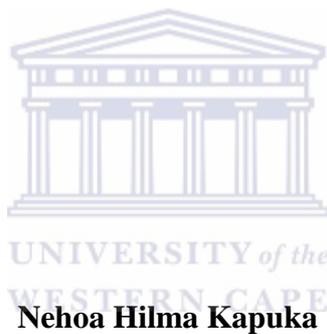


University of the Western Cape

Department of History

The making of Ruacana as place and its construction as future heritage



**A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Magister Artium in the Department of History, University of the Western Cape,
November 2014**

Supervisor: Professor Leslie Witz

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KEY WORDS

Army base

Boundary agreements

Expedition

Heritage

Hydropower

Modernity

Photographs

Place

Representation

Ruacana



ABSTRACT

Ruacana is a town in northern Namibia, located on the border with Angola on the Kunene River. It is about 150 kilometres north of Oshakati. The town was established in the early 1970s by the South West Africa Water and Electricity Commission, to provide accommodation for the Ruacana Hydropower station staff. Having been established without forced removals, Ruacana was an ideal ‘apartheid town’ as only ‘white’ staff lived in the wall-fenced –off town. The ‘black’ staff, soldiers as well as those that provided services in the town, were accommodated in a nearby township known as *Oshifo*. A few years later, the South African colonial government established one of its largest army bases in Owambo ‘district’ to safeguard the hydropower station from possible guerrilla attacks. However, the town is rarely documented in academic or even South African colonial government publications. It is rather the hydropower complex that is well documented, where Ruacana is represented through its projects of modernization. Also, other than claims to natural heritage and a heritage of ethnicity, Ruacana town lacks formal invocations of heritage. Thus it is argued that Ruacana points to a different pattern of heritage production, as the future itself was planned as heritage. This study is an attempt to analyse how Ruacana became a place of a heritage of development, even though heritage is not formally acknowledged in the institutional structures.

DECLARATION

I, Nehoa Hilma Kapuka, declare that 'The making of Ruacana as place and its construction as future heritage' is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Nehoa Hilma Kapuka

November 2014

Signed:.....



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge the presence of the almighty God for wisdom and strength.

Undertaking this study has been a truly learning experience for me and it would not have been possible to complete without the support from the following people and institutions.

I would like to express my unreserved and sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Leslie Witz for his unwavering help and support. I have been fortunate to have a supervisor who gave me the freedom to explore on my own and at the same time the guidance to recover when my steps faltered. Professor Witz taught me how to question thoughts and express ideas. His patience and support helped me overcome many crisis situations and complete this thesis.

My deepest appreciation goes to the Carl Schlettwein Foundation for funding my studies during the two year period. I am equally thankful to Professor Patricia Hayes, for successfully facilitating the acquisition of the scholarship from the foundation. Also, I gratefully acknowledge the funding I received for my fieldwork in Pretoria from the History Department of the University of Western Cape.

I especially acknowledge the help and support of my lecturers, and colleagues in the History Department for conditioning us to think beyond the norms and break traditions. It is through such conditions that my thesis was moulded.

I am indebted to Mr Werner Hillebrecht of the National Archives of Namibia and his entire team for pointing out materials which became core to my research. Equally I want to express

my gratitude to the Namibian Scientific Society, South African National Archives in both Cape Town and Pretoria for their assistance with my research.

Most importantly, none of this would have been possible without the help, support, love and patience from my family. I warmly thank and appreciate my parents for their material and spiritual support in all aspects of my life. My brothers and sisters, Rauna Shiweda, Otto, Jackson, Josefina, Hertha and Ndinelago Kapuka, for caring for Tulino and Hadula at times when books had to be prioritised. I am equally grateful to my friends Zekhaya Gxotelwa and Busiswa Mofu, for opening their home to me and their incredibly warm hospitality in Cape Town. I want to express my great appreciation to Loide Shipingana and George Agbo for your excellent technical assistance.

I am thankful to Iria Iitembu, Lahya Bensley-Haitembu Ndahafa and Dorothea Shiningayamwe for words of encouragement. Finally, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to Erastus Kautondokwa who has been by my side, and my anchor and source of encouragement to complete my study.

This mini-thesis is dedicated to my two children Tulino and Hadula who have been my inspiration throughout this journey.

INTRODUCTION

The selection of Ruacana as a focus for this mini-thesis was motivated by different factors. Firstly, I grew up in the vicinity of Ruacana where the sight of tourists, visiting both the majestic Ruacana waterfalls and the hydropower station was a norm. Ruacana is a tourist destination for both local and international tourists. It is a favourite site for families and friends, especially during festive seasons. A residency in Ruacana is an inhabitation of a space with tourists and Himba communities, and thus regarded as a privilege by some Namibians, as Ruacana is deemed to be an exotic place. If one questions why Ruacana is regarded as ‘a place to be’,¹ a response is directed to highlight the scenery or ‘natural beauty’ of the area, the waterfall, the river, the beautiful town as well as the hydropower dam.²

I figured that these admirations have their origins in the past. Then, as a history student, I wanted to learn more on the history of my area. I wanted to know about the travelling histories and historical narratives on the development of Ruacana hydropower scheme. But there never seemed to be much literature to help me answer these questions. In 2011, I joined the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies, where I was exposed to different ways of thinking and analysing the past. It was then, after such exposure that I started thinking about possibilities of Ruacana having multiple pasts. With all these issues at play, I decided to explore uncertainties that I had pertaining to Ruacana’s past, and the framework through which Ruacana’s heritage was constructed.

¹ This is a phrase used locally to refer to places regarded as aesthetic or picturesque.

Ruacana is located in north western Namibia, on the border with Angola, about 150 kilometres west of Oshakati.³ As the area expanded, the name was given to different sites over time. In this study, Ruacana does not only refer to an area as a whole but a place made up of four main sites that each took a life of their own but that were closely connected to the other sites. Thus Ruacana refers to the waterfalls, the hydropower scheme, the town, the township as well as the surrounding district. The very first site to be referred to as Ruacana was a trading post on the banks of Kunene River flowing along the north-western Namibia and Angola borders. This was in the early days of 1800s, the area was inhabited by the Himba communities, who traded with Portuguese traders from Angola.⁴ The Chief of the Himba community at the time of establishing such economic relations was Chief Ruhacana. However the Portuguese traders could not pronounce his name properly and only called him 'Ruacana'. They also named the trading post and its sphere of influence as 'Ruacana'. It is not clear what local communities called their area. But Ruacana's existence seems to have first gained international prominence in 1886, when the German and Portuguese colonial governments commenced negotiations of the borderline between Namibia and Angola. The Ruacana Waterfalls were used to determine the precise location of the northern boundary line. Agreed in principle in 1886, but not officially demarcated until 1931, the waterfalls featured as a landmark demarcating the borderline, in the draft proposal for the 1886 Boundary Convention.⁵ However the waterfalls were referred to as 'unnamed waterfalls' by the Germans and as a cataract near the Canna mountains by the Portuguese.⁶ It was only in the final document of the same Boundary Convention, that the waterfalls were named as Rua

³ Lazarus Hangula, *The International Boundary of Namibia*, (Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan Publishers, 1993), 15; Francis Kanthack, 'Notes on the Kunene River, Southern Angola', *The Geographical Journal*, 57, (1921), 327.

⁴ See Carl Hahn, *The Native Tribes of South West Africa*, (Cape Town: Cape Town Limited, 1928), 34.

⁵ Ieuan Griffiths, 'The Scramble For Africa: Inherited Political Boundaries', *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 152, (1986), 212.

⁶ Hangula, *International Boundary*, 15 - 17.

Canna by the Portuguese and Kambele Waterfalls by the Germans, and thus became clear that the two parties were referring to different sites.⁷

Germany lost Namibia as its colony in 1915, as it was defeated by South Africa during the First World War. Namibia was placed under South African military rule until 1920, when the territory became a mandated territory of the League of Nations. Britain and then, later, South Africa, was given the task of preparing Namibia for its independence. South Africa not only inherited the colony but also the border dispute with Portugal. In July 1920, a Joint Boundary Commission was set up and was tasked to establish a point on the Kunene River where the boundary line should be drawn eastward to the Kavango River. The point agreed on by the Joint Commission was at Ruacana Waterfall and the Portuguese team established a referential beacon on the spot.⁸ The selection of the spot to mark the boundary line was documented in an agreement signed at Ruacana by the members of the Joint Boundary Commission. But this was not a final agreement as the Portuguese signatories were only government representatives and did not have complete authority, and thus the agreement still needed to be approved in Portugal.

The agreement was never accepted in Lisbon. Even in the Ruacana Agreement, the naming of the waterfalls was still not made clear. It is only in the subsequent Kunene Treaty of July 1926 signed in Cape Town that the Portuguese naming of the Great Kunene Waterfalls was appropriated and has been used since then. The northern border agreement was only finalised in the 1931. This agreement featured a crucial clause about the use of the Kunene river waters by the Ruacana communities as well as for the purposes of the generation of electricity, with the specifics only outlined in the South African – Portugal Kunene Water - Use Agreement of

⁷ Hangula, *International Boundary*, 42.

⁸ Hangula, *International Boundary*, 38.

1969. This agreement led to the creation of numerous sites that bear the name Ruacana: a hydro power station, a town and a township, all established in the early 1970s.⁹

The Ruacana residential precinct was divided into two sections, Oshifo township and *Dorp*, that were established without forced removals.¹⁰ Oshifo township was established as a residential area to cater to the housing needs for the South West Africa Water and Electricity Commission's¹¹ 'black' staff working on the power plant and later 'black' South African Defence Force members. There was also a residential precinct for the South West Africa Water Electricity Commission's 'white staff'. The residential area was known as Ruacana *Dorp* or town, which is located about six kilometres away from the township. Ruacana *Dorp*, first of all comprised of about 27 modern housing units, a primary school, post office, filling station, grocery shop, police station and prison, health centre, swimming pool, and sport complex. In 1978, Ruacana *Dorp* was extended with the establishment of the army base infrastructure, including an airfield.

The Ruacana Waterfalls are located about 15 kilometres, west of the Ruacana *Dorp*. The Ruacana Waterfalls, which are amongst the largest waterfalls in Africa (based on volume and width), sits on the border between Namibia and Angola. Here the Kunene River 'drops 352 feet over a broad semi - crescent shaped, angled scarp into a narrow gorge which straddles the border of Angola and Namibia'.¹² At times of peak discharge the falls may stretch over 3500 feet wide. But because the volume of the Kunene River varies greatly from season to season, the actual width and volume of the falls varies greatly, and as a result the falls may

⁹ In South Africa and Namibia, the term 'township' refers to the often underdeveloped urban living areas that, from the late 19th century until the end of Apartheid, were reserved for 'non-whites', black Africans, Coloureds and Indians. Errol Haarhoff, 'Appropriating modernisation: Apartheid and the South Africa Township', *ITU A/Z*, Vol. 8, (2011), 186.

¹⁰ In most townships that were established in Namibia, residents were forced to move to areas designated for their racial and even ethnic classification.

¹¹ This was the commission that was established to develop and manage the Ruacana hydropower scheme.

¹² <http://www.worldwaterfalldatabase>, 'Ruacana Falls: Kaokoland Namibia', Accessed on the 19 - 09 - 2013.

not flow consistently year round or may dry out completely during drought seasons.¹³ The drying up of the falls is further caused by the generation of hydropower, immediately above Ruacana falls. It is only from approximately December to June, that the ‘annual monsoons provide ample sustenance to the river basin that the hydro project maxes out and the falls return to their impressive natural state’.¹⁴

It is irrefutable that Ruacana carries a series of ‘the largest’, ‘the only’ as well as ‘first’ of status in Namibia. The Ruacana hydropower complex features as ‘the only’ water canal system in Namibia. One of ‘the largest’ South African Defence Force army bases in northern Namibia was sited in Ruacana, and thus talks between Cuba, South Africa, Angola and South West Africa People’s Organisation, on the implementation of the United Nation’s resolution 435 in 1988 were held in the town. Following a breach of the consequent agreement, a decisive battle was fought there between South West Africa People’s Organisation armed wing, People’s Liberation Army of Namibia, and the South African Defence Force on the 1st April 1989.¹⁵

But in post-colonial Namibia, Ruacana town has no formal invocations of heritage in the form of museums memorials or monuments. Although there seems to be a claim to natural heritage through the waterfalls, and a heritage of an ethnicity from groupings known as Zemba, Ndonguena and Himba, there seems to be no attempt from government, academics and local residents to invoke a heritage through memorialising a past as heritage and historical narratives. Ruacana remains known largely as a tourist destination or is used as a signpost to other popular tourist destinations such as the Etosha National Park and

¹³ <http://www.worldwaterfalldatabase>, ‘Ruacana Falls’.

