Studio in 1972 (Fig. 19). The Korean Central News Agency mentions that a ceremonial floral basket was laid before the statue in the name of the Namibian President, a familiar ritual for Pyongyang citizens and a requisite act for foreign visitors.⁴⁴ As at the Martyrs' Cemetery, Nujoma took part in this rite and experienced first-hand the reverence accorded to North Korea's revolutionary leader, a man with whom he could personally identify given his role in the struggle for Namibian independence.

Inside the Kumsusan Memorial Palace Nujoma also followed ritual practice required of visitors. In the Mourners' Hall, he learned of the overwhelming grief of the North Korean people when they learned of the death of the Great Leader. Then Nujoma viewed the embalmed body of Kim Il Sung. Afterward, in the exhibition halls, Nujoma saw the orders and medals awarded to the Great Leader from countries across the world.

At the Kumsusan Memorial Palace, as well as other Mansudae buildings such as the Grand People's Study House (Fig. 20) Nujoma viewed flamboyant interiors that feature brightly colored, floral-pattern terrazzo floors, extensive use of colored marble,

⁴⁴ Korean Central News Agency, "Namibian President visits Kumsusan Memorial Palace," <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2000/200011/news11/28.htm>.

decorative bronze reliefs, gaudy crystal chandeliers, and epic landscape paintings (Fig. 21 and Fig. 22). The marble and terrazzo floors, grand chandeliers, and epic landscape works are all definitive markers of the opulent, modern sensibility of North Korean visual culture and came to be featured in the designs of the Namibian commissions of the Mansudae Overseas Project.

In sum, Nujoma's 2000 goodwill visit to Pyongyang familiarized him with the particularly potent, still living brand of socialist art and architecture specific to North Korea. He observed first-hand how monuments and buildings can be combined on a grand scale to glorify the legacy of the nation's founders and their resistance of colonial forces, and motivate the performance of a shared national history. Visiting the various Mansudae designed monuments and buildings, Nujoma observed a system of unified and highly controlled national memory, apparently propagated willingly by the North Korean people. While others may dismiss Pyongyang as a city serving the personality cult of Kim Il Sung, Nujoma might have perceived it more positively as a city remembering its past and a great leader not entirely of obligation, but out of gratefulness. Whatever his personal response, what he saw was soon echoed in the building projects he initiated and supported following his return to Namibia.

III. Mansudae Overseas Project in Namibia: the Heroes Acre and Namibian State House

In his writings on collective memory and public monuments, James Young argues for a relationship between a state's desire to forge a common, national memory and the

creation of monuments that serve as a naturalizing locus for that memory. According to Young, these places of memory, or to borrow Pierre Nora's term, *lieux de mémoire*, cast a state's martyrs, founding myths and ideals as naturally true as the landscape they inhabit.⁴⁵ Furthermore, invoking Halbwachs' assertion that memories are recalled through membership in national, religious or class groups, Young argues that "both the reasons for memory and the forms memory takes are always socially mandated, part of a socializing system whereby fellow citizens gain common history through the vicarious memory of their forbearers' experiences."⁴⁶

Young's identification of monuments as socially-mandated, naturalized loci of national memory provides insight into the creation of the first Namibian work designed by the Mansudae Overseas Project, the Heroes' Acre monument. Completed over a period of thirteen months, it was inaugurated on August 26th, 2002. Officially designated "Heroes' Day," August 26th is a national holiday commemorating the start of the Namibian war for independence, led by SWAPO liberation forces, in 1966.⁴⁷ The Heroes' Acre commemorates important revolutionary figures that worked to attain Namibian independence. The monument features a thirty-five meter high obelisk, an eight-meter high bronze statue of an Unknown Soldier, a continuous semi-circular bronze relief

⁴⁵ James Young, "Memory/Monument," 237.

⁴⁶ James Young, "Introduction" to *The Texture of Memory*, 6.

⁴⁷ Each year ceremonies are held out at the Heroes' Acre on August 26th, Heroes' Day, when the monument itself is honored by officials and attending citizens. It is also of note that when representatives of the DPRK travel to Namibia, as did Kim Yong Nam, President of the Presidium of the DPRK Supreme People's Assembly, they will lay wreaths at the monument. See: Korean Central News Agency, "Wreath Laid Before Heroes Cemetery in Windhoek"

<http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2008/2008003/news03/22.htm>

depicting Namibia's struggle for independence, an eternal flame, and 170 graves (Fig. 23 and Fig. 24).⁴⁸ The monument emerges at the foot of the Auas Mountains, ten kilometers south of Windhoek's downtown area. Its location outside the immediate urban environs of Windhoek, in combination with the entry admission charge and restaurant adjacent to the seating pavilion, all function to distinguish the Heroes' Acre memorial as a site of destination, a place one visits to leave behind everyday activities. The placement of the monument in the city's outskirts amidst desert hills also forges a connection between the memorial to Namibia's martyrs and the natural environment. This juxtaposition invokes Young's notion that the placement of a monument within a particular natural environment seeks to invoke a "truth" and "legitimacy" associated with the "objective" and "impartial" land.

There are a number of important parallels between the Heroes' Acre and works in Pyongyang, which connect the decision to employ a North Korean aesthetic to the intention of the postcolonial regime to create a site of collective national memory. First, the viewing experience closely replicates that of the North Korean Martyrs' Cemetery. Visitors to the Heroes' Acre monument must enter through a monumental entrance gate adorned on each side with relief sculptures depicting two kneeling women holding bouquets of flowers (Fig. 25 and Fig. 26). After passing through the gate, the visitor encounters a fountain with a column at its center, whose top is carved away in the shape of three faces meant to symbolize youth that look toward the "buried heroes and

⁴⁸ Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the Namibia National Heritage Council. "Heroes Acre Introduction." <http://www.namibia-1on1.com/a-central/heroes-acre-2.html> (accessed on November 30, 2009).

heroines laid to rest on the Acre itself” (Fig. 27).⁴⁹ The fountain itself has particular iconographic meaning; one guide notes that it contains “cleansing and soothing qualities [that] symbolize freedom after a long and bitter struggle.”⁵⁰ The degree to which this iconographic program can be interpreted by visitors is uncertain as no plaque or written inscription at the site provides such information.

A short drive up the hill brings the viewer to a pavilion at the base of the monument, one replete with a grandstand purportedly capable of holding up to 5,000 persons (Fig. 28).⁵¹ Before reaching the stairs the viewer encounters a sprawling, cruciform bronze medal – a clear reference to the medal at the Martyrs’ Cemetery (Fig. 29). Here, the medal, “the Heroes’ Medal of Bravery,” is dedicated to “all Namibians who sacrificed their lives for the freedom and sovereignty of Namibia.”⁵² The eternal flame at the base of the medal is similarly symbolic, honoring the fallen heroes and heroines of Namibia.

The graves at the Heroes’ Acre are also similar to those at the Martyrs’ Cemetery. Designated for heroes of the Namibian independence struggle, over 170 graves are present at the memorial, though some are empty and are marked in honor of revolutionary heroes buried elsewhere. Evenly divided among the tiers ascending to the obelisk, the graves appearing in ordered lines from below in a manner similar to the

⁴⁹ *Namibia Heroes’ Acre Monument*. <http://my-beautiful-namibia.com/heroes-acre-monument.html> (accessed on December 12, 2010).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the Namibia National Heritage Council. “Heroes Acre Introduction.” <http://www.namibia-1on1.com/a-central/heroes-acre-2.html> (accessed on November 30, 2009).

⁵² *Ibid.*

Martyrs' Cemetery. In contrast to the stones at the Martyrs' Cemetery, however, which feature 110 copper busts of their dead, the Namibian stones display names and pictures engraved in black marble markers (Fig. 30 and Fig. 31). Taken together, the location of the Heroes' Acre at the edge of the city, the passageway between city and sacred space signaled through the entrance gate, the inclusion of a symbolically cleansing water, and the ascension a visitor must make to reach the monument's focal point, all echo the viewing experience performed by a visitor to the Pyongyang Martyr's Cemetery.