¹⁴ <http://www.worldwaterfalldatabase>, ‘Ruacana Falls’.

¹⁵ See C. J Hay, Bank Van Der initial, and J Ferreira, ‘The effect of the artificial linkage between the Kunene River and the Cuvelai System on the fish fauna in Owambo, Namibia’, *Modoqua*, 19, (1997), 99 – 105; Anthony Turton *et al.* ‘A hydropolitical history of South Africa’s international river basins, *Water Research commission Report (1220/1)*. (2003), 249; Catherine Susman, Ruacana Forth Turbine Commissioned’, *The Namibian*, June 4, 2012; World Waterfalls Database, ‘Ruacana Falls’, <http://www.worldwatellsdatabase.com>.

Kaokoland. In contrast in colonial Namibia, Ruacana was presented with a different status by the Apartheid State. Ruacana was largely represented as a heritage project of modernization: the hydropower dam, the tarred roads, as well as the water canals. This form of representation was done in such a way that Ruacana became a symbolic site, an acre of modernisation and tangible evidence of the abilities and ingenuity of the apartheid administration. This mini-thesis is an analysis of Ruacana as a whole area, but at the same time singling out the contribution made by each site to transform Ruacana as a whole into a place. The hydropower scheme will appear to be the key focus of the study since the two other sites developed from the hydropower scheme. While the study aims to unveil the ideal apartheid town planning by a case-study of the town and its township, simultaneously, the study investigates the deliberate processes involved in both the representation of Ruacana as a symbol of modernity during the colonial era, as a way to create a legacy of modernity. Specifically, this study attempts to analyse how Ruacana became a place and symbol of a heritage of development and modernity in colonial Namibia, even though that heritage was not formally acknowledged in the institutional structures of museums and memorials.

An understanding of the processes involved in heritage production and memorialization projects in Ruacana can be best attained from an analysis of assertions formulated by scholars in the field. Heritage as a concept has a long history, diverse interpretations and meanings and is applicable to a variety of contexts. Clearly heritage ‘implies a particular means of relating to the past’.¹⁶ At its most primary meaning, heritage refers to the ‘idea of an individual’s inheritance from a deceased ancestor’.¹⁷ However the concept was appropriated to denote ‘any physical survivors from the past’,¹⁸ and thus changing from inheritance of an

¹⁶ JoAnn McGregor, and Lyn Schumaker, ‘Heritage in Southern Africa: Imagining and Marketing Public Culture and History’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32, (2006), 650.

¹⁷ John Tunbridge, and Gregory Ashworth, *Dissonant heritage: the management of the past as a resource in conflict*, (John Wiley & Sons: 1996), 1.

¹⁸ Tunbridge. and Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage*, 1.

individual [s] to that of a community or a state. These could be artefacts deemed significant to become part of museum collections, a major archaeological site, or a designated monumental building. The introduction of the category 'National Heritage' even saw the declaration of rivers, canals and even railways as heritage. Heritage as a concept has come to represent both tangible and intangible elements of the past that proves to have no 'surviving structures in the present and foreseeable future', but are still regarded invaluable to present society, and thus should be preserved.¹⁹ Heritage thus became a concept to describe processes involved in the preservation of 'fragments, judged in terms of their ability to link past to present' and the future.²⁰ Another dimension that adds complexity to heritage as a concept is that of incorporation of heritage into leisure activities. Individuals socialised into perceiving such activities as a legitimate and worthwhile use of their time and money, partake in the appreciation of designated heritage sites.²¹ Here heritage in the form of flora and fauna or any form deemed 'original or typical' is then presented as a package.²²

The conceptualisation of heritage in this manner brings to the fore preservation as a key concept. It is apparent that heritage can only be sourced in the past and not the present.

According to Davison, heritage is what is valued in the past and is defined largely in terms of what is valued or 'repudiates in the present or fear in the future'. He further states that heritage is something to be preserved or saved rather than created or built. 'It expresses the unspoken conviction that there is nothing that we have made, or can hope to make, which is valuable as what we have inherited from the past'.²³ Thus items come to be recognised as 'heritage', not for their intrinsic qualities but by being preserved for posterity.²⁴

¹⁹ Tunbridge. and Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage*, 2.

²⁰ JoAnn McGregor, and Lyn Schumaker, 'Heritage in Southern Africa', 650.

²¹ Tunbridge. and Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage*, 2.

²² Tunbridge. and Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage*, 2.

²³ G. Davison, *Use and Abuse*, (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000), 117.

²⁴ Davison, *Use and Abuse*, 117.

However, Davison diversifies the concept of heritage. He argues that ‘heritage is something preserved for posterity so its framework of reference is the future - the generations yet unborn who will inherit - as much as the past’.²⁵ Such an understanding is widened by Lord Chartris, Chairman of Britain’s National Heritage Memorial Fund once said heritage ‘means anything you want’. Davison translates this riddle to mean that its ‘value lay not in its analytical precision, but in its psychological resonance’.²⁶ Davison further maintains that ‘things don’t actually have to be old or historically significant to be described as heritage’.²⁷ In other words, heritage is not only what is inherited from the past but can be created in the present. Time is not really of the essence, but rather meanings attached to a heritage site or object. The conceptualisation of heritage in this manner signals a possibility of a form of heritage that offers a different projection of time and thus a different formulation of heritage, which perhaps the Ruacana heritage is compatible with. It is a heritage produced in the present and appreciated instantaneously as well as projected to be valued in the future. It is as Tunbridge and Ashworth assert that heritage is a ‘created phenomenon continuously created anew according to changing attitudes and demands’ and thus ‘could be produced both in the past or present’.²⁸

This is the notion under which Ruacana heritage could be best described. Conceptualizing heritage in this way means that it is not the present to inherit from the past. Also, there seems to be no past to be appropriated anyway, in the case of Ruacana.²⁹ The Ruacana hydropower scheme was presented as a heritage at the time of its construction. It was the future to inherit from the present, when the present becomes a past. The development project reflected aspirations of the future with an explicit rejection of the past. The Ruacana Hydropower

²⁵ Davison, *Use and Abuse*, 111.

²⁶ Davison, *Use and Abuse*, 115.

²⁷ Davison, *Use and Abuse*, 111.

²⁸ Tunbridge and Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage*, 2 & 10.

²⁹ A past that is presented for Ruacana, in different publications is that of Europe or the West and its encounter or exploration of Ruacana. It is a presentation of natural heritage. See chapter 3 for an account of this.

complex, the Ruacana – Oshakati tarred road and Calueque – Okatana water canal were then perceived to be a priceless legacy, a heritage that the ‘future generations’ would ‘highly prize’.³⁰ It is apparent in government publications, that at the time of completion, such infrastructures were perceived as historic landmarks, or historic legacies. They are technologies that invoke ‘emotions of awe or pride’ among its creators.³¹

Another similar project constructed by the apartheid state in South Africa, the Orange River Project which was completed in 1971, provoked similar sentiments. The Orange River Project was ‘hailed as a triumph of Afrikaner independence and technical ingenuity at the time’. In an inaugural speech, the prime minister, Hendrik Verwoerd, claimed that the ‘entire project was a symbol of the determination of the white civilization in Southern Africa to stay in the African Continent, representing a heritage to be passed on to the next generation’.³²

Although the Ruacana Hydropower Project is much smaller compared to the Orange River Project, it could be argued that the project invoked the same awe. It was going to be a first, a cheaper and reliable power - generating project in the colony, built on a very remote and rugged terrain. The project’s canal water system could be compared to a desert oasis as it was perceived to bring massive relief to communities who suffered a great deal of water shortage during the dry seasons. Hence it was perceived to be an application of science, technology and a development project through which a ‘primitive’ colonial economy could be transformed to benefit both its own needs and those of the colonizing nation.³³

Processes involved in the production of heritage are very complex and thus it is imperative to engage a discussion on how different scholars in the field have elucidated such processes, as they occurred in southern Africa as well as other parts of the world. While much of the

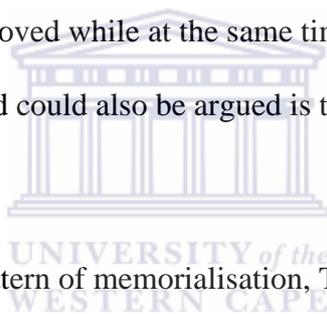
³⁰ Davison, *Use and Abuse*, 112.

³¹ JoAnn McGregor, and Lyn Schumaker, ‘Heritage in Southern Africa: Imagining and Marketing Public Culture and History’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32, (2006): 651.

³² Turton et al, ‘A Hydropolitical History’, 188.

³³ Heather Hoag and May-Britt Öhman, ‘Turning Water into Power: Debates Over the Development of Tanzania Rufiji River Basin, 1945-1985’, *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 49, (2008), 629.

discussion below dwells on the postcolonial period, it is still valuable to this thesis as the key issue here is to identify the curators of heritage, the conditions under which the processes took place as well as the rationale for the heritage projects. Indeed, it is an elaboration of how past images have been curated, institutionalised and disseminated as heritage. For starters, Benedict Anderson has argued that in many countries, historical imagery is curated and disseminated by governments for nation–building purposes.³⁴ This is a trend that could be said is true in many independent African states as heritage narratives are characterized by the memorialization of the attainment of political independence. Such a memorialisation is selective in nature. Rosa De Jorio, in her study of the politics of forgetting and remembering in Mali, asserted that the government engineered a ‘politics of forgetting’, whereby traces of the colonial state power were removed while at the same time foregrounding the new government’s victory.³⁵ This trend could also be argued is true to Ghana, Malawi and Kenya.³⁶



In their attempt to analyse this pattern of memorialisation, Tunbridge and Ashworth propose that it is best understood through the notion of a dominant ideology thesis. The assumption of this argument is that heritage is used as a political tool both to strengthen the ruling powers and to justify government policies.³⁷ They submit that heritage may also be used by government rivals to disapprove and criticize the government. The dominant ideology thesis centrally emphasizes that the public realm is filled with heritage messages directed at citizens of a country, to support and accept the government.³⁸ The core assumption of the dominant

³⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (Verso: London, 1991), 71 - 77.

³⁵ Rosa De Jorio, ‘Politics of Remembering and Forgetting: The Struggle over Colonial Monuments in Mali’, *Africa Today: Memory and the Formation of Political Identities in West Africa*, 52, (2006), 81.

³⁶ Laragh Larsen, ‘Replacing Imperial Landscapes: Colonial monuments and the Transition to Independence in Kenya’, *Journal of historical Geography*, 38, (2012), 46 – 48; Christopher Colvin, ‘Civil society and reconciliation in southern Africa’, *Development in Practice*, 17, (2007), 328 – 329; Mark Crinson, ‘Nation-building, collecting and the politics of display: The National Museum, Ghana’, *Journal of History of collections*, 13,(2000), 235 – 242.

³⁷ Tunbridge and Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage*, 48.

³⁸ Tunbridge .and Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage*, 48.

ideology thesis seems to suggest that as government changes, what constitutes especially national heritage also changes. This could be inferred to mean that the transition of governance from European colonialists to African leaders should be viewed as a manifestation of the dominant ideology thesis, as it was accompanied by changes in what constituted national heritage. But these reconstructions of national heritage in newly independent African states not only asserted a legitimating past for new governments but also claimed a ‘previously neglected’ and ‘indigenous’ heritage.³⁹

The dominant ideology thesis also seems to suggest that governments literally impose heritage on the people and thus eliding complexity from heritage as a concept. However heritage is not imposed on people, it is organized to work through a consensus, through gradually systematic and creation of ideas that seem natural. Rather than being a tool of power, heritage is a system of power. This system of power does not exist instrumentally but is diffused in such a way that it is impossible to question the systems of power. On this ground, Rassool, Minkley and Witz argues that heritage is a discourse and thus the production of living and national heritage especially in post-apartheid South Africa should be understood through the notion of a heritage complex. Here the scholars maintain that the post anti-apartheid heritage complex is ‘symbolised by a redefined national estate, its associated public identification, and nomination, expertise in its inventory, intangibility of memory, management, conservation and regulation of public visibility and access’.⁴⁰ This process, they say, ‘articulates particular relationships between the past and the present by drawing together the indigenous resistance histories to become narratives of a unified new nation’.⁴¹ The production of the past in the heritage complex is a result of negotiations and conflicts over

³⁹ See Garry Minkley, “‘A fragile inheritor’: The post-apartheid memorial complex, Ac Jordan and the re-imagining of cultural heritage in the Eastern Cape”, *Kronos*, Bellville, no. 34, (2008), 16 – 40.

⁴⁰ Gary Minkley, Leslie Witz and Ciraj Rassool, ‘South Africa and the spectacle of public pasts: heritage, public histories and post anti-apartheid South Africa’, (paper presented at Heritage Disciplines symposiums, University of the Western Cape, 8-9 October 2009), 20.

⁴¹ Minkley, Rassool and Witz, ‘South Africa’, 20.

what elements should constitute this past. Thus in this complex, systems of power and knowledge become the key determining factors on what should be included and excluded in the heritage narratives of the nation.

In the heritage complex, heritage becomes a new form of citizenship and expressions of governance. This system of power emanates from selection of certain narratives of the past, that, as Witz drawing from Tony Bennett maintains, are constituted in institutions that 'produce, circulate and contain meanings about the past', such as museums, heritage sites, monuments, festivals and tourists routes.⁴² In this case the meanings of institutions in this domain can be best understood when the very specific forms by which they create heritage are located within a present scenario, where the modes and genres of representation are connected to 'social, cultural and political preoccupations'.⁴³ These considerations are most apparent in constituting the 'spatial and temporal limits of nations which are conceived of as new or reborn'.⁴⁴ Here the 'past is aligned with the present, so that the nation becomes an almost predetermined outcome of a history that usually begins in a deep time' of long ago.⁴⁵ The past-present alignment in the heritage production processes makes it possible to think of historical development as complete, a process that finds its accomplishment in the present. Although the present marks the accomplishment, it does not mark the completion, but rather 'stand poised as a moment between the immemorial past and the limitless future, cast in the same mould'.⁴⁶ In this way the nation and its history is represented as a cumulative process, which is turned into a 'litany of struggles and achievements that almost demand replication in the future, manufacturing 'a never-ending story of development'.⁴⁷ The use of living

⁴² Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: history, theory, politics*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 130 – 153, in Leslie Witz, *Apartheid's Festival: Contesting South African National Pasts*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, (2003), 249.

⁴³ Minkley, Rassool and Witz, 'South Africa', 20.

⁴⁴ Minkley, Rassool and Witz, 'South Africa', 20.

⁴⁵ Minkley, Rassool and Witz, 'South Africa', 20.

⁴⁶ Bennett, *Birth of Museum*, 148 – 153.

⁴⁷ Bennett, *Birth of Museum*, 130 – 153, 249.

heritage or intangible heritage is most crucial in the narrative of a nation as it gives it origin since time immemorial.⁴⁸ This means heritage is not only about the preservation past but rather a resource used to foster relationships of governance within nation-states.

The work of Minkley, Rassool and Witz draws upon that of Richard Werbner where he argues that in post-independent Zimbabwe the production of heritage is best understood through the conceptualisation of the memorial complex. In this complex, it is the independence war that exclusively features the grand narrative, whereby the memory of the dead liberation war fighters has been remembered through the construction of a national heroes acre. However the process created huge disparities and contradictions because burial at the national heroes acre were reserved to an elite class of government official thereby excluding the common warriors of the struggle.⁴⁹ The memorialisation process has become a bone of contention between the various contributors to the liberation struggle of Zimbabwe liberation war heritage, with conferment of this heroes' status being reserved for loyalists of the ruling party. Thus the construction of this form of heritage in Zimbabwe was vested in the power of the ruling party which makes the overall decision over the burials.

The form of heritage discussed above shows a pattern of heritage production where a part of the past considered to be valuable or important is selected to be preserved. Also, heritage is not perceived as a given, an already-existing something waiting to be unveiled, but rather understood as constructed and produced in the present. In this regard heritage is still very much a 'project of ideology that is dependent on ambivalent temporal entanglements: though

⁴⁸ Timothy Mitchell, 'Making the Nation: The Politics of Heritage in Egypt', in N. Al Sayyad, ed, . *Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage: Global Norms and Urban Forms*, (London: Routledge, 2001), 212–239.

⁴⁹ Richard Werbner, 'Smoke from the Barrel of a Gun', in Richard Werbner, ed, *Memory and the Postcolony*, (Zed: London, 1998), 72.

claiming diachronic rootedness'.⁵⁰ It is such formulations that inform the conceptualisation of heritage in this study though; heritage is understood as a product that has no recourse to the past. Its 'conceptualisation depends on modernity's sense', that the present needs to establish links with the envisioned future.⁵¹ This is re-conceptualisation of and re-theorisation of heritage not only as sites, places, performances or events, but rather as a social construction and cultural practice, and draws attention to the process of heritage-making by applying and recognising the social significance of objects and expressions. As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has argued heritage is a mode of cultural production that emanates from a metacultural relationship and thus heritage is created through metacultural operations.⁵²

This conceptualisation of heritage leads to an argument that heritage cannot only be categorised in the familiar forms of natural, living or national but in other categories, and for specificity for this study as the category, heritage of modernity. Ruacana heritage is best described through this form of heritage. This form of heritage goes beyond the conventional restoration project and rather is curated and constructed in the present as a future legacy.

Here, the production of heritage is not characterised by declarations, or conservation management plans, but it is literally produced in the present, with the intentions of creating a legacy. It is a category that unfolds in the form of development projects such as construction of roads, hydropower dams, water pipelines, canals. Such projects tend to invoke feelings of accomplishment as tangible evidence of progress and development.

Throughout the twentieth century, North America and Europe demonstrated how controlled rivers, especially for the generation of hydropower, could form the foundation for economic transformation. But beyond supplying such a function they have been perceived to be

⁵⁰ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Theorizing Heritage', *Ethnomusicology*, 39, (1995), 369; Kristin Kuutma, 'Cultural Heritage: An Introduction to Entanglements of Knowledge, Politics and Property', *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics*, 3, (2009), 5 - 6.

⁵¹ Kuutma, 'Cultural Heritage', 5.

⁵² Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Intangible Heritage', 52.

concrete evidence of development, and thus making them symbols of modernity.⁵³ In African states hydropower has also come to serve a similar ends and in some instances even more. In his study of the Aswan High Dam Mark Caine emphasises this phenomenon by asserting that ‘the story of the High Dam is the history of technology and the management of natural resources’.⁵⁴ In this sense Caine argues that Aswan High Dam ‘not only symbolised Egypt’s independence from a foreign colonial rule but was also a powerful symbol of Egypt’s entry into modernity’.⁵⁵ Caine further asserts that the Aswan High Dam became tangible proof that Egypt was a strong nation determined to build its modern economy through investment in major hydraulic projects. McCully concurs with this argument by further asserting that the post-colonial Egyptian government used the very colonial hydraulic control mechanisms to create an independent Egyptian and a modern technological Egypt.⁵⁶ Thus governments understood the capacity of large dams to function as shining monuments of development and progress.⁵⁷

However constructing a big dam like Aswan High Dam required heavy financial commitments and thus Waterbury maintains that the decision to build Aswan High Dam was made in the light of signalling that Egypt, a new player in regional and international politics was economically and politically strong. Accordingly the dam ‘promised to show the world that Egypt would no longer accept economic backwardness and international dependency’.⁵⁸ In this regard Waterbury asserts that Aswan High Dam was constructed to establish ‘credibility for a new and unknown regime’.⁵⁹ Hence Caine argues the Egyptian government saw the hydraulic projects as a way to engineer modernity and to develop itself into an

⁵³ Hoag and Öhman, ‘Turning Water’, 9.

⁵⁴ Caine, Mark, ‘Engineering Modern Egypt: Water and Technology at the Aswan High Dam’, (MA Thesis, Brown, University, 2010), 26.

⁵⁵ Mark, ‘Engineering Modern’, 26.

⁵⁶ McCully, *Silenced Rivers: The Ecology and Politics of Large Dams*, in Caine M, ‘Engineering Egypt: Water and Technology at the Aswan High Dam’, (MA diss., Brown University 2010), P 25.

⁵⁷ MacCully, *Silenced Rivers*, 25.

⁵⁸ J. Waterbury, *Hydropolitics of the Nile River Valley*, in Caine, ‘Engineering Egypt’, 26.

⁵⁹ Waterbury, *Hydropolitics of the Nile River Valley*, 26.

independent and prosperous state.⁶⁰ This is also reflected in government literature whereby the dam was defined as a better and bigger version of similar projects in the West, and thus suggesting that Egypt is just as ‘modern as the economically powerful western states and by comparing the dam to purely symbolic monuments such as the Eiffel Tower the Aswan High Dam information administration underscored the dam’s symbolic status as a marker and producer of the ‘modern’ Egyptian state’.⁶¹

In Mozambique, the Cahora Bassa project made similar claims.⁶² Mitchell asserts that other than the generation of electricity, Cahora Bassa was deemed to ‘improve the life of its backward subjects and to bring them into the twentieth century under Portugal’s tutelage’.⁶³ But most importantly, Cahora Bassa, being the world’s fifth largest hydroelectric power installation came to invoke a sense of pride and an ‘ultimate confirmation that nature could be conquered and biophysical formation could be transformed to serve human kind. A wild river was tamed and transformed into a valuable tool for progress’.⁶⁴ Isaacman and other scholars’ argument emerges from discourses on hydraulic engineering where the dominant narratives are those of articulating a dichotomous paradigm of nature / culture relations and encourages a view of hydropower projects as ways through which nature can be appropriated and controlled through hydraulic technology. Here the ‘natural is a site for cultural’ exploitation and economic utilization of nature’s bounty as a marker of human technological progress.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Caine, ‘Engineering Egypt’, 26.

⁶¹ Caine, ‘Engineering Egypt’, 26.

⁶² Mit Mitchell, ‘The Politics of Water: the Significance of Dams and River Valley Development Projects in the Political and Economic of Southern Africa, with Particular Reference to the Cunene River Scheme’, (PhD diss., University of York, 1976), 3, 8.

⁶³ Mitchell, ‘Politics of Water’, 3 - 8.

⁶⁴ Allen Isaacman, ‘Displaced People, Displaced Energy and Displaced Memories’, 1; Allen Isaacman, ‘Toward a Social Environmental History of the Building of Cahora Bassa’, 597.

⁶⁵ John Bennett, *Human Ecology as Human Behaviour: Essays in Environmental and Development Anthropology*, in Caine, ‘Engineering Egypt’, 52.

The Ruacana Hydropower Complex⁶⁶ had similar intentions. Renfrew Christie who studied the Ruacana Hydropower Station, argued that South Africa constructed the Kunene Hydropower Scheme with the purpose of ‘modernising Namibia as emblematic of the power of South Africa as the colonizing power’.⁶⁷ The proposal to extend of the scheme with the then proposed Epupa Dam echoed these similar hopes, of ‘modernising’ Kaokoland,⁶⁸ and Namibia at large. Those that supported the construction of the dam argued that the project would not only generate electricity but would also create jobs, roads and irrigation schemes for the region’s inhabitants.⁶⁹ At a national level, the post-colonial government argued for breaking dependency on power importation from South Africa and rather aims to export to South Africa and other neighbouring countries. Giving the same reasons as their predecessor, the independent government further maintained that an independent power supply was a necessity if Namibia were to establish a modern and strong foreign investment economy and thus curb the high level of unemployment. Further, Joshua Forrest maintains that the Epupa project is a techno-giantist or grand - scale scheme. The proposed Epupa Dam was to serve as an imagery of political potency projected by the government’s ability to construct macro scale water systems. In other words, the Epupa Dam was going to be an avenue through which the government would demonstrate its political power through their taming of and control over the natural environment.⁷⁰

Timothy Mitchell in his study of the Aswan High Dam has argued against the notion of humankind conquering and bringing nature under control. He maintains that such a statement

⁶⁶ The Ruacana Hydropower Complex, is very crucial in this study as it led to the establishment of the Ruacana town. In fact part of the complex is located with the town’s jurisdiction. Hence the complex forms part of the heritage complex of Ruacana.

⁶⁷ Renfrew Christie, ‘The political economy of the Kunene River Hydro-electric Schemes’, MA diss., University of Cape Town’, (1975), 1- 2.

⁶⁸ Sidney Haring, ‘God Gave us this Land: The Himba, the Proposed Epupa Dam, the Independent Namibian State, the Law and Development in Africa’, *Heineonline*, no. 14, (2001), 52.