In addition to the viewer's spatially mediated experience, other important formal parallels associate the Heroes' Acre with Mansudae works in Pyongyang. For example, the dynamically-posed statue of the Unknown Soldier in full combat gear, who stands in front of the obelisk and looks towards Windhoek over an expanse of the arid Namibian landscape, closely recalls a statue of the "Victory" monument at the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Memorial (Fig. 32 – Fig. 37). Also brandishing military armament, the latter soldier holds the North Korean flag in one hand and boldly motions with the other. The kinetic folds of his cape rhyme with the whipping flag, creating a valiant, explosive tenor seemingly in conflict with the weight of the sculptural medium. That the soldier is posed with the North Korean flag connotes a relationship between the brazen revolutionary fighter and the collective national identity symbolized within the flag. The soldier's open mouth further energizes the bold, decisiveness of his gesture and suggests the emanation of a visceral yell, one perhaps projected over the howl of the wind filling the soldier's cape.

The Unknown Soldier at the Namibian Heroes' Acre grips a grenade in one hand and an AK-47 in the other, a reference to the typical armament of the liberation arm of the organized resistance. Like the Unknown Soldier at the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Memorial, the Namibian figure strides forward, replicating the kinetics of the Pyongyang work. Though the bronze statue represents the Unknown Soldier, its chiseled features bear a striking resemblance to Nujoma himself, and the likeness is often read as such. This connection is further advanced through the inclusion of a handwritten message at the base of the statue, which reads: "Glory to the fallen heroes and heroines of the motherland Namibia! Sam Nujoma, 26th August 2002" (Fig. 38).⁵³ The inclusion of a leader's written script also has ample precedent in Pyongyang, where Kim Il Sung's autographs and messages appear in gold in such places as the United Front Tower, the Chongchon Bridge, and Chungsong Bridge. Additionally, Kim Il Sung's calligraphy figures prominently at the base of the Pyongyang Martyrs' Cemetery, where it serves as a record of the monuments benediction and dedication.⁵⁴

Influences for the Mansudae-designed thirty-meter high obelisk and bronze statue likely include the Juche Tower, and other Western prototypes from which the North Korean monument originally derived. The obelisk, visible even from the apex of the downtown area of Windhoek, represents a sword symbolizing strength, bravery and

⁵³ That the memorial was inaugurated on the 26th of August is significant as it this date marked the beginning of the armed struggle in 1966. Since Namibia's independence this date has been known as "Heroes Day."

⁵⁴ Korean Central New Agency, "Kim Il Sung's Calligraphic Style, Treasure of Korean Nation," <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2010/201004/news12/20100412-13ee.html>.

dedication.⁵⁵ Below the statue a symbolic grave to the Unknown Soldier contains soil from mass graves in Angola and Zambia believed to contain remains of revolutionary fighters.⁵⁶

The semi-circular bronze mural depicting Namibia's struggle for independence can be compared to the relief encircling the monument commemorating the founding of the Korean Workers' Party, lead by General Secretary, Kim Jong Il (Fig. 39 – Fig. 43). The Monument to the Party Founding was completed in 1995 and features three fifty-meter high sculptural towers that depict the hammer, the sickle and the writing brush, representing the worker, the peasant and the intellectual. Below the massive sculptures a stone belt encircles the monument, inside which a narrative band displays iconographically-rich bronze reliefs. The bands are said to represent "the historical root of the Korean Workers' Party, the might of the single-minded unity of the leader, party and masses, and the fighting feature of the Korean people to carry out the human cause of independence."⁵⁷ The narrative scenes feature strong, defiant figures of both sexes, against either neutral or forested backdrops. The facial features of the figures vary only slightly, and their determined expressions are matched by the forceful poses of their bodies. The large size of the figures and their placement beneath the soaring sculptures underscore the message of hard work and dedication as the root of the party's power.

⁵⁵ *Namibia Heroes' Acre Monument*. <http://my-beautiful-namibia.com/heroes-acre-monument.html> (accessed on December 12, 2010).

⁵⁶ *Namibia Heroes' Acre Monument*. <http://my-beautiful-namibia.com/heroes-acre-monument.html> (accessed on December 12, 2010).

⁵⁷ Korean Central News Agency, "Monument to Party Founding, Symbol of Workers' Party of Korea," <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2008/200810/news10/20081010-13ee.html>.

To see the band in its entirety, the visitor must stand inside the monument itself and is confronted with the dynamic charge of the figures and dwarfed by the great stone fists overhead. This thundering viewing experience combined with the narrative reliefs effectively assert the myth and might of the ruling Workers' Party and its role in achieving Korean freedom from colonial rule.

The narrative within the Namibian mural is continuous (Fig. 44 and Fig. 45), but is meant to represent five separate scenes chronicling the journey towards self-rule. An online Namibian guide identifies each scene as: "the awakening of the independence ideal (Fig. 46), political mobilization of the masses (Fig. 47), start of the armed struggle (Fig. 48), intensification of the struggle and finally (Fig. 49), achievement of independence itself (Fig. 50)."⁵⁸ This guide indicates that the final scene, the achievement of independence, is "depicted by a flag-bearing soldier marching at the head of a column of male and female soldiers."⁵⁹ The guide does not, however, note the striking resemblance between the flag bearer in the final scene and Founding President Sam Nujoma.

Except for the likeness of Sam Nujoma leading the victorious soldiers, the mural's iconographical references are generalized. For example, in the first section, the awakening of the independence ideal, figures representing Herero and Himba ethnic tribes, are shown enslaved, some crawling, visibly defeated, and burdened under the weight of colonial rule. The slope of their backs leads the eye to the next scene, the

⁵⁸ *Namibia Heroes' Acre Monument*. <http://my-beautiful-namibia.com/heroes-acre-monument.html> (accessed on December 12, 2010).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

political mobilization of the masses. Emblematic plants associated with the Namibian desert environment, such as the century plant, are shown at the base of the first through third scenes. Weapons depicted throughout the final four scenes of the mural represent the various armaments of the liberation forces, including AK 47s, grenades and a bazooka. The soldiers themselves appear similar in physique and facial expressions, like the minimally varied figures in the dioramas or other bronze reliefs produced by the Mansudae Art Studio in Pyongyang.

The narrative emphasis in the last three scenes is clearly focused on soldiers and guerilla efforts in the achievement of independence, which is represented in the last scene of the mural. This visual connection between guerilla figures and the narrative climax in the final scene can be observed in the formal arrangement of the figures behind the flag bearer. Five of the six figures dressed in military attire directly behind the flag bearer stare in unison at their leader. Behind them, a mother and child follow the group of soldiers, clapping and raising their arms in celebration. The child pushes a bouquet of flowers into the hand of a soldier at the back of the group, the only soldier not looking towards the leader. Preceding the mother and child are three figures wielding guns, who partially obscure the fronts of tanks peaking out over plants and rocky outcroppings in the distance.

The bold, dynamically-posed Socialist Realist figures credit the SWAPO liberation forces with the attainment of independence. Aside from the mural's second scene, the "political mobilization of the masses," where three figures are shown with their hands placed on top of each other over a schematic globe, references to Resolution 435 or the

international mediation of the transfer of power are absent in the stylized account of the struggle. Instead, the connection between guerilla fighting and independence is championed and asserted within the mural, such as in the third scene, which features a soldier holding a flag and raising a clenched fist.

Reinhart Kössler interprets the relief's narrative as either an image of a unified, national collective opposing external rule, or as a reference to the end of colonialism brought by an army in exile, but notes that both interpretations advance a "militarist view" of the liberation struggle.⁶⁰ Historically, however, SWAPO's armed liberation struggle, though it did have "a major impact on the course of decolonization," was not *the* decisive factor in the achievement of independence.⁶¹ Rather, the transfer of power from South Africa to the SWAPO-led government came about after a year-long transition supervised by the United Nations and guided by United Nations Security Council Resolution 435.⁶²

In sum, the visual panoply of references to the militarized members of the independence movement at the Heroes' Acre, exemplified through the narrative relief that foregrounds the role of military leaders in achieving independence, and the Unknown Soldier who looks out towards the prosperous urban capital from the monument's apex, assert the importance of SWAPO in achieving Namibian freedom. A North Korean visual rhetoric was used to articulate this assertion of power by the SWAPO elite to create a lasting memorial to honor and promote the achievements of

⁶⁰ Kössler, "Facing a Fragmented Past: Memory, Culture and Politics in Namibia," 370.

⁶¹ Melber and Saunders, "Conflict Mediation in Decolonisation: Namibia's Transition to Independence," 76.

⁶² Bauer, "Namibia in the First Decade of Independence: How Democratic?," 35.

the SWAPO revolutionary figures in the independence struggle, link the current regime to their efforts, and inspire a recognition of a shared history for those visiting the site.