⁶⁹ John Friedman, ‘Contest and Contestation in the Development Process: Lessons from Kaokoland (Namibia)’, *European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes*, 21, (2009), 337.

⁷⁰ Joshua Forrest, ‘Water Policy and Environmental Sustainability: The case of Post-Colonial Namibia’, *Public Administration and development*, no 21, (2001), 393.

conceals any failures and overlooks challenges experienced in the construction of such mega projects. The construction of Aswan High Dam caused difficulties that had to be relieved by crop spraying, high-yield corn, drainage mechanisms, fertilizer plants, pesticides and mud bricks. According to Mitchell, human and nonhuman are both ingredients of the construction projects whereby the human is always somewhat overrun by the unintended. Such interactions are presented to be organized in a way that human intellect is in control of the nonhuman, so that the human intellectual, the realm of intentions and ideas seems to come first to control and organize the non-human. Thus it is stated that hydropower dams are perceived to be tangible evidence that humans can indeed conquer nature through science. Mitchell contests this notion and argues that the interaction between human elements and the forces of hydraulics and nature are very complex and when one ‘unravels these interwoven forces, human agency appears less a calculating intelligence in which the human element is never wholly in control’. In his own words Mitchell states that ‘there were always certain effects that went beyond the calculations, certain forces that exceeded human intention. Scientific expertise and national politics were produced out of this tension’.⁷¹ The discussion above shows that it is possible for governments to appropriate development projects as avenues to exhibit their legacy or achievements of their reigns. It is also apparent that the category heritage is a complex one and thus it may be possible to analyse a legacy of hydropower generation by the South African colonial government. It is through such theoretical frameworks that a heritage, of Ruacana will be analysed.

Since literature with a complete focus on Ruacana proves to be rare, it is hoped that this thesis will contribute to such a field. The study draws data from libraries and archives containing material on the representation of Ruacana. Archival materials both documents and photographs that were sourced from the Namibian National Archives in Windhoek and the

⁷¹ Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-politics, Modernity*, (California and London: University of California Press, 2002), 10 – 11.

National Archives of South Africa in Pretoria shaped this thesis to a great extent. These archives will not be treated as an end and taken as they are, but rather will be regarded as sites of knowledge production themselves. Thus, for this study not only what is in the archives matters but also what is absent will be a case of analysis.

Another issue that cannot be separated from the hydrological landscape of Ruacana is the apparent transformation of Ruacana into place as caused by different actors who both visited and worked at Ruacana. In as much as places are most visible through their physical attributes, Brenda Yeoh and Lily King maintain that places are ‘articulate social constructions subtly imposed by those in power – planners, architects, administrators, politicians or engineers, - intent to advance state policies and goals’.⁷² This study attempts to suggest that Ruacana was not just a place, but also an avenue through which an understanding of a ‘complicated interplay of people and environment’ was constructed.⁷³ An analysis of Ruacana in this manner will reveal attachments, connections, meanings, and experience that different personas and institutions attached to Ruacana. Thus it will be argued that a place is a ‘way of seeing’,⁷⁴ of which Ruacana is visible through the lens of tourism, apartheid planning, the hydropower plant, technical ingenuity and expeditions. Thus, this mini thesis is as much about place as a way of knowing as it is about place as a location. It is as much about epistemology as it is about ontology.

Apart from the introduction and conclusion, this mini-thesis is divided into three chapters.

The first chapter documents the history of Ruacana from the early times of 1920s to the 1980s.⁷⁵ This specific time period is of focus, not only in this chapter but also throughout the entire study. The outlined period reflects a formation of Ruacana by the South African

⁷² Brenda Yeoh and Lily Kong, ‘The Notion of place in the construction of history, Nostalgia and Heritage in Singapore’, *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 17, (1996), 53.

⁷³ Tim Cresswell, *Place: A short introduction*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 12.

⁷⁴ Cresswell, *Place*, 13.

⁷⁵ The name Ruacana encompasses all different areas of Ruacana discussed in this study. This includes the waterfall, the hydropower station, the *Dorp*, township, as well as the army base.

colonial government, thus creating a platform from which processes of the making and unmaking of Ruacana heritage could be critically analysed. The second chapter undertakes the making of Ruacana as a project of development under South African colonial rule. Here a key part of the analysis will be on how Ruacana is represented in various publications during the South African colonial rule. Three sets of publications are selected. The *South African Panorama*, a magazine that published what they said were achievements of the South African government in both Namibia and South Africa. The second publication is the *South West African Survey*, which was clearly set to assert the South African colonial government developmental efforts in Namibia up until 1975. The third publication is a book titled *Passport to Truth*, authored by one of the engineers who worked on the Ruacana hydropower scheme in 1972. Each of these publications, although some only partly focus on Ruacana, seems to have a stark representation of Ruacana. These depictions are taken to represent messages that authors want to communicate to its audience. It is such messages, their meanings, and the impacts that form the core of this chapter. Chapter three examines the visual archive of Ruacana in the Namibian archives, in order to critically analyse the form of heritage that is inscribed through these visual images. Finally the concluding arguments about the production of Ruacana heritage in relation to theoretical frameworks of production of heritage are discussed.

In conclusion, heritage has long been understood as the processes involved in the preservation and interpretation of pasts marked 'valuable'. However this thesis aims to explore heritage as a phenomenon produced in the present. The presentation of Ruacana hydropower scheme as a remarkable project that significantly contributed to the economic advancement of Namibia, strongly cues notions of heritage. Conceptualisation of heritage in this manner disconnects heritage's rootedness to the past to position it in the imagined future.

Therefore the most appropriate framework to configure Ruacana's past is that it was presented as a heritage of modernity.



CHAPTER ONE

1. Ruacana becomes a place: early settlers, establishing the borders, the hydropower plant, *dorp*, township and army base

This chapter documents a history of Ruacana from the 1920s to the 1980s. The outlined period reflects a transformation of Ruacana from a space into a place, and creates a platform from which processes of the making of Ruacana heritage can be critically analysed in the chapters that follow. The chapter does not provide a chronological history of Ruacana, but rather it is a partial analysis and very limited mainly to the presence of South Africa colonial government and its impact on the area. The chapter identifies four key moments through which Ruacana was transformed into a place. It will be argued in this chapter that the signing of border and water-use agreements, the development of the Ruacana hydroelectric scheme, the spatial design of the town and the ‘township’, and the setting up of an army base transformed Ruacana. The location and occurrence of the identified moments at Ruacana did not only rearrange the physical space, but also led to an increased representation of Ruacana in a variety of genres of publications. The chapter emphasises that the transformation of Ruacana occurred first through cartographic representation that was enabled by the northern boundary and Kunene water-use agreements. The chapter further emphasises that Ruacana was modified through the installation of the hydropower project with its water technologies fixed around a discourse of harnessing hydropower, sophistication, and technical ingenuity. A space becomes a place when it becomes meaningful. The perception of Ruacana hydropower scheme as the key infrastructure that enabled industrial take-off and a genesis of economic development in Namibia, along with spatialized urban planning of apartheid that created a town out of nothing as well as a modern army base, transcended the conventional physical arrangement of the landscape to include meanings that were attached to Ruacana by the South

African colonial administration.¹ Conceptualising Ruacana's space and place in this manner is not to imply that, prior to the occurring of these events, Ruacana was an empty land without inhabitants. But it is rather to say that a space becomes a place, through established material topography, and the processes of knowledge production, and documentation such as mapping, photographs as well as the incorporation of Ruacana into both academic and public literature. It will thus be argued in this chapter that meanings attached to Ruacana were expressed through processes of knowledge production that transformed Ruacana.

1.1 Evidence on Ruacana's early inhabitants

There is more to a place than concrete material. According to Brenda Yeoh and Lily Kong, places are 'socially constructed positions and sites within the context of a particular period, that is, places have meaning only in relation to an individual's or groups' goals and concerns'.² In this regard a place is both a specific concrete setting as well as a constructed image that is always in the making and thus should be thought of as a 'process of becoming'.³ In this thesis, it is this conception of place-making that is appropriated to explore and explain the processes of transformation of Ruacana into a place.

Before the boundary negotiations that started in the late 1800s, the Ruacana area and specifically Ruacana waterfalls were just a space that were hardly known. Its remote location both from the German and Portuguese administrative centres, at Windhoek and Ondjiva, kept it almost hidden from the exploration of travellers at least until the late nineteenth century. However Ruacana area has always been occupied first by the people ethnically categorised as Himba, and later by Zemba who moved from Angola. The presence and migration pattern

¹Cresswell, *Place*, 1 -2.

² Brenda Yeoh and Lily Kong, 'The notion of place in the Construction of History and Heritage in Singapore', *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, Vol. 17, (1996), 52 – 53.

³ Brenda Yeoh and Lily Kong, 'The notion of place in the Construction of History and Heritage in Singapore', 53.

was observed and noted by Francis Kanthack in 1920, whom further predicted that there is likely to be 'a general exodus to the south of the line' as soon as the boundary is demarcated.⁴

More evidence of occupancy of Ruacana by local people can be traced back to the events of the border demarcation. Namibia was a colony of Germany from 1884. However throughout the colonial reign in Namibia, Germany's colonial administration never reached the northern regions.⁵ But in the neighbouring Angola, a colonial administration was well established throughout the country, including the southern region. The apparent absence of a ruthless colonial master in the north-western regions of Namibia encouraged the communities that were on the Angolan side to move into Namibia, at Ruacana where Ruacana communities enjoyed freedom from harsh colonial rule. As late as 1927 the South African representatives on the Boundary Delimitation Commissions,⁶ came under attack from both sides, by the Portuguese representatives and community members living along the frontier. Though the Portuguese representatives were aware of the migrations as it had been going on for several years, they still claimed that the South African representatives actively induced local communities living in the old neutral zone to transfer themselves to the southern side of the boundary. Also communities living along the boundary line, on the Angolan territory complained that the South African representatives were handing them over to the Portuguese Government after being their subjects since the times of Erickson.⁷ Local communities living

⁴ Francis Kanthack is not clear on where he obtained his ethnic classification but it is similar to early publications on Namibian communities such as Hermann Tonjes, *Ovamboland, Country, People, Mission with Particular Reference to the Largest Tribe, the Kwanyama*, (English Translation of the original published in German in 1911), (Berlin: Martin Warnneck, 1911); Francis Kanthack, PRO FO 317/1 4402, ff 336-346, in Patricia Hayes, Jeremy Silvester and Wolfram Hartmann, eds. *Namibia Under South African Rule: Mobility and Containment 1915 -1946*, (Athens, Oxford and Windhoek: James Currey and Out of Africa Publishers, 1998), 299.

⁵ Joshua Forrest, 'Namibia-- The First Post-apartheid Democracy', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 5, 1994, 88-89.

⁶ The Boundary Delimitation Commissions, discussed in detail in the following sections, was established by the South African and Portuguese colonial government to help establish a point through which the boundary line should run.

⁷ According to Kanthack, Erickson was a famous British trader and hunter who travelled extensively in southern Angola and Ovamboland in the late 1800s and whose name figures frequently on maps of these parts. A drift on the Kunene River, 20 kilometres, upstream from the Ruacana falls is named after him, as this is the spot where he was last seen. Erickson is said to have wished to take his waggons across the Kunene into Angola. Kanthack

on the side of Angola, thus made it clear that they would migrate into Namibia, despite the fact that they would be leaving behind a 'country which was well-watered and fertile for a territory that had none of these advantages'.⁸ Such determination to migrate from Angola it was claimed was encouraged by 'better administration conditions' in Namibia, and fuelled by Portuguese 'incompetent and unscrupulous rule', the way in which 'native tribal life has been broken up and undue taxation, constant interference on the part of the Portuguese officials and soldiers and their despicable habit of freely cohabiting with native women'.⁹ Finally ethnographic reports from the early 1900s show that in Ruacana, Himba populations were in the minority to those of the Zemba as according to these reports, explorers came mainly in contact with Zemba.¹⁰

1.2 Germany - Portugal Boundary Convention of 1886

The Portuguese colonization of Angola began in 1575. Yet Portugal did not demarcate the colony's southern boundary line. It is perhaps the arrival of Germany in the region as colonial administrator for Namibia, which caused settlement over Angolan southern border to commence. The boundary line between Namibia and Angola was defined in an agreement which came into force on 30 December 1886. However the definition of the boundary line given in the treaty appears to have been ambiguous. This is because the border issue still remained subject of a dispute between the German and Portuguese Governments. The two parties both wanted to own or at least have access to the Kunene River's 'great falls' for its

further asserts that the area looks unattractive for such a purpose, and has not since been used. The drift is near the lower extremity of the great bend, where the Kunene changes its course to the west. The gradient is exceedingly flat, the current very small, and the margins are covered with broad belts of high reeds and swamps, which are intersected with deep creeks and pools infested with crocodiles. Kanthack, 'Notes on Kunene', 327.

⁸ NAN, NAO, Storage Unit 17, File 10/3 (VI) Angola Affairs, Angola Borders: Boundary line 24 December 1927.

⁹ NAN, NAO, Storage Unit 17, File 10/3 (VI) Angola Affairs, Angola Borders.

¹⁰ Kanthack, 'Notes on Kunene', 334.

potential of hydroelectric power.¹¹ It was such early contestations arising from the border negotiations and the economic potential that could be offered by Ruacana that already made Ruacana a vital place and thus earning new meanings. On this ground Francis Kanthack¹² wrote in 1920, that the Kunene River in general and Ruacana falls specifically had become politically important in connection with the settlement of the boundary dispute which had existed between Portugal and Germany for the past thirty-four years.¹³ It was finally decided that:

The boundary-line between the Portuguese and German possessions in South West Africa shall follow the course of the river Kunene from its mouth to the cataracts which are formed by that river to the south of Humbe when crossing the range the Canna Hills. From this point the line will run along the parallel as far as the river Kubango, and thence it will continue along the coast of the same river as far as Andara, which place it to remain within the sphere of German interest. From this place the boundary will continue in a straight direction eastward as far as the rapids of Catima, on the Zambezi River.¹⁴

Secondly, the name of the cataracts through which the borderline should run along prolonged negotiations as the name of the cataract being referred to by the two governments is not stated in the agreement. On the other parts of the treaty, it is clarified that these waterfalls are located approximately at 17° 23' south latitude. The Germans named these waterfalls Kambele while the Portuguese called them Rua Cana.¹⁵ While an approximate position was stated in the treaty, the Ruacana waterfall became a subject of dispute between the German and Portugal governments. According to Kanthack, it was not only the name of the water fall that caused the dispute as it appeared that the two governments were even referring to different

¹¹ Sidney Haring, 'God Gave us this Land: The OvaHimba, the Proposed Epupa Dam, the Independent Namibian State, the Law and Development in Africa', *Heineonline*, Vol.14: 35, (2001), P 1; Richard Meissner, 'The transnational role and involvement of interest groups in water politics: A comparative analysis of selected Southern African case studies', (PhD diss., University of Pretoria, 2005), p 124; Richard Meissner, 'Interaction and existing constraints in international river basins', in Mikiyasu Nakayama, ed, *International Waters in Southern Africa*, (United Nation University Press: Tokyo & New York, Paris, 2003), 258.

¹² Francis Kanthack headed the British Commission appointed to co-draw, with the northern boundary line with the Portuguese commission. The two commissions were stationed in the vicinity of Ruacana falls. Kanthack used this time to study the morphology of the Kunene River between Erickson's drift and the Ruacana Falls.

¹³ Francis Kanthack, 'Notes on the Kunene River', 334.

¹⁴ Hangula, *International Boundary*, 19 – 20.

¹⁵ See for instance, Kanthack, 'Notes on Kunene', 334; Hayes, Silvester and Hartmann, 296; Hangula, *International Boundary*, 15 - 20.

falls, but they could also not agree on the precise spot through which the parallel of latitude from the Kunene to the Okavango should be drawn. Consequently the Portuguese assumed the high point on the Serra Cana ridge immediately above the downstream portal of the gorge below the Rua Cana waterfall (Lat. 17° 24' S). The Germans on the other hand, made a claim that the parallel of latitude 'should be drawn through the uppermost of the falls below the Humbe, viz Kavale rapids (Lat. 17° 17' S), some 39 kilometres above the Rua Cana waterfall'.¹⁶ The Namibian northern frontier remained undecided until 1931. As a way of keeping order while awaiting for the finalisation of the border demarcation, a provisional agreement was reached between the local British and Portuguese administrations under which a belt of country 10 kilometres in width, measured south of the old mission station of Namakunde, was administered as a Neutral Zone, jointly by a British and Portuguese resident commissioners.¹⁷

The 1886 boundary convention unveiled the processes of place making for the Ruacana falls. The boundary convention was the tangible process that transformed Ruacana falls into a place. Not only did this treaty elevate the prominence of the Ruacana falls by declaring it the geographic determining point through which the boundary should run through, but the treaty also earned Ruacana falls prominence. When the treaty was ratified by the Portuguese Cortes¹⁸ in its session of 20 January 1887, its text was published in the Portuguese White Book of the year 1887. In Germany the treaty's text appeared in the official Gazette *Reichsanzeiger* No.168 of July 1887.¹⁹ The 1886 boundary convention is perhaps the first official document where the name Ruacana appeared. The official naming of the Ruacana falls

¹⁶ Kanthack, 'Notes on Kunene', 334.

¹⁷ Kanthack, 'Notes on Kunene', 335.

¹⁸ In Portuguese Cortes or courts' was an assembly of representatives the three estates: nobility clergy and bourgeoisie in the medieval Iberian kingdoms and, in modern times, is referred to as the national legislature of Portugal. J. O'Callaghan, 'Cortes, Leon, Castile and Portugal' in E.M. Gerli, editor, 2003, *Medieval Iberia: an encyclopedia*, (London: Routledge), 2003;

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/138832/Cortes> (Accessed on 20 October 2014).

¹⁹ Hangula, *International Boundary*, 20.

on the 1886 boundary convention further signified Ruacana through cartographical representation. It seems, as the map below shows, that before the boundary convention, Ruacana falls hardly appeared on the German South West Africa maps. It is as Mathew Edney writes, ‘unless a region is first conceived of and named, it cannot become the specific subject of a map’.²⁰ Consequently a map accords an area ‘territorial integrity and its basic existence’. Thus, a mapped, ‘region gains prominence in the public eye’.²¹ The map below dates to the early period of Germany occupation of Namibian, before the border agreements. Evidently Ruacana is not included in this map as it was not signified as a place of prominence.

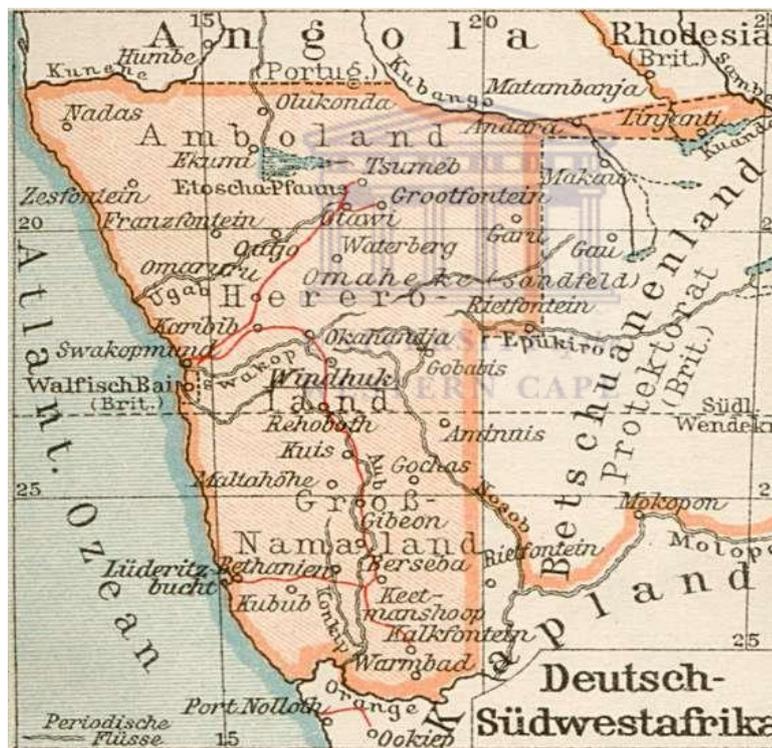


Figure 1. A map of Namibia from 1884, during German Colonial Administration, showing places that were all significant in different ways such as hosting mission station, mines or colonial administration offices. Ruacana was not a mapped region then and thus excluded from the map. www.on-therand.co.uk. Accessed on 22. April 2014.

²⁰ Mathew Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843*, (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London, 1997), 3.

²¹ Edney, *Mapping an Empire*, 3.

However soon after the signing of the of the 1886 border convention, Ruacana Waterfalls is included on maps of Namibia. Portugal called for a revision of the Boundary Treaty of 1886, as they realised that they and the German colonial authority in Namibia believed in two different border lines about eleven kilometres apart.²² But such a call never materialised and the dispute stood until the defeat of the German forces and its colonial era, leading to a consequent occupation of Namibia by South Africa as part of the British forces in 1915.

1.3 Ruacana Boundary Agreement of 1920

In 1916, the border dispute became the subject of investigation and correspondence between the British and Portuguese governments, but without reaching an agreement. Patricia Hayes maintains that this was because both parties were eager to acquire access to the biggest cataract as it offered hydropower generation and irrigation potential.²³ At the end of 1919 the British and Portuguese governments undertook to resolve the northern boundary issue, and thus appointed a Boundary Delimitation Commissions to survey the disputed area and consequently establish a point on the Kunene River where the boundary line should be drawn eastward to the Kavango River. According to a report by Kanthack, who was in charge of the British Commission, during the months of July and August, the British and Portuguese Commissions camped in the vicinity of the Ruacana falls, carried out independent preliminary investigations and commenced negotiations at the very same site on 30 June 1920.²⁴ The following month, on 15 July 1920, an ‘agreement concerning the delimitation of the international frontier between Angola and South West Africa was signed at the Portuguese camp adjoining the Rua Cana falls’.²⁵ But the Ruacana agreement was just a

²² Gregor Doubler, ‘Boundary-drawing and the notion of territoriality in pre-colonial and early colonial Ovamboland’, *Journal of Namibian Studies* 3, 2008, 87.

²³ Patricia Hayes, ‘A History of the Owambo of Namibia, 1880-1930’, (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 1992), 253 – 269.

²⁴ Kanthack, ‘Notes Kunene’, 335.

²⁵ Kanthack, ‘Notes Kunene’, 335.

preliminary phase as it remained to be ratified in the metropolis. The Portuguese government refused to ratify the Ruacana Agreement as the South African representatives, part of the British commission, pushed to retain the right to use the Ruacana falls for hydropower generation and irrigation.²⁶ However it was because of this very demand that the agreement was deemed improper in Lisbon. The Portuguese government claimed that permitting access to the Kunene waters by Namibia for the listed functions ‘would involve a diminution of their sovereign rights’.²⁷

Just like the German-Portuguese convention of 1886, the Ruacana agreement further made the Ruacana Falls’s knowable. But this time the unveiling went beyond just naming the falls and its location. The agreement earned its name, not only because it was signed at the Ruacana Falls but also, because the same waterfalls featured as a landmark, a geographic point from where the boundary line was to follow the parallel of latitude through right to the Kavango river.²⁸ During their stay at Ruacana falls, members of the Technical Joint Commission were involved in the intellectual processes of creating a body of knowledge for the area. Prominent work in this regard is perhaps that of Kanthack who surveyed Ruacana Falls as well as the area between the waterfalls and Erickson’s Drift. Kanthack’s work, a combination of text and photographs, was published in *The Geographical Journal*. Kanthack states that he studied the seasonal distribution of the rainfall, surrounding terrain, drainage basin, velocity, geomorphology, as well as the geology and biome of the surrounding terrain. He also did an ethnography of the Zemba communities that were living in the vicinity of the waterfalls. Kanthack makes his work appear as indispensable by dismissing nearly all other information on the Ruacana falls, ‘both official and otherwise to be erroneous and wholly

²⁶ Hayes, Silvester and Hartmann, *Namibia*, 299. The cataract referred to here was the Ruacana waterfalls.

²⁷ Hayes, Silvester and Hartmann, *Namibia*, 299.

²⁸ Griffiths, ‘Scramble for Africa’, 212; Kanthack, ‘Notes on Kunene’, 335.

misleading'.²⁹ He declared that the Portuguese who had known the river intimately for a very long time, surprisingly had recorded unreliable information regarding so important a geographical feature. It is necessary to reinforce this point as his work seems to be intended to establish a claim that it is the first and most truthful account of the area.