The second work designed and built by the Mansudae Overseas Project in the capital city was the new Namibian State House (Fig. 51). Commissioned in 2002, the building of the new State House took five and a half years and was completed in March of 2008. It was inaugurated with much fanfare, and the ceremony included a speech by Kim Yong Nam, who traveled to Namibia for the occasion. The new State House inspired a fair amount of controversy, much of which surfaced in Windhoek daily newspapers such as *The Namibian*, although only some of it related to the commissioning of a North Korean design firm for the project. By any measure the new State House is grandiose, with amenities such as a musical fountain, a massive underground parking area and collections of life-sized animal sculptures dispersed throughout the grounds (Fig. 52 – Fig. 54).⁶³ The building itself is located outside of the city center in the Windhoek suburb of Auasblick, and required the expropriation of some fifty properties for security purposes. The cost to the Namibian citizens quickly exceeded from original estimates, fueling anger that the government was acting irresponsibly when nearly a third of the population lived in poverty.⁶⁴ The fact that the building project began in the middle of Nujoma's third term in office also prompted speculation that he intended to continue on as President for a fourth term. Finally, that North Korean workers firm made up the majority of the labor force for the building project provoked further criticisms. When

⁶³ Dynes, Michael, "Palace Pad for People's Hero." *The Times (London)*, June 23, 2004.

⁶⁴ Business Day, "Namibia; Nujoma Builds for Fourth Term." *Africa News*, October 3, 2003.

the project began in 2003 there were 176 workers on site, only forty-four of which were Namibian citizens.⁶⁵ The number of controversies surrounding the building of the new State House underscores the fact that the commission of Mansudae Overseas Project for the job was not a choice of convenience. Rather, the decision reflects a clear desire on the part of the former Namibian President to have the North Korean firm complete the commission, one indicative of his fondness for the authority, modernity and monumentality expressed in Mansudae-designed works.

The design of the Namibian State House displays myriad influences from extant works in North Korea, ones especially visible within its interior. Elements such as terrazzo flooring, extensive use of granite, large-scale paintings of the Namibian landscape, and the incorporation of iconic plant species all borrow from motifs common within North Korean visual culture. As with the Heroes' Acre, the bold, symbolically-laden Mansudae design offered a clear strategy for inscribing nationalistic content within the new State House.

Lawrence Vale notes the importance of straightforward, legible architectural statements for new regimes asserting their legitimacy and identity following their election. He writes: "...for rulers of fledgling countries, in which questions are too many and answers are at a premium, the prospect of a building that fails to contribute unambiguously to the consolidation of rule may be unsettling."⁶⁶ Vale's emphasis on the importance of buildings that unambiguously contribute to the larger project of a

⁶⁵ The Namibian, "Namibia; Government has 'No Clue' On Final Costs of New State House" *Africa News*, September 26, 2003.

⁶⁶ Vale, *Architecture, Power and National Identity*, 328.

national identity favorable to a new regime has particular relevance to considerations of the appeal of North Korean designed works for postcolonial governments in Africa. Mansudae designs, as seen in the Heroes' Acre, emphasize understandable, iconographically-rich designs, and offer a unique, suitable means for creating "unambiguous" architectural works that both declare the power of a new regime and align them with the expression of nationalistic content.

That the Namibian government built the lavish new State House to inspire nationalistic sentiment and loyalty to the new regime is confirmed in the various public statements made in response to protests from parliamentary representatives and the citizenry about the escalating costs for the project. For example, when probed about the cost of the State House by the opposition party Minister of Presidential Affairs Albert Kwana told the National Assembly:

"The New State House is – because of our background – a symbol of Namibia's Sovereignty, of our history and our struggle. The Government therefore took the decision to express our history and our struggle, to honour our heroes and heroines and forebears. That is why we call it the House of the People. People will appreciate our freedom when they see the new State House."⁶⁷

In this statement the Minister both justified the project's cost, and reminded the readers of the Government's role in the struggle as a means of affirming its legitimacy. Also of note is that in the state budget the allocation for the new State House project is

⁶⁷ Brigitte Weidlich, "Costly New State House, not only 'House of the People', but Struggle Symbol: Kwana," *The Namibian*, April 18, 2008.

listed under the heading of “protecting and defending the Constitution,” an section designating provisions for the maintenance of peace, stability and good governance.⁶⁸

As in the case of the Heroes’ Acre visual parallels exist between the Namibian State House and similar projects in Pyongyang. The Namibian State House interior recalls elements found in the Grand People’s Study House, the Kumsusan Memorial Palace, and the Pyongyang Maternity Hospital. For example, common to the Namibian State House and the grand buildings of Pyongyang are the inlaid floral patterns that radiate out from the center of stone floors. Examples of such circular designs are found on floors in the Credential Area room and the State House Media Briefing room in the Namibian State House (Fig. 55 and Fig. 56). The design in the Credential Area displays alternating dark and light “s” curved lines that spiral out from a rosette center to create a dynamic pattern that seems to reference nature. Floors in the Grand People’s Study House, and the Pyongyang Maternity Hospital (Fig. 57 and Fig. 58) are similarly symmetrical and derived from nature. However, the Pyongyang examples display clear subject matter, such as botanical motifs, and a greater range of colors than do the Namibian floors. Nevertheless, the Namibian works undoubtedly derive from this popular mode of adorning public buildings in Pyongyang.

Another aesthetic feature of the Namibian State House rooted in the bombastic visual culture of North Korea and other communist states is the use of grand emblematic landscape paintings and mosaics. One such mosaic landscape appears in Grand People’s Study House behind a seated statue of Kim Il Sung; the subject is the

⁶⁸ Lindsay Dentlinger, “New State House ‘to defend the Constitution,’ *The Namibian*, May 17, 2005.

iconic crater lake on Mt. Paektu, the holy mountain of revolution (Fig. 59).⁶⁹ Depictions of the natural landscape were approved as subject matter in the 1970s, when Kim Jong Il declared that: “The idea of describing nature in a Socialist country is to promote patriotism, heighten national pride and confidence of living in a Socialist country.”⁷⁰ This statement by Kim Jong Il underscores the important relationship that North Koreans have with their physical landscape and the value attached to it as an artistic subject.⁷¹ Such landscapes also serve as backdrops for official photographs with state visitors. For example, during his state visit to North Korea, Bill Clinton was photographed with Kim Jong Il in front of a large mural of a crashing waterfall (Fig. 60).⁷² A state photograph of Nujoma and North Korean officials was taken in front a similar mural during a previous visit made by Nujoma (Fig. 61).

Representative scenes of Namibia’s landscape such as Rucana Falls, Fish River Canyon (Fig. 62 and Fig. 63), Epupa Falls (Fig. 64 and Fig. 65), and the Spitzkoppe rock formation (Fig. 66) were painted by Mansudae artists and figure prominently within the

⁶⁹ Brian Myers discusses this symbol of the birthplace of the Korean race and a frequently depicted national landmark. B.R. Myers, *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters*, 76. See also: Jane Portal. *Art Under Control in North Korea*, 60.

⁷⁰ Jane Portal. *Art Under Control in North Korea*, 124.

⁷¹ For an in-depth discussion of North Korean interpretations and uses of landscapes see: B. R. Myers, *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters*, 73; see also Peter Atkins’ post-structuralist interpretation of landscape history in: “A Séance with the Living: the Intelligibility of the North Korean Landscape” in *North Korea in the New World Order*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996): 196-211.

⁷² Crashing waves are frequently used in North Korean paintings as a metaphor for the aggression and hostility of the outside (particularly Western) world. Their breaking along the coast as scene in this image is meant as a reference to the ineffectuality of such onslaughts. See: B. R. Myers, *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters*, photographic insert 13.

State House interior.⁷³ These paintings represent highlights of the Namibian landscape, without indication of human presence. The scenes are cropped closely to emphasize the power of the falling water and arching dunes, and effectively associate the grandeur of the Namibian landscape with the postcolonial government.