Kanthack's work inspired others to study Ruacana Falls and its vicinity. Maudley Baines whose work was published in *The Geographical Society* confesses that he had been interested in the work on Kunene River specifically by Kanthack and E.H.L Schwarz. But he seems to have had more interest in Kanthack's work as he evidently studied exactly the same area and at the same time of the year. His work as well seems to have been set to establish the validity of Kanthack's work. With the help of local guides, Baines explored much further than what Kanthack assumed could be possible.³⁰

The processes of knowledge production became intertwined with the inscription of the personal biographies on the landscape of Ruacana. This is evident in Kanthack's work and those of other people that documented Ruacana waterfalls. The German surveyor Schimdt is said to have fairly accurately fixed the position of the Ruacana falls, while the Portuguese commissioners established the exact position of the Ruacana falls by placing a beacon at the site. The centre of the crest was determined by Col. Roma Machado and the total height of the Ruacana falls from the crest to the pool below the ridge was determined in approximates by Kanthack.³¹ The processes of knowledge production and inscription of biographies on the Ruacana falls further constructed mental geographical images that are dependent on cultural conceptions and expectations of the discovery of place. Individuals claim to be the first ones of their nationalities to have visited or to have studied Ruacana falls. For instance, Kanthack

²⁹ Kanthack, 'Notes on Kunene', 321. It is however worth noting that this study embraces the notion of ethnic identities, such as Zemba as 'less fixed'.

³⁰ Kanthack, 'Notes on Kunene', 333

³¹ Kanthack, 'Notes on Kunene', 333.

declares that the British commissioners were the first ‘Britishers to explore properly the Kunene between the Erickson’s Drift and the great Ruacana falls – the most interesting and important section of the river’.³² Finally these studies not only made Ruacana a subject of academic writing but also constructed Ruacana Falls as a ‘nature monument’ and a destination for expeditions. The vivid descriptions and the photographs in this literature created a place of value appealing to scholars and leisure travellers alike. From the early 1920s most of the expeditions destined to northern Namibia travelled to Ruacana Falls. The events at Ruacana falls seems to have kindled interest from scientists of different fields to study and document Ruacana waterfalls and the rest of the Kunene river especially between the Ruacana waterfalls and Erickson’s Drift and even further downstream.³³

1.4 The Cape Town Boundary Agreement of 1926

By the time the Namibian – Angolan border negotiations were revived in 1924, South West Africa had been placed under the administration of South Africa as a ‘C’ class mandate, by the Permanent Mandate Commission of the League of Nations.³⁴ This time negotiations took place in Cape Town. The clause that proved the Ruacana Agreement of 1920 improper was removed and Portugal was ‘allowed the use of the water for reasons of humanity and not in recognition of local customary rights’.³⁵ Further, the agreement granted South Africa the right to construct ‘a dam, weir or barrage within three miles upstream from the Ruacana beacon,³⁶ in order to divert water’ for hydropower generation in Namibia.³⁷ Randolph Vigne argues that the agreement was of paramount importance to the South African government as it was a

³² Kanthack, ‘Notes on Kunene, 321.

³³ Kanthack, ‘Notes on Kunene’, 335.

³⁴ Hayes, Silvester and Hartmann, *Namibia*, 299

³⁵ Hayes, Silvester and Hartmann, *Namibia*, 299

³⁶ The Ruacana beacon was placed by the Portuguese boundary commission of 1920 as a referential beacon on the spot for the border line; Hangula, *International Boundary*, 38.

³⁷ Hayes, Silvester and Hartmann, *Namibia*, 301.

show of sovereign independence from Britain.³⁸ This agreement is thus more crucial in terms of the transformations of Ruacana into a place as it prefigured the development of the Ruacana area through the hydropower project.

1.5 The Kunene River Water-Use Agreements: 1926 – 1969

When the South Africa commenced its administration over Namibia, the possibility of utilising Ruacana falls for the generation of hydroelectric power was first proposed and documented by Kanthack's hydrographical study of the Kunene River which he carried out in 1920. Suggesting Calueque to be the best site to build the dam, Jan Smuts, South African, prime minister at the time, tried to sway from the 1886 German-Portugal boundary convention and redraw the South West Africa's borders to include in the territory the dam site, but with no success. Nevertheless, South Africa and Portugal signed a treaty on the 1st July 1926 in order to facilitate the use of the Kunene river water for the purpose of generating hydroelectric power. According to Meissner, the proposed hydroelectric project could not become tangible at the time, as the South African government decided that Namibia was not in dire need of water and electricity and it proved to be too difficult to implement it. Still, the South African and Portuguese colonial administrations established a Joint Technical Commission to investigate the feasibility of damming the Kunene and diverting its water into Ovamboland.

Up until 1920, Namibia lacked a reliable power supply, a shortage that delayed industrial development and mining activities in the territory. Concrete plans to install the Ruacana Hydropower Scheme were only recommended by the Odendaal Commission 38 years later, after the Cape Town Agreement was signed. The Odendaal Commission's report that was

³⁸ Hayes, Silvester and Hartmann, Namibia, 299.

published in 1963 states that though the possibilities of generating electric power on the Kunene river have long been recognised, no detailed surveys of the said terrain had been made.³⁹ In justifying why the development project was prolonged, Meissner argues that in 1926 there was a low level and limited decentralisation of economic activity in South West Africa and this did not justify a countrywide electricity supply network. But I differ with this stance because not only does Meissner, contradictorily, state that this power supply pattern resulted in high power costs arising from transport, but, as it was already stated, Jan Smuts' attempt to alter the northern boundary accentuated the great need for electricity in the mandated territory as early 1926.

The question is thus, why did the South African government seem to be more action-oriented and fiercer regarding the development of a hydropower scheme from the 1960s? I suggest that in order to understand this delay in the infrastructural development in the form of the hydroelectric scheme, it is crucial to understand circumstances pertaining to South West Africa at the time, especially the legal dispute between the United Nations and South Africa. While the prolonged legal dispute between South Africa and the United Nations falls outside the scope of this study, it did influence the actions of South Africa's economic policy especially in respect of the Odendaal Plan, that, amongst other things, established the foundation of the Ruacana hydropower project. Gordon Lawrie argues that there can be little doubt that the appointment of the Odendaal Commission was responding to the development needs of Namibia, but at the same time, it is clear that its recommendations affected matters on which the International Court of Justice dealt with the Ethiopia and Liberia's application. Lawrie further maintains that it was therefore 'possible that a decision to implement

³⁹ *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into South West African affairs, 1962-3* (Odendaal Commission), RP 12/64. Pretoria: The Government Printer, 439

Odendaal Commission's recommendation might have led to an application from Liberia and Ethiopia for an injunction'.⁴⁰

Christo Botha asserts that 'South Africa's decision to commission a study to recommend the best ways to promote development in Namibia, should be seen against the background of increasing domestic and international opposition to South Africa's occupation. The Odendaal Report can be seen as central to South Africa's political and social-economic response to this offensive'.⁴¹ Likewise Marion Wallace emphasizes that the Odendaal Commission, in recommending increased government expenditure and modernisation hoped to deflect some of the adverse criticism that South African rule in South West Africa was receiving internationally, and to encourage foreign investment which would in return benefit the South African economy.⁴² Similarly, Lawrie argues that the South African colonial government used the geographical location of the Ruacana hydropower project as if it was designed entirely to benefit Ovamboland.⁴³ However the only power supplies were for the benefit of the mining and industrial areas in the south. Except for the small amount required for pumping water from the Kunene River into the Ovamboland canals, the only benefit that Owambo residents were to gain was the sight of the power lines. It seems to a 'layman that the 220 kilovolt power supplies will mainly benefit the mining and industrial areas in the south'.⁴⁴ Mitchell maintains that with the Ruacana hydropower scheme both its power and water supply were intended to serve the expansion of the mining sector.⁴⁵ Thus, most people

⁴⁰ Gordon Lawrie, 'New Light on South West Africa: Some Extracts from and Comment on the Odendaal Report', *African Studies*, Vol.23, (1964), 13 - 14. I will discuss the case of Ethiopia and Liberia in the following sections.

⁴¹ Christo Botha, 'The Odendaal Plan: Development for Colonial Namibia', Windhoek, Department of History. University of Namibia, www.namibweb.com/oden.htm, Accessed on 30 May 2013.

⁴² Marion Wallace, *A history of Namibia*, (United Kingdom: C. Hurst & Co Publishers, 2011), 262.

⁴³ Gordon Lawrie, 'New Light on South West Africa: Some Extracts from and Comment on the Odendaal Report', *African Studies*, Vol.23, (1964), 13 - 14.

⁴⁴ Lawrie, 'New Light, 13 - 14.

⁴⁵ Mit Mitchell, 'The politics of Water and Power: The Significance of Dams and River Valley Development Projects in the Political and Economic History of southern with particular reference to the Cunene River Scheme', (B. Phil thesis, York: Centre for African Studies), 26.

in Ovamboland continued to use oil lamps and candles despite the power lines running right across it. Such an understanding unveils the different motivations behind the infrastructural development and also articulates the prominence attached to Ruacana as a place by those in power.

The Odendaal Commission's report was published in the midst of the legal proceeding at the International Court of Justice. The report recommended a 'first five-year economic development plan involving an expenditure of R160 m, followed by a second five-year plan involving R 190m'.⁴⁶ The report picks out the provision of electricity as the greatest single contribution that could be made at the time to the general progress of the northern areas.⁴⁷

The Commission recommended that a hydro-electric scheme should be established where the Kunene forms a common boundary with Angola at the Ruacana Falls and later farther downstream.⁴⁸ The report further states that the project would supply northern and central regions with electrical power and water.⁴⁹ Other projects included an irrigation scheme on the Orange River for the Nama people, and in the central area the report suggested a number of dams for the supply of water to the Damara, Nama and Herero.⁵⁰

The recommendation by the Odendaal Commission for the establishment of the Ruacana hydroelectric scheme necessitated another water-use agreement between the South African colonial government and Portuguese authorities. The 1926 water-use agreement did not seem to set details pertaining to the construction of a hydropower scheme on foreign territory as well as sourcing water from a shared river. In October 1964 an agreement between the South

⁴⁶ Andre Du Pisani, *SWA/Namibia: The Politics of Continuity and Change*, (Jonathan Ball Publishers: Johannesburg, 1985), 163.

⁴⁷ *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into South West African*, 439.

⁴⁸ Gordon Lawrie, 'New Light on South West Africa: Some Extracts from and Comment on the Odendaal Report', *African Studies*, Vol.23, (1964), 8.

⁴⁹ I make this point because the commission was exclusively aimed to better the lives of non-White South West Africans. There were recommendations for other sectors of the economy as well; however, they are beyond the scope of this work. See, Marion Wallace, *A history of Namibia*, (United Kingdom: C. Hurst & Co Publishers, 2011), 261.

⁵⁰ Du Pisani, *SWA/Namibia*, 163.

African and Portuguese governments in regard to issues of mutual interest on the Cunene River Scheme was signed in Lisbon. This agreement outlined conditions to be adhered to when utilising the Kunene and Okavango rivers: promotion and maintenance of friendship and good neighbourliness, ensuring harmonization of interests and eliminating, reducing or compensating for any damage which may result from the hydraulic works.⁵¹

The agreement also permitted the diversion of water from the Kunene River into Ovamboland. Here the South African government was requested to submit specific plans regarding this project to its counterpart for final approval. The agreement further stipulated for the two countries to build a dam at Matala, located 50 km upstream from Ruacana in order to increase power output for the hydropower station in Angola and thus supply power to South West Africa. Since both Angola and South Africa were both beneficiaries, the costs of the project were to be shared equally. However given Portugal's poor financial state, South Africa was to give a loan to the Portuguese government.⁵² Finally the agreement clarified the location of the Kunene river scheme to be on the Namibia side of border, in the vicinity of Ruacana.⁵³ The two governments were expected to carry out technical aspects involved in the construction of a storage dam above Ruacana in order to obtain maximum regulation for the power station at Ruacana. Both the Portuguese and South African authorities pledged to nominate suitable personnel and cooperate in making a preliminary study of the hydroelectric possibilities of the Kunene River. The South African group was to concentrate on the Ruacana area. The two groups were to suggest to their governments lists of priorities and

⁵¹The Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Governments of the Republic Portugal Regarding to Rivers of Mutual Interests and the Cunene River Scheme,(13th October 1964: Lisbon), www.kunenerak.org/, Accessed 11 October 2013.