Assigning North Koreans to paint scenes of the Namibian landscape for State House decoration is perhaps one of the most surprising decisions made by Namibian officials orchestrating the commission. The arid, desert expanses of the Namibian landscape are familiar tropes of Namibian paintings of the past century, exemplified in the works of early twentieth-century artists such as Alfred Jentsch (Fig. 67 and Fig. 68) and more contemporary artists such as Christine Marais.⁷⁴ In addition, Namibia has a vibrant arts community, as evidenced by the number of artists working and exhibiting in Windhoek and other cities such as the coastal municipality of Swakopmund. In Windhoek alone there are two institutions that provide arts education: the Department of Art at the University of Namibia and the Katatura Center for the arts, whose students work in a variety of media and receive rigorous training through their respective

⁷³ Economist, The, "New State House to open on Independence Day." *The Economist (Namibia)*, March 20, 2008.

⁷⁴ It is important to note that even if the government rejected the use of artworks made by Namibian artists of European descent for the new State House there were a number of other artists whose work they could have used instead. For example, the work of prominent, prolific black artists such as John Muafangejo or Joseph Madisia could have been chosen to decorate the State House, and as such, effectively supported those Namibians disadvantaged under the colonial administration's apartheid rule. For an in-depth discussion of the history of landscape painting in Namibia see: Adelheid Lilienthal, Annaleen Eins, and Jo Rogge, *Art in Namibia: National Art Gallery of Namibia*, 1-7.

curricula.⁷⁵ Thus, local artists might have been given the commissions. Another alternative was borrowing from the National Gallery of Art in Windhoek, which has a large permanent collection rich with work from Namibian artists, ranging from tradition-based to contemporary works in different media.⁷⁶ Presumably some of these works could have been loaned to the State House, as was done previously for various ministry offices.⁷⁷

The lobby of the State House features a large painting depicting the first Namibian Cabinet. Large-scale portraits of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il may be counted among the immediate precedents for this work (Fig. 69 and Fig. 70). Such portraits typically display the two leaders together within a natural setting, sometimes with emblematic plant species such as the Kimilsungia, a special new hybrid cultivar of orchid, and the Kimjongilia, a special begonia, named in honor of the leaders; the magnolia, the national flower of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; and the azalea, the flower of the revolution (Fig. 71 and Fig. 72).

The group portrait of the Namibian leaders extends the length of the wall and presents: Sam Nujoma, Hifikepunye Pohama, Hage Geingob (the first Prime Minister of

⁷⁵ Many of the Katatura students are disadvantaged and had the government wanted to support a non-elite group of students they could have done so.

⁷⁶ The prevalence of desert scenes and other depictions of the Namibian natural environment painted by Namibian artists began to diminish towards the end of the 1970s, when tastes established by European painters and patrons lost much of their influence. The 1970s were a tumultuous time politically and as such many artists began to move away from edenistic depictions of the countryside in their work to subjects with political content and or that could otherwise convey tension and unease. See: National Art Gallery of Namibia, Adelheid Lilienthal, Annaleen Eins, and Jo Rogge, *Art in Namibia: National Art Gallery of Namibia* (Windhoek: The Gallery, 1997): 6.

⁷⁷ Personal communication, Annaleen Eins, August 15, 2010.

Namibia), Theo-Ben Gurirab (who replaced Hage Geingob as Prime Minister and now serves as Speaker of the National Assembly of Namibia), Ben and Libertina Amathilia (both previous cabinet and National Assembly members), Hidipo Hamutenya (former cabinet and National Assembly member), Gert Hanekom (Former Finance Minister) and others against a Namibian landscape with laces of *Welwitschia* leaves in the foreground (Fig. 73).⁷⁸ All persons pictured, in addition to their service in the postcolonial government, were also important figures within SWAPO prior to independence, and many, such as Hage Geingob, continue to hold officer positions within the party. The inclusion of this portrait within the new state house effectively equates members of the SWAPO elite with the realization of the new, postcolonial government. References to Resolution 435 or other Namibians involved in the internationally-mediated transfer of power from South Africa are absent within state house decoration, privileging the efforts of SWAPO elite in the narrative of the nation's founding over less glamorous diplomatic efforts.

A theme of the new Namibian State House was said to be the *Welwitschia* plant, a peculiar plant species, known locally as "n'tumbo," or "onion of the desert," unique to the Namib Desert in northwestern Namibia (Fig. 74).⁷⁹ An adult *Welwitschia* consists of only two leaves, a stem base and roots, but can grow to over a meter tall and eight meters wide. The *Welwitschia* leaves are the longest-lived in the plant kingdom, with an average life span between 500-600 years and the largest specimens up to 2000 years of

⁷⁸ Sibeene, Petronella. "Namibia: State House Inaugurated in Style." *New Era*, March 25, 2008.

⁷⁹ Senters, Anna E. "Welwitschia mirabilis Cultivation." *AERGE Newsletter*, Vol. 10 (2) Summer 1997 p. 5.

age.⁸⁰ The long-life and endurance of the Welwitschia as well as its endemism to the Namib Desert make the Welwitschia an ideal botanical symbol for the new nation.

The idea of integrating a symbolic plant into the state house design may well have come from North Korea where emblematic plants such as the magnolia and azalea are ubiquitous in the designs of the official Mansudae projects in Pyongyang. For instance, the Kimilsuniga and the magnolia are included in the carved baskets of flowers that decorate the both sides of the Juche Tower, representing the people's desire to bring the Juche idea into bloom (Fig. 75).⁸¹

The omnipresence of the Welwitschia in the Namibian State House is most clearly observed in the golden emblems adorning the exterior fences and walls, and cabinet doors (Fig. 76 – Fig. 79). The Welwitschia plant also features prominently in a painting in the State House banquet hall (Fig. 80 and Fig. 81). Situated behind the head table, this painting includes three different-sized depictions of the plant, with the largest extending the length of the wall. The plants are isolated from any particular context, set against a stark blue background, which pushes them forward within the picture plane. The separation of the plant species from its natural desert environment suggests its interpretation as a recognizable emblem of the Namibian nation. Again, while the Welwitschia plant is specifically Namibian, its use as a recurring motif recalls North Korean practice and represents another way in which the visual culture of Pyongyang was absorbed and recast for Namibia.

⁸⁰ Notten, Alice. "Welwitschia mirabilis." *Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden*. Kirstenbosch: Cape Town, March 2003.

⁸¹ Jane Portal, *Art Under Control in North Korea*, 92; 44.

Lawrence Vale, in his discussion of postcolonial capital designs, acknowledges that foreign architects, in adapting their designs “to the challenges of cultural pluralism” must often make “visible assumptions about the social and cultural preferences of their clients.”⁸² In singling out the Welwitschia as a signifier of the Namibian nation, the Mansudae design foregrounds aesthetic tropes common to North Korean visual culture, and in doing so, formulates culturally specific symbols that have little relation to contemporary Namibian culture. Frederic Freschi describes the “incorporation of regional elements as coding devices” as an “attempt to engage a sense of place,” yet acknowledges that all too often, this results in clichéd portrayals of an “African aesthetic” instead of indigenous references. This practice is exemplified through the indiscriminate, widespread integration of the Welwitschia plants in the State House design, and also through the animal sculptures adorning the grounds that encircle the building. Sculptures of elephants, zebras, oryx and other common African mammals, in an attempt to culturally locate the Namibian State House, end up drawing attention to the touristic artifice of the symbolic program characterizing the North Korean design.

Other parallels between the interior decoration of the Namibian State House and Mansudae projects in Pyongyang include the mosaic of the Namibian flag (Fig. 82 and Fig. 83), and extravagant chandeliers (Fig. 84). The mosaic depicting the Namibian flag that adorns the wall of the Cabinet Room might be compared to many mosaic murals decorating Pyongyang buildings. Mosaics are a specialty of the Mansudae Art Studio,

⁸² Vale, *Architecture, Power and National Identity*, 322

and figure prominently within the visual culture of Pyongyang, including the Metro.⁸³ Also, the domed ceiling in the cabinet chambers and the ornamental chandeliers in the cabinet areas as well as banquet hall recall the lighting design in Mansudae buildings such as the Grand People's Study House (Fig. 85) and the Pyongyang subway stations. Another characteristic of the Pyongyang buildings shared by the State House is the extensive use of costly polished stone floors, pillars and walls. In the Namibian State House, the Mansudae designers used different colors of granite – black, green and maroon – for each floor of the building.⁸⁴ These examples attest to breadth of correlations between interior design motifs within the Namibian State House and with other projects completed by the Mansudae Art Studio in Pyongyang.

Taken together, the numerous ways that the Heroes' Acre Monument and the new Namibian State House recast the visual culture of Pyongyang to suit the Namibian context are striking. Both Namibian projects are of particular national significance: the State House emblematic of the new nation and its independent government, and the Heroes' Acre monument a tribute to Namibia's struggle for self-rule. The aesthetic outsourcing of their designs was a controversial decision, and ultimately represents a concerted effort to replicate the power of Pyongyang's visual culture in Namibia for the purposes of imprinting the authority and legitimacy of the post-colonial government within the public sphere and by extension the public consciousness.

⁸³ Jane Portal, *Art Under Control in North Korea*, 148.

⁸⁴ Catherine Sasman, "Namibia: New State House for New Nation," *New Era*, March 20, 2008.

IV. Independence Memorial Museum

The most recent Namibian commission given to the Mansudae Overseas Project is the Independence Memorial Museum, which is scheduled to be completed in the Summer of 2011 (Fig. 86).⁸⁵ This grandiose concrete tower, identified by the Namibian Ministry of Public Works as the second phase of the Heroes' Acre project, was originally planned to open in March of 2010 in commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of Namibia's Independence from South Africa, but construction was put on hold due to budgetary concerns.⁸⁶

Both the Heroes' Acre and the new Namibian State House visually assert the authority of the ruling SWAPO party through the use of aesthetic programs borrowed from monuments and buildings in Pyongyang, but this process is even more overt in the Independence Memorial Museum. While the former employ elements of the imported visual culture, they nonetheless incorporate Namibian references into their subject matter and assert the authority of the ruling SWAPO party in clear, yet nuanced ways. The Independence Museum, however, is first and foremost an aggressive symbol of nascent nationalism and the Namibian government's triumph over the colonial regime.

The site chosen for this museum is the highest point in central Windhoek, at the intersection of Robert Mugabe and Fidel Castro streets adjacent to the iconic German colonial Christuskirche. The placement of the museum in this location not only speaks to the government's desire not only to establish new visual identities for the young Nation,

⁸⁵ "Namibia: Memorial Museum Getting Off the Ground," *Namibia Economist*, 11 September 2009.

⁸⁶ "Independence Memorial Museum." <http://visitwindhoek.net/menu-seedo/menu-museums/menu-independence> (accessed on October 19, 2010).

but also constitutes a metaphorical confrontation with icons of the colonial period. The museum can be seen throughout the city, and its stark, solid form forcefully challenges the curvaceous façade of the church (Fig. 87).⁸⁷ This type of iconoclastic practice directed at colonial structures has ample precedent outside of North Korea, nonetheless the visual force Mansudae design is a particularly effective means of achieving this aim.

Along with the Independence Museum's aggressive juxtaposition with the German colonial Christuskirche, the choice of site also represents an assertion of authority by current regime over the former colonizers. In order to build the museum on this spot, officials had to dismantle and relocate a notable sculpture commemorating German war victory, the "Reiterdenkmal." The sculpture, a man with outstretched arm mounted on a horse overlooking the city of Windhoek, was inaugurated in January of 1912 as a remembrance to the German Schutztruppe soldiers that died during the war against the Herero and Nama peoples of northern Namibia (Fig. 88 and Fig. 89).⁸⁸ Although for many moving this statue this was a reprehensible act against a monument that was part of modern Namibian history,⁸⁹ for others it represented a welcome phase

⁸⁷ Namibian architect Jacob Wasserfall originally took part in the government meetings reviewing the design proposal from the Mansudae Overseas Project for the Independence Museum. At his suggestion that the government consider using an existing structure across the road from the Museum's current location Wasserfall was told by Sam Nujoma that the Independence Museum was to be taller than any colonial structure, and as such his suggestion was not adequate for the commission. Jacob Wasserfall, Personal Communication, 13 August 2010.

⁸⁸ Christof Maletsky, "City Icon to Take Last Ride," *The Namibian*, October 6, 2008.

⁸⁹ Namibia maintains close and cordial relations with the German government and there some feared that this action against the statue would be viewed unfavorably by German officials and perhaps more importantly, German tourists. See: Brigitte Weidlich, "Let's Not Move History, DTA Leader Proposes," *The Namibian*, December 6, 2008.

of the decolonization process.⁹⁰ Ultimately, the monument was moved, but not far. It now stands about 100 yards to the north in front of the state Alte Feste history museum, another structure erected by German colonizers (Fig. 90 and Fig. 91). Nonetheless, the symbolic value of its displacement to make way for the Independence Museum, in concert with the dwarfing of the emblematic Christuskirche, was a bold repudiation of the past.

The Namibian Institute of Architects (NIA) was one of the many voices in opposition to the move of the Reiterdenkmal to make way for the Independence Museum. The architects association believed that the selection of a site in the Windhoek business district was inappropriate for a museum dedicated to commemorating the nation's independence. The President of the NIA, Paul Munting, speaking on behalf of the Institute, urged the government to consider an alternative location outside of downtown Windhoek:

“Taking the museum to Katutura, Mondesa (Swakopmund) or Kuisebmond (Walvis Bay)⁹¹ would mean it would form part of the daily lives of those who were in the struggle. At present there are few incentives available to draw tourists to Katutura and as a consequence the tourist expenditure in Windhoek is concentrated in the central business district and surrounds.”⁹²

The architect's feelings regarding this matter were also represented by others in the public media. One editorial, written in response to the article published in *The Namibian*

⁹⁰ See: Phaniel Kaapama, “Memory Politics, The Reiterdenkmal And The De-colonization of the Mind” *The Namibian* August 22, 2008.

⁹¹ Swakopmund and Walvis Bay are cities on the Namibian coast; Mondesa and Kuisebmond are both townships (informal settlement areas) within these cities.

⁹² Christof Maletsky, “Architects Say Move of Monument ‘flawed’”, *The Namibian*, July 17, 2008.

that outlined the architect's objections, states: "[the museum] is right in the middle of the government and administrative area, away from the very people whose freedom it is supposed to represent."⁹³ As precedent for the location of culturally significant monuments in historically disadvantaged areas, the architects cited two museums in South Africa: the Red Location Museum in the Nelson Mandela Municipality (Port Elizabeth) and the Hector Pietersen Museum in Soweto, Johannesburg.⁹⁴

The architects also voiced concern over the process through which the museum's design was chosen. The NIA members and many others objected to the absence of an open architectural competition for the design, and failure to solicit qualified Namibian architects. Moreover, the secrecy surrounding the design plans until they were approved was, for many, an affront to the spirit of the proposed project.

Local architects, such as Nina Maritz, point to the newly erected Constitutional Court in South Africa as an example of how the Namibian government might have awarded of the commission for the Independence Museum. In this case, the design submitted by a team of South African architects was chosen from a pool of international and domestic proposals in an open competition. Information about the nationalities of the architects was not made available to the panel of judges prior to their selection, and finalists were chosen solely on the merits of their design. Once the finalists had been picked the designs were submitted to the public for comment, and their input was

⁹³ "Appropriate Memorial, Inappropriate Site" *The Namibian*, June 13, 2008.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

weighed heavily in the eventual awarding of the commission to the South African architects Andrew Makin, Janina Masojada and Paul Wygers.⁹⁵

The design of the South African Constitutional Court incorporates portions of a notorious Apartheid era prison, and in doing so references the struggles against past injustices at the same time as it looks towards a brighter future. To this point Law-Viljoen notes:

It is the realization of the dream of many to have a building in the new South Africa that would celebrate the ideals of a progressive Constitution, commemorate the suffering and struggles of the country's past without slavishly doing obeisance to history and give visible form to the belief that all are equal before the law.⁹⁶

For architects such as Maritz the Independence Memorial Museum lacks such a balance between recognition of the past and commemoration of the hopeful present, and misses an opportunity to give Namibian citizens a chance to engage in civic discourse about the meaning of their independence, and to help heal the lingering wounds of the apartheid past.⁹⁷ Effectively, in the awarding of the commission to the Mansudae firm, Namibia lost a chance to bring its diverse citizens together and involve them in the process of creating a monument representative of their post-colonial unity.

⁹⁵ Bronwyn Law-Viljoen, *Light on a Hill: Building the Constitutional Court of South Africa* (Parkwood, South Africa: David Krut, 2006): 7

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

⁹⁷ Nina Maritz, Personal Communication, August 11 2010.