⁵² The Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Governments of the Republic Portugal Regarding to Rivers of Mutual Interests and the Cunene River Scheme,(13th October 1964: Lisbon), www.kunenerak.org/, Accessed 11 October 2013.

⁵³ The Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Governments of the Republic Portugal Regarding to Rivers of Mutual Interests and the Cunene River Scheme.

plans of execution.⁵⁴ The final clause of the 1964 agreement was subjected for final action to another agreement between the two governments. Factors such as the exact locations of the dam and the power station in the vicinity of Ruacana as well as their economic implications were referred to another agreement after a series of preliminary studies had been completed.

On 21 January 1969 the South African and Portuguese governments signed what would then become their final water-use agreement in Lisbon. The Lisbon Agreement of 1969, firstly, was aimed at establishing guidelines for the ‘best utilisation of the Kunene waters’.⁵⁵ The first section of the agreement outlines the aims of the agreement to be that of regulating the flow of the Kunene River and thus to enable improvements of hydropower at Matala, generation of hydroelectric power at Ruacana as well as the use of Kunene waters for human and animal requirements in Namibia, and for irrigation purposes in the Ovamboland. While these are all listed as aims of the agreement, the subsequent sections stipulate the terms and conditions by which the hydroelectric projects must abide. These regulations could be said to be aimed at ensuring transparency and setting out clearly the financial responsibilities for each party.⁵⁶ The development of the Ruacana hydro complex is discussed at length and thus making up the larger part of the agreement, reaching even the extent of stating components of the Ruacana hydraulic project, such as the Gove dam, the Ruacana hydropower station, and Calueque reservoir which supplies water to northern Namibia via an Owamboland canal.⁵⁷ Negotiations that led to the water-use agreement were deliberately initiated for the purpose of instituting the Ruacana hydraulic project.

⁵⁴ The agreement between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Government of Portugal in Regard to the First phase of Development of the Water Resources of the Cunene river Basin, Lisbon, (21 January 1969), Portugal, *Dario do Governo*, www.fao.org, No. 250, 28 October 1970, p. 1589, Accessed 11 October 2013.

⁵⁵ The South African and the Portuguese Kunene river agreement

⁵⁶ The South African and the Portuguese Kunene river agreement.

⁵⁷ The South African and the Portuguese Kunene river agreement.

Since the bulk facilities of the Ruacana hydropower scheme were to be located in Angola, part of the agreement includes regulations to facilitate the movements of personnel and goods for the construction, operation and maintenance of facilities in Angolan territory without evading Portuguese sovereign rights and yet at the same time granting South African personnel access to Angola without immigration restrictions.

To ensure the former, the agreement required South Africa to pay the government of Portugal an 'amount of R 220 000.00 as compensation for the ground occupied by the works and for the flooding of approximately 18 000 ha of ground resulting from the construction of the dam to a full supply level of 1098m'.⁵⁸ The South African government was also further mandated to pay a loyalty fee to Portugal in 'respect of power generated at Ruacana'.

However, the irony is that the South African authority was permitted to 'use, free of charge, the ground on Portuguese territory at Ruacana to be occupied by and required for the construction of the diversion works and regulating basin'.⁵⁹

The significance of the agreement in regards to Ruacana is that it authorised the construction of the Ruacana hydropower scheme. Thus the Lisbon Agreement played a fundamental role in the making and transformation of Ruacana as a place. The agreement allowed the South African government to use the Kunene river waters and development of the Ruacana waterfall for the purpose of generating hydropower at Ruacana. While the hydropower project alone changed the place of Ruacana, consequent developments such as the provision of housing which was designed according to apartheid town planning ethos even further moulded further Ruacana into a place.

⁵⁸ The South African and the Portuguese Kunene river agreement

⁵⁹ The South African and the Portuguese Kunene river agreement

1.6 Ruacana hosts the biggest hydropower station in Namibia

It has been argued in the preceding sections that Ruacana was conceived and transformed into a place first in the boundary agreements and then later in the water-use agreements signed by the South African and Portuguese governments respectively. But up until then, Ruacana had just been an abstract idea, a project leaving much to one's imagination of what was to become of the space known as Ruacana. It was the installation of the Ruacana hydropower scheme that put such imaginations to rest. The Ruacana hydropower scheme not only transformed Ruacana into a place, but has also created a Ruacana that never existed: two towns and a hydropower stations and its components.

The Ruacana hydropower scheme with its elaborate network of dams, weir barrages, and power station together with canals, pipelines, power lines, roads, and settlements physically changed Ruacana area, a space that was once defined by the South African colonial government representatives, as wild, inaccessible and only known as a location for the waterfall. Evidently, the landscape was modified into humanly made elements when water was diverted for drinking, and irrigation. When the river was dammed to regulate its flow, trees were cleared, for the construction of dams, roads, canal, and houses and thus rearranging the ecology of the area. To elaborate this transformation further, it is crucial to narrate the components of the Ruacana hydropower scheme.

In 1963, the Namibia's Department of Water Affairs commenced the implementation of the project with the construction of the Calueque-Okatana canal in northern Owamboland to collect flood waters, some of which come from Angola, and carry them as far as the Roman Catholic mission at Okatana, in Oshakati.⁶⁰ A second phase of the scheme started further west

⁶⁰ *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into South West Africa*, 451; Lawrie, 'New Light', 9.

and used a natural flood water course of the Etaka flood plain as its main canal.⁶¹ The water systems were both intended to supply water for both human and animal consumption, as well as for providing for irrigation projects.⁶² The canal, being the first of its kind in Namibia did not only function as a source of water but was viewed by the South African colonial government to be a technology that would help in flood control.⁶³ After the 1964 water-use agreement specified the location for the hydropower station the South West Africa Electricity Corporation was formed on the 19th December 1964 as a ‘private and fully affiliated company of the Industrial Development Corporation of the Republic of South Africa’, with a ‘prime objective of the development’ of the Ruacana hydropower scheme and ‘establishment of a transmission system for the distribution of power southwards’.⁶⁴

Immediately after the signing of the final water-use agreement in 1969, further construction of other components of the Ruacana hydropower project commenced with the construction of a storage dam at Gove, located along the Kunene River about 430 km from Ruacana. The Gove dam which has a carrying capacity of 2,600 million cubic metres was designed to store flood water that would be used to supplement the flow in drier seasons thus, ensuring optimal power generation downstream at the Ruacana power station.⁶⁵ The Gove dam was completed in 1975 and was at the time mostly used to facilitate the construction of the Ruacana diversion weir and the Calueque dam.⁶⁶

As a second component of the Ruacana hydropower scheme, was a regulating dam, built at about 65km upstream from Ruacana, at Calueque. A pumping station to extract water into the

⁶¹ *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into South West African affair*, 451; Lawrie, ‘New Light’, 9.

⁶² *Report of the Commission of Enquiry*, 451; Lawrie, ‘New Light’, 9.

⁶³ Martha Akawa et al, ‘Water use and environmental conditions along the Etaka canal in north central Namibia’, 2002, 2

⁶⁴ *The History of SWAWEK in South West Africa in Visual Representation*; Olivier Henry, *Great Dams in Southern Africa*, (Cape Town: Purnell & Sons, 1977), 125.

⁶⁵ *The History of SWAWEK in South West Africa in Visual Representation*, P 2; The Kunene River Scheme, www.kunenerak.org/, Accessed 10 November 2013.

⁶⁶ *The History of SWAWEK in South West Africa in Visual Representation*, P 2.

Oshana at Etaka and the Calueque-Okatana canals were also constructed at the same site, Calueque. The dam was primarily designed to further regulate the flow of the Kunene River and thus ensuring the optimal generation of power at Ruacana station. The dam was also intended to store water for bulk transfer for human and animal consumption in northern Namibia and local consumption in Angola.⁶⁷ Construction of the Calueque dam started in 1972 but three years into construction, Portuguese colonial rule came to an end. The transition in governance in Angola impacted work on the Ruacana hydropower project negatively. In 1976 the Angolan authorities ordered South West Africa Water and Electricity Commission staff to vacate the construction site within 12 hours.⁶⁸ Although the dam was partially functioning in 1976, it stored considerably less than the original design volume of 475 Cubic Millimetres (Mm³).⁶⁹

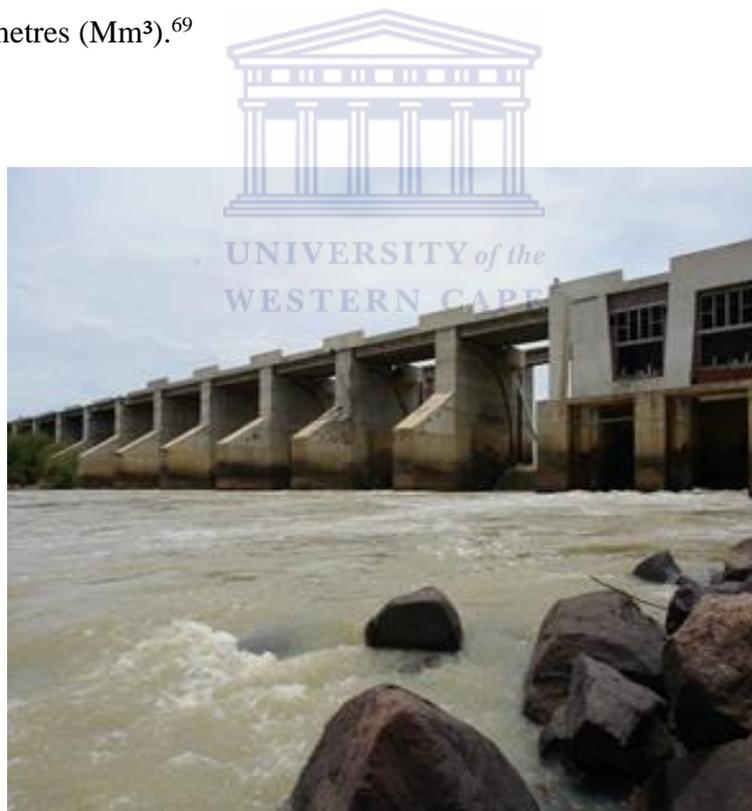


Figure 2. The Calueque regulating dam located 65 kilometres, upstream Ruacana. Horst Vogel, 2004. www.kunenerak.org. Accessed on 11th October 2013.

⁶⁷ The Kunene River Scheme, www.kunenerak.org/, Accessed 10 November 2013.

⁶⁸ *History of SWAWEK*, 2; The Kunene River Scheme, www.kunenerak.org/, Accessed 10 November 2013.

⁶⁹ Kunene River Scheme.

The third component of the Ruacana hydropower project was the Ruacana diversion weir constructed about 1km upstream from Ruacana in Angolan territory. The primary function of this weir was to provide a constant head of water in the river and divert water through an 8 m diameter pipe for hydroelectric power generation in Namibia.⁷⁰ Construction of the Ruacana diversion weir was completed in January 1978 but could not be commissioned because the Angolan government refused the closing of the sluice gates. This meant that the power station could also not be operational.

The final (and the only component of the Ruacana hydropower project located on the Namibian territory) is the Ruacana hydropower station. The power station was constructed some 140 metres, underground. The plant consists of a large head bay and buildings in which switch-gear and protective equipment are housed. At completion the plant has a capacity of 240 mw.⁷¹

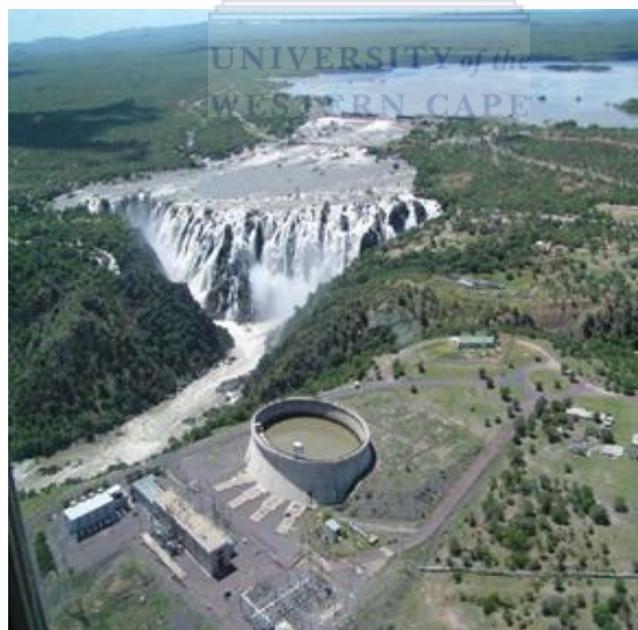


Figure. 3 An overview of the Ruacana falls, Ruacana electrical relay station, and Calueque dam from air. Anthony Turton. *A South African Diary: Contested Identity, My Family - Our Story: 1975 – 2007*

⁷⁰ Kunene River Scheme.