V. Conclusion

In March of 2008 Kim Yong Nam paid an official state visit to Windhoek on the occasion of the eighteenth anniversary of Namibia's independence and to attend the inauguration of the new State House. As an honored guest, Kim Yong Nam gave a speech, and together with Sam Nujoma and current President Hifikepunye Pohamba, unveiled a tablet of peace to officially open the new seat of the national government.⁹⁸

In his address Kim Yong Nam praised the continued positive relations between North Korea and Namibia and described the new State House as a symbol of friendship between the two countries.⁹⁹ He continued, declaring that the State House had sprung from the good relations first begun between Kim Il Sung and Sam Nujoma during the Liberation struggle. Reflecting these sentiments, Namibian President Hifikepunye Pohamba praised the able North Korean technicians and declared that the State House would act as a symbol of the sovereignty and dignity of the Namibian people. Pohamba also expressed his thanks to the North Korea for its moral support and material aid during Namibia's struggle for independence.¹⁰⁰

A joint communiqué from the two nations details the remainder of the North Korean leader's goodwill visit. It notes that Kim Yong Nam and his delegation visited the Heroes Monument and laid a ceremonial wreath at the foot of the statue of the

⁹⁸ BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific – Political. "North Korea's Kim Yong Nam Attends Namibia Events." March 21, 2008.

⁹⁹ Joint Communiqué. "Joint communiqué issued on the occasion of the official visit to the Republic of Namibia by his excellency, Kim Yong Nam, President of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea."

¹⁰⁰ BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific – Political. "North Korea's Kim Yong Nam Attends Namibia Events." March 21, 2008.

unknown soldier and traveled to other sites in Windhoek.¹⁰¹ In addition, the communiqué expresses that the visit was a success and relays Kim Yong Nam's conviction that the visit marks an important milestone in deepening the feelings of the two peoples and giving a "fresh impetus to the bilateral relations."¹⁰² An official invitation to visit Pyongyang was also extended to President Pohamba.¹⁰³

This account of relations between Namibia and North Korea on the occasion of the State House inauguration represents a commitment on the part of both nations to strengthen the ties that began during Namibia's years of struggle to attain independence. The sense of obligation felt on the part of the Namibian leaders towards North Korea lends support to the argument that the commission of the Mansudae Overseas Project for the building of the Heroes' Acre Monument, State House and Independence Museum represents an act of calculated diplomacy. Yet, the remarkable fidelity between the Namibian works and extant Mansudae works in Pyongyang suggests that motivations for commissioning the North Korean firm extended beyond fostering favorable relations and more clearly demonstrated the government's desire to establish a collective national identity through architectural works, based on a set of memories favorable to the postcolonial government and apart from Western references.

¹⁰¹Korean Central News Agency. "Wreath Laid before Heroes Cemetery in Windhoek" <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2008/200803/news03/24.htm>

¹⁰² Joint communiqué Joint Communiqué. "Joint communiqué issued on the occasion of the official visit to the Republic of Namibia by his excellency, Kim Yong Nam, President of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea."

¹⁰³ Ibid.

As Lawrence Vale describes, edifices and monuments that are touted as being representative a nation's identity, are typically a means of fulfilling three other needs: "the need to re-assert the sub-nationality of the sponsoring regime by equating its own specific ethnic heritage with 'the national'; the need to extend international identity through staking some new claim to noteworthy modernity; and the need to develop a personal identity of the client or designer, who views any single building project as a highly individualized imprint of self."¹⁰⁴ Viewed in relation to the Namibian commissions, hiring the Mansudae Overseas Project may be seen as an attempt to meet the first two "needs" described by Vale. The foregrounding of the SWAPO narrative in achieving Namibian independence in the Heroes' Acre and the mural-sized portrait of SWAPO elite against a naturalized, Namibian landscape in the State House portrait both speak to the desire for a sub-national entity to equate itself with the 'national.' The erection of a new State House, distinct from one used during the colonial era, replete with innocuous, clichéd icons intended to convey a sense of Namibian identity speaks to the need for a common means of forging identity and legitimacy within the domestic as well as international spheres. Similarly, the independence museum, whose design makes it first and foremost a metaphorical affront to colonial structures, serves as a declarative voice for the power and might of the new regime in the postcolonial era.

In sum, this paper has speculated on the motivations behind the awarding of commissions for three of the most culturally-significant buildings in Windhoek to the Mansudae Overseas Project. I have identified the unique ways in which the monuments

¹⁰⁴ Vale, *Architecture, Power and National Identity*, 99.

echo the reverential visual culture of Pyongyang, and argued that this had a profound impact on Sam Nujoma. Given his familiarity with the city, it is possible to view the monuments in Windhoek as consequences of his desire to realize a similar visual regime for his own nation. By examining the mechanisms through which the commissions are realized, how the sites are chosen, and how the designs were selected, we can see how works inspired by North Korea and produced by North Korean artists are being used to assert the power and authority of the post-colonial government in the public sphere as well as a nationalistic sentiment based on the actions of the SWAPO elite.

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Figure 1: Independence Museum, viewed from Robert Mugabe Avenue, Windhoek.
Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 2: View of Heroes' Acre Memorial central "Unknown Soldier" sculpture, Windhoek, Namibia.

Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 3: Aerial view of Namibian State House, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Courtesy of *Die Republikein*.



Figure 4: Portrait of current President Hifikepunye Pohamba (left) and Founding President Sam Nujoma at Ministry of Environment and Tourism. Portraits of the two leaders appear together frequently in offices throughout the capital city of Windhoek
Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 5: Sam Nujoma greets North Korean citizens during a diplomatic visit to North Korea. Accompanying caption read: “President Sam Nujoma on a visit to North Korea meets female soldiers, 1983.”

Source: Namibian National Archives.



Figure 6: Sam Nujoma with Kim Il-Sung in North Korea
Source: Namibian National Archives.



Figure 7: View of Juche Tower towards Grand People's Study House.

Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zaruka/3560068203/>.



Figure 8: View of Juche Tower from below.

Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zaruka/2945684478/in/set-72157608060704314>.



Figure 9: Entrance to Martyr's Cemetery, Pyongyang, DPRK
Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/kernbeisser/424812977/>.



Figure 10: View of Entrance Gate, Martyrs' Cemetery, Pyongyang, DPRK.
Source: <http://www.pbase.com/bmcmorrow/image/116365871>.



Figure 11: View towards Cemetery, Martyrs' Cemetery, Pyongyang, DPRK.
Source: <http://www.pbase.com/bmcmorrow/image/116365874>.



Figure 12: Sculpture Group at Martyrs' Cemetery, Pyongyang, DPRK.
Source: <http://www.pbase.com/bmcmorrow/image/116365879>.



Figure 13: Detail, Sculpture group at Martyrs' Cemetery, Pyongyang, DPRK.
Source: <http://www.pbase.com/bmcmorrow/image/116365877>.



Figure 14: Inscription from Kim Il Sung, Martyrs' Cemetery, Pyongyang, DPRK.
Source: <http://www.pbase.com/bmcmorrow/image/116365881>.



Figure 15: View of Martyr's Cemetery, Pyongyang, DPRK
Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/kernbeisser/424815605/>.



Figure 16: Side view of granite sculptures depicting revolutionary heroes, Martyrs' Cemetery, Pyongyang, DPRK

Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zaruka/2982123644/sizes/l/in/set-72157608451672128/>.



Figure 17: View of gravestones at Martyrs' Cemetery, Pyongyang, DPRK.
Source: <http://www.pbase.com/bmcmorrow/image/116365888>.



Figure 18: View of Kumsusan Memorial Palace, Pyongyang, DPRK.
Source: <http://www.pbase.com/bmcmorrow/image/116365852>.



Figure 19: Kim Il Sung statue at Kumsusan Memorial Palace, Pyongyang, DPRK.
Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mytripsmypics/2520830134/>.



Figure 20: View of Grand People's Study House, Pyongyang, DPRK.
Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/rawbean/180734835/>.



Figure 21: Interior, Grand People's Study House, Pyongyang, DPRK.
Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/stiofandeburn/3696810219/>.



Figure 23: View of gravestones, Heroes' Acre, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Photograph taken by Author.



Figure 24: Bronze mural depicting Namibia's struggle for independence, Heroes' Acre, Windhoek, Namibia.

Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 25: Entrance to Heroes' Acre, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 26: View of sculpture flanking entrance to Heroes' Acre, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 27: Stone sculpture symbolizing youth. Heroes' Acre, Windhoek, Namibia.

Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 28: View of stadium seating, Heroes' Acre, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Photograph taken by author.

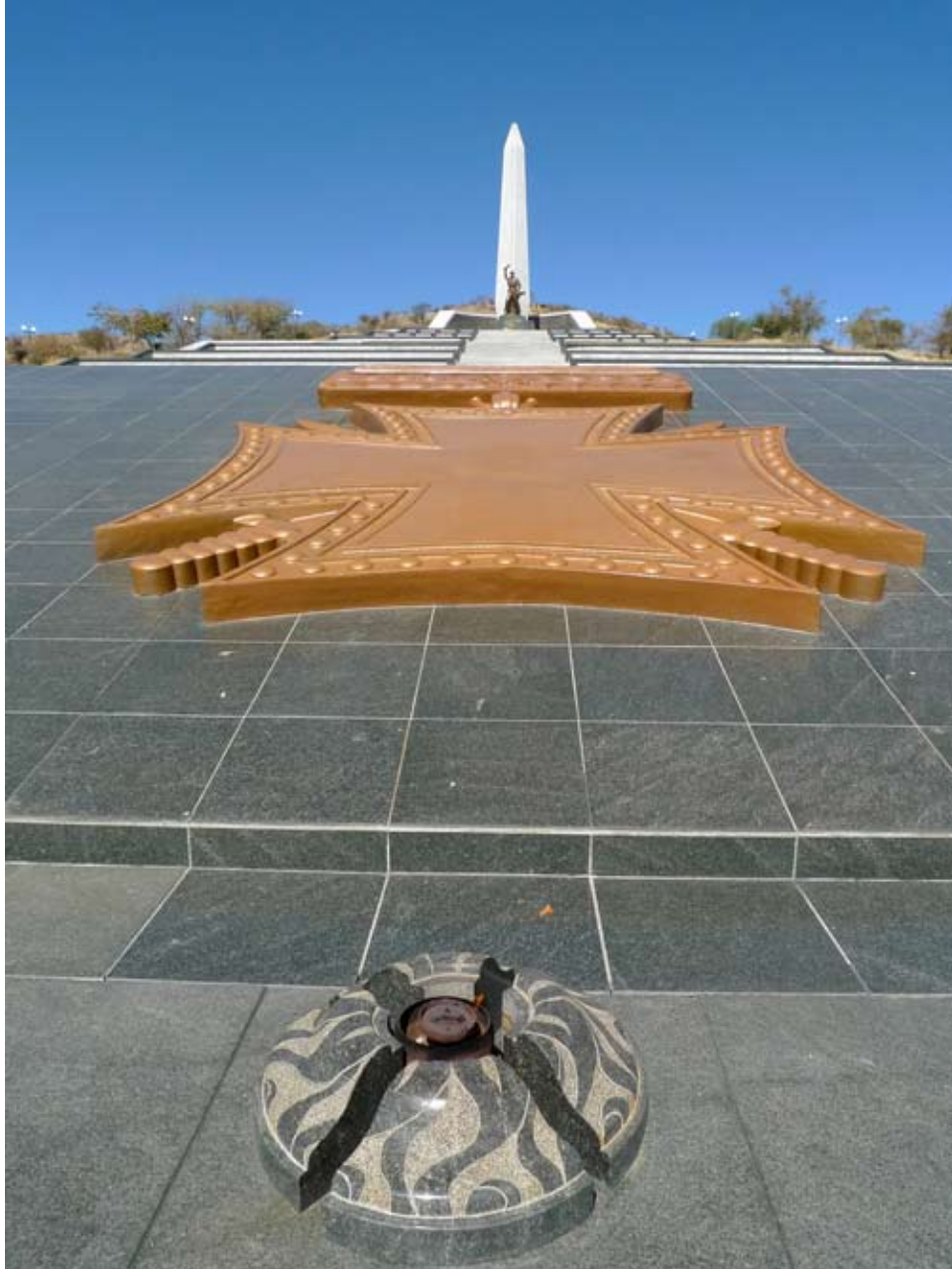


Figure 29: View of Heroes' Medal, Eternal Flame and obelisk, Heroes' Acre, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 30: View of graves from behind, Heroes' Acre, Windhoek, Namibia.

Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 31: Grave, Heroes' Acre, Windhoek, Namibia.

Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 32: View of Unknown Statue overlooking desert, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 33: Statue of the Unknown Soldier, holding grenade and AK-47, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/pyrex/2159653362/in/photo-stream/>.



Figure 34: Side view of Unknown Soldier statue, Heroes' Acre, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 35: Victory Monument, Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Memorial, Pyongyang, DPRK.

Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/langsx2/5104311451/sizes/z/in/photostream/>.



Figure 36: Rear view, Victory Monument, Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Memorial, Pyongyang, DPRK.

Source: <http://www.pbase.com/bmcmorrow/image/116357212>.



Figure 37: Victory Monument, Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Memorial, Pyongyang, DPRK.

Source: <http://www.pbase.com/bmcmorrow/image/116357218>.

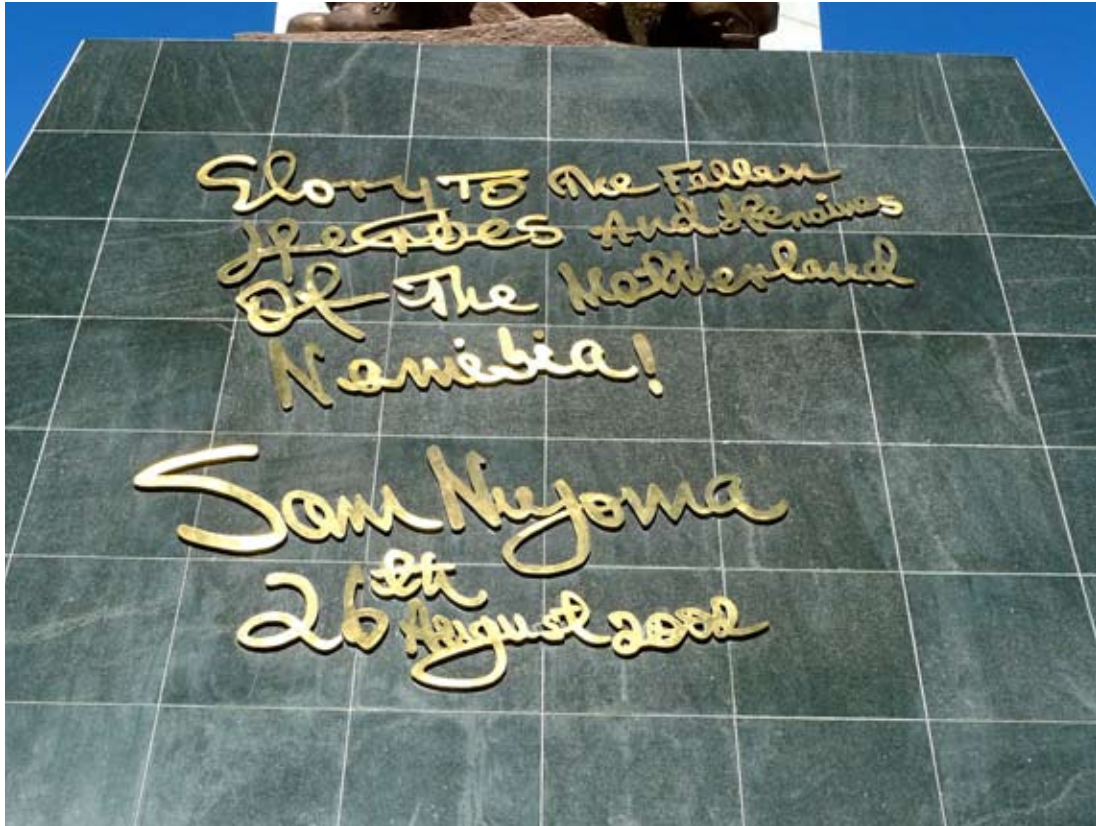


Figure 38: Plaque reading “Glory to the Fallen Heroes and Heroines of the Motherland Namibia, Sam Nujoma, 26th August, 2002,” Heroes’ Acre, Windhoek, Namibia.

Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 39: View of the Monument to the Party Founding, Pyongyang, DPRK.
Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zaruka/3118941172/sizes/z/in/set-72157611400240356/>.



Figure 40: View of the Monument to the Party Founding, Pyongyang, DPRK.

Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zaruka/3118941354/sizes/z/in/set-72157611400240356/>.



Figure 41: View of interior relief, Monument to the Party Founding, Pyongyang, DPRK.
Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zaruka/3118941260/sizes/z/in/set-72157611400240356/>.



Figure 42: View of interior relief, Monument to the Party Founding, Pyongyang, DPRK.
Source: <http://www.pbase.com/bmcmorrow/image/116357440>.



Figure 43: View of interior relief, Monument to the Party Founding, Pyongyang, DPRK.
Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zaruka/4037987541/sizes/z/in/set-72157611400240356/>.



Figure 44: First half of bronze mural depicting Namibia's struggle for independence, Heroes' Acre, Windhoek, Namibia

Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 45: Last half of bronze mural, Heroes' Acre, Windhoek, Namibia

Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 46: First scene in bronze mural depicting Namibia's independence struggle, Heroes' Acre, Windhoek, Namibia

Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 47: Second scene in bronze mural depicting Namibia's independence struggle, Heroes' Acre, Windhoek, Namibia.

Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 48: View of third scene, Heroes' Acre, Windhoek, Namibia
Source: Photograph taken by the author.



Figure 49: View of end of fourth scene and beginning of final scene, Heroes' Acre, Windhoek, Namibia.

Source: Photograph taken by the author.



Figure 50: Final scene of bronze mural depicting Namibia's independence struggle, Heroes' Acre, Windhoek, Namibia.

Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 51: Entrance to State House, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Courtesy of *Die Republikein*.



Figure 52: Animal sculptures in State House grounds, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Courtesy of *Die Reublikein*.



Figure 53: Animal sculptures at State House entrance, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Courtesy of *Die Republikein*.



Figure 54: Animal sculptures (Oryx), State House entrance, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Courtesy of *Die Republikein*.



Figure 55: Media Briefing Room, State House, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Courtesy of *Die Reublikein*.



Figure 56: Credential Area, State House, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Courtesy of *Die Republikein*.



Figure 57: Floor, Grand People's Study House, Pyongyang, DPRK
Source: Photo courtesy of Dr. Marsha Haufler.



Figure 58: Pyongyang Maternity Hospital, Pyongyang, DPRK.
Photo courtesy of Dr. Marsha Haufler.



Figure 59: Kim Il Sung Statue, Grand People's Study House, Pyongyang, DPRK.
Source: Photography courtesy of Dr. Marsha Haufler



Figure 60: President Bill Clinton and his delegation with Kim Jong Il.
Source: http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/2009/08/09/2009-08-09_n_korea_leader_uses_bill_visit_to_groom_minikim.html.



Figure 61: Accompanying caption read: “President Sam Nujoma establishing ties for the future SWAPO with North Korean leader (to his right), the late Kim Il Sung in Pyongyang, North Korea, 1986”

Source: Namibian National Archives.



Figure 62: Fish River Canyon Painting, State House, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Courtesy of *Die Republikein*.



Figure 63: Fish River Canyon Painting, full view, State House, Windhoek, Namibia
Source: Courtesy of *Die Republikein*.



Figure 64: Epupa Falls Painting, State House, Windhoek, Namibia.

Source: Courtesy of *Die Republikein*.



Figure 65: Epupa Falls Painting, State House, Windhoek, Namibia.

Source: Courtesy of *Die Republikein*.



Figure 66: Painting of the Namibian Spitzkoppe, State House, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Courtesy of *Die Republikein*.



Figure 67: Adolph Jentsch, Swarte Kuppe, 1941. Oil on canvas Collection of the National Gallery of Namibia.

Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 68: Adolph Jentsch, Landscape with Trees, 1941. Oil on canvas. Collection of the National Gallery of Namibia.

Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 69: Painting of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, Pyongyang, DPRK.

Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/langsx2/5126629140/sizes/z/in/set-72157625181417574/>.



Figure 70: Picture of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il in field of Kimilsungia and Kimjongilia flowers.

Source: http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_dhZOqRGa-uA/RlyErOGbe4I/AAAAAAAAAAM/RLmf1hE_Et8/s1600-h/kimilsungia.



Figure 71: Kimjongilia flower.

Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/pric-ey/478837511/sizes/z/in/photostream/>.



Figure 72: Kimilsungia flower.

Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/pric-ey/478837291/sizes/z/in/photostream/>.



Figure 73: Portrait of Namibian cabinet, State House, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Photograph courtesy of *Die Republikein*.



Figure 74: Welwitschia, Namib desert, Swakopmund, Namibia.
Source: Photograph taken by author.

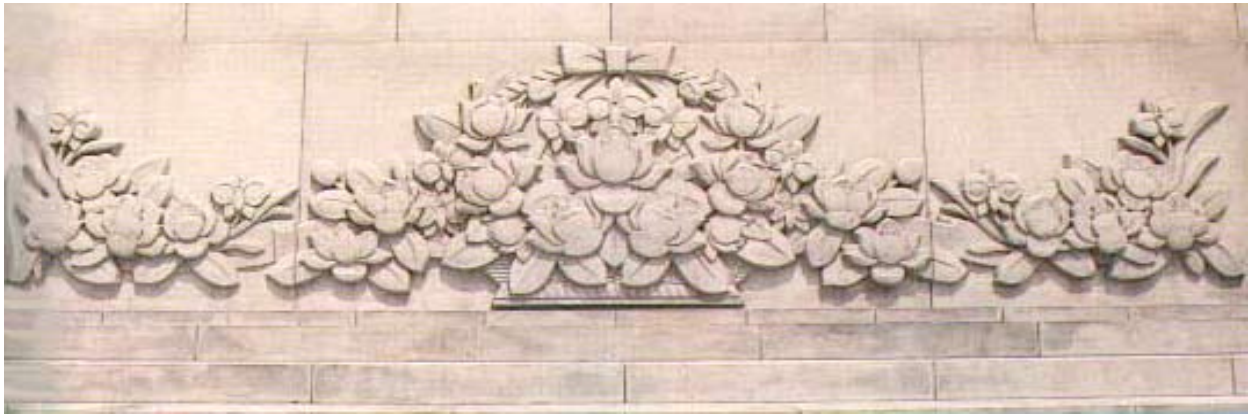


Figure 75: View of carved Kimilsungia and magnolia flowers carved into side of Juche tower. Pyongyang, DPRK.

Source: <http://www.uriminzokkiri.com/Newspaper/english/JucheIdeaTower/PHOTO.HTM>.



Figure 76: Welwitschia adornments on exterior State House fence, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 77: View of exterior wall and Welwitschia adornments, State House, Windhoek, Namibia.

Source: Photograph taken by author.



(Above) Figure 78: View of Cabinet Room, State House, Windhoek, Namibia

Source: Photograph courtesy of *Die Republikein*



Figure 79: Welwitschia adornments on State House paneling, State House, Windhoek, Namibia

Source: Photograph courtesy of *Die Republikein*



Figure 80: Banquet Hall, State House, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Photograph courtesy of *Die Republikein*.



Figure 81:
Wall Painting,
State House,
Windhoek,
Namibia.

Source:
Photograph
courtesy of *Die
Republikein*.

www.hellonam.com - Namibia's Online Community



Figure 82: View of mosaic of Namibian flag, State House, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Photograph courtesy of *Die Republikein*.



Figure 83: View of Cabinet Chamber Room, State House, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Photograph courtesy of *Die Republikein*.



Figure 84: Chandelier in Cabinet Chamber Room, State House, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Photograph courtesy of *Die Republikein*.



Figure 85: Chandelier, Grand People's Study House, Pyongyang, DPRK.
Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/stiofandebrun/3696810219/>.



Figure 86: View of Independence Museum in relation to the Christuskirche, Robert Mugabe Avenue, Windhoek, Namibia.

Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 87: View of the Independence Museum from Independence Avenue, Windhoek, Namibia.
Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 88: Reiterdenkmal monument in its original location.

Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/53741353@N05/4970912133/sizes/z/in/photo-stream/>.



Figure 89: View of Reiterdenkmal monument in relation to the Christuskirche, Windhoek, Namibia

Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/globe-photography/4244195080/sizes/z/in/photo-stream/>.



Figure 90: View of the Reiterdenkmal in its new location in front of the Alte Feste museum, Robert Mugabe Avenue, Windhoek, Namibia.

Source: Photograph taken by author.



Figure 91: Reiterdenkmal in new location in front of Alte Feste Museum, Windhoek.

Source: Photograph taken by author.