⁷¹ Kunene River Scheme.

It is evident from the description and photographs above that the Ruacana hydropower scheme enormously transformed Ruacana. The Ruacana hydropower scheme, it could be argued was the most prominent structure in the transformation of Ruacana into a place. Of course the dams, weir barrages, roads, canals, power station, and power lines created a new visual impression, and material topography that had never previously existed in Ruacana and thus changed the face of the landscape extensively, an area that was just an open space became a place with physical man-made features.

However, transformation went beyond conventional changes of concrete settings of Ruacana. The construction of the hydropower station meant, formation of new ‘processes whereby the reproduction of social and cultural forms, the formation of biographies, that the transformation of nature ceaselessly become one another’.⁷² The power project was framed within a lens of high modernism as it was seen as evidence of progress, and engineering accomplishments. Government Planners, civil engineers, hydrologists hailed the project’s technical complexity and the skill required to construct the largest power station in a country which lacked the most basic economic infrastructure.⁷³

The Ruacana hydropower project was described by the South West Africa Legislative Assembly as a ‘thrilling and beautiful scheme’.⁷⁴ At its planning stage a Resident Engineer for the power scheme referred to it as an ‘impressive piece of planned technology’ and thus when offered an opportunity to work on the project was ‘dragged ... like a magnet’.⁷⁵ The difficult landscape of Ruacana and political, and financial turmoil of civil war in Angola which the South West Africa Water and Electricity Commission endured in order to complete the project both demanded and provided the grounds for the elaboration of a ‘techno-

⁷² Allan Pred, ‘Place as Historically Contingent Process: Structuration and the Time- Geography of Becoming Places’, *Taylor & Francis*. 74, (1984), 282.

⁷³ George von Konrat, *Passport to Truth*, (1972), XII; *History of SWAWEK*, 2 -4.

⁷⁴ South West Africa Legislative Assembly, quoted by M.P. Mitchell, *The Significance water*, 57.

⁷⁵ Konrat, *Passport*, XII.

nationalist pioneering discourse, celebrating the toil and ingenuity of South African engineers and scientists working on the project'.⁷⁶ Therefore upon completion of the power project, the South African colonial government, contended that it demonstrated that 'through scientific knowledge and modern technology capricious natural forces could be harnessed and biophysical systems transformed to serve humankind'.⁷⁷

The magnitude of the project meant that it had significance attached to it by the South African government. Meanings attached to the project earned Ruacana more substance and transformed it into a unique entity, and a special ensemble. Like a monument, the power project transformed Ruacana into a place by giving it more prominence and significance and thus organised Ruacana into a place of meaning. Most importantly, a project of this nature was also, as Sparks argues 'demonstrating the state's modernity to national and international audiences'.⁷⁸ Other scholars have also underlined the importance of large-scale technological projects and their discursive accompaniments to the apartheid state's assertion of its technological modernity. For instance Gabrielle Hecht and Paul Edwards who foregrounded the South African nuclear program, argued the apartheid state 'sought demonstrate technological self-sufficiency'.⁷⁹ Similarly, Saul Dubow argues that Afrikaner nationalist leaders specially valued 'state-controlled prestige projects as trophy technology'.⁸⁰ Such national(ist) discourses of 'technological prowess and the technological sublime were absolutely central in the meanings attached to the Ruacana hydropower scheme'.⁸¹

⁷⁶ See, Konrat, *Passport, 2; History of SWAWEK, 2 -4.*

⁷⁷ Allen Isaacman, 'Domesticating a White Elephant: Sustainability and Struggles Over Water, The Case of Cahora Bassa Dam'. *Zambesia*. XXVIII, 201.

⁷⁸ Stephen John Sparks, 'Apartheid Modern: South Africa's Oil from Coal Project and the History of a South African Company Town', (PhD., diss., The University of Michigan, 2012), 106.

⁷⁹ Sparks, 'Apartheid Modern', 106.

⁸⁰ Saul Dubow, 'Afrikaner nationalism, Apartheid and the conceptualization of 'race'', *The Journal of African History*, 02, (1992): 217.

⁸¹ Sparks, 'Apartheid Modern', 106.

More significance emanated from the possibilities that the power project offered to the South African government. First and foremost the project helped the South African government representations to the United Nations.⁸² By the 1970s South Africa continued administration over Namibia was contrary to rulings by the United Nations General Assembly, the Security Council and the International Court of Justice.⁸³ In 1967 the General Assembly terminated South Africa's mandate and established a council to administer the territory.⁸⁴

In 1969, the United Nations Economic Committee commended Cahora Bassa, especially for its expected services to Malawi. South Africa hoped that the Ruacana hydropower scheme, represented as the largest investment South Africa made in Namibia, would achieve a similar effect at the United Nations as the government represented Ruacana hydropower scheme as though it was a piece of evidence that they were honouring its 'sacred trust of civilisation' and would 'promote to the utmost the material and moral well-being and social progress of the inhabitants'. Such expectations came to light especially when reporters from the International Court of Justice at the Hague, the United Nation's Secretary-General Dr Waldheim, and a few months later Dr Alfred Escher, visited Namibia at South Africa's invitation to see for themselves how South Africa had transformed Namibia, Ruacana was a leading attraction on the planned itinerary he exclaimed. When the Director of Water Affairs addressed the reporters he exclaimed:

So you see what we (RSA) are doing here? Our deeds speak for themselves! I do not have to try to convince you, gentlemen, you can see for yourselves.⁸⁵

Secondly just as much as the Ruacana hydropower scheme was a product of the politics of the 1960s, it came to play a very important role in the political process. The scheme was

⁸² Konrat, *Passport*, 56.

⁸³ Mitchell, 'Politics of Water', 56.

⁸⁴ Mitchell, 'Politics of Water', 54.

⁸⁵ Mitchell, 'Politics of Water', 56.

financed by international banks, which Mitchell argues was not an isolated phenomenon.⁸⁶ Also the Ruacana hydropower scheme supplied cheap electricity and thus allowed immense economic development in Namibia mainly through mining. Mitchell further asserts that, although South Africa was capable themselves to exploit mineral resources in Namibia, their involvement was very minimal and left opportunities to the Western businesses. These financial arrangements were consciously designed to gain South Africa international support. By financing the Ruacana hydropower scheme and by investing in the mining sector, international firms, with the help of their governments, developed a vested interest in maintaining and protecting the status quo and their investment in Namibia. Such interests in Namibia encouraged companies and their governments to ‘deflout the authority of the United Nations and that of the International Court of Justice’.⁸⁷ This way South Africa could build up a network of economic contacts, and assure military security.⁸⁸

Finally before the installations of the Ruacana hydropower scheme there was no electric grid linking all the towns in Namibia. Due to this shortage Namibia virtually had no industry with its economy based on mining, agriculture, fishing and tourism.⁸⁹ The project became an ‘evidence of progress’ as it helped establish a national grid which joined smaller power stations with Ruacana and the Van Eck, and Walvis Bay thermal stations.⁹⁰

All this meant that Ruacana had ‘become something of a showpiece’ for the South African colonial government.⁹¹ A location whose existence was barely known had been accorded a position in the country where economic development seemed to depend on it. It is these meanings and attachments that lead me to suggest that these transformations made Ruacana into a place that articulates social constructions by those in power – planners, architects,

⁸⁶ Mitchell, ‘Politics of Water’, 56.

⁸⁷ Mitchell, ‘Politics of Water’, 81.

⁸⁸ Mitchell, ‘Politics of Water’, 25.

⁸⁹ Mitchell, ‘Politics of Water’, 80.

⁹⁰ Mitchell, ‘Politics of Water’, 52.

⁹¹ Mitchell, ‘Politics of Water’, 56.

administrators, politicians and property developers.⁹² It was through Ruacana that these economic, political and social aspirations of the state were expressed.

1.7 Spatialised Apartheid: Ruacana and Oshifo Townships

The making of a place does not only involve assemblage of buildings, land use, patterns and arteries of communication that constitute place as a visible scene indelibly etched in the once-natural landscape.⁹³ But a place is always a human product and in that it does not emerge out of nothingness. As such, making a place is not only about constructing what is fleetingly observed on the landscape, a locale or setting but also involves appropriation and transformation of society in time – space.⁹⁴ This sets to suggest that a place is ‘a way seeing’ and thus a constructed image based on the meanings that people attach to place.⁹⁵ The conceptualisation of the making of a place in this manner translates well into a Ruacana residential area. The constructed image of Ruacana residential precinct occurred within the conventions, policies, laws, beliefs, traditions, attitudes, values, and ideologies that structured society and thus dictated the framework within which the planning and actual setting up physical aspects of a place occurred. In Ruacana the development of the residential precinct occurred within the framework of apartheid urban planning and alongside that of modernisation. Thus there was both a transformation of physical environment into a setting of modern housing, streets, water and power systems as well that of a constructed image that further extended Ruacana as a landscape as a symbol of modernity.

The planning of the residential Ruacana precinct commenced early in 1970. The precinct was intended to accommodate South West African Water and Electricity Commission’s staff as

⁹² Brenda Yeoh and Lily King, ‘The notion of place in the construction of history, nostalgia and heritage in Singapore’, 53.

⁹³ Pred, ‘Place’, 279.

⁹⁴ Pred, ‘Place’, 279.

⁹⁵ Yeoh and King, ‘Notion of Place’, 53.

well as other departments that were linked to the development of the Ruacana hydropower station such as the Department of Water Affairs. These developments took place along racial lines, black and white staff each had their own township. This model of urban development was first implemented in Namibia in 1959, with the implementation of the Group Areas Act of 1950. This Act was instrumental in bringing about urban segregation, in that it recommended, enabled and compelled residential segregation.⁹⁶ The Act required the establishment of ‘separate residential areas for White, Indian, and Coloured (mixed-race) decent, and Black, the latter in what were designated native locations’.⁹⁷ Important to this study is the concept ‘township’ which was used outside its common definition of ‘little town’. Under the apartheid town planning, the concept township came to refer a location mainly separated from the main town or city where people racially designated as ‘natives’ were designated to live.⁹⁸ The ‘native townships’ were regarded as temporary places of residence as urban residents who would return to rural ethnic homelands once they no longer laboured in the cities. Likewise the term ‘residential areas’ was only used to indicate areas exclusively for white occupation.⁹⁹ This urban development model originated from South Africa when it was first introduced in around 1923, through the Native (Urban Areas) Act. The Act gave local authorities a responsibility to provide housing for black workers in urban areas. These areas were then called ‘locations’ or ‘townships’.¹⁰⁰ These urban planning policies were implemented to tightly control the development of land in urban areas especially with the intentions of preventing and restricting urbanization by black South Africans.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Paul Maylam, ‘Explaining the Apartheid City: 20 Years of South African Urban Historiography’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 21, (1995), 27 – 28

⁹⁷ Haarhoff, ‘Appropriating modernisation’, 186.

⁹⁸ Dick Vestbro, ‘Housing in Apartheid City’, 2.

⁹⁹ Haarhoff, ‘Appropriating modernisation’, 187.

¹⁰⁰ Dick Vestbro, ‘Housing in Apartheid City’, 2

¹⁰¹ Stephen Beresford, ‘Unravelling Apartheid Spatial Planning Legislation in South Africa’, *Urban forum*, 22, (2011), 249.

It was this political milieu that structured the planning of Ruacana residential area. Although the town planning documents do not make reference to the Group Areas Act of 1950, Ruacana's residential zones bore very much the imprint of apartheid town planning. Ruacana's residential zone was classified into the 'European Township' and the 'Bantu/Native Township'. However Ruacana stands out in two instances. Firstly in order to implement the newly segregatory urban planning policies, in many towns and cities in both South Africa and Namibia, town dwellers were forcibly removed from areas that they lived in to be settled in areas designated both for their racial category and their ethnic category. Although planning of Ruacana's residential zones occurred when the apartheid officialdom was at its peak, Ruacana's residential precinct was established in areas that were not settled before. These factors evaded any need for forced removals in order to ensure racial segregation for South West Africa Water and Electricity Commission's staff. Secondly, the planning documents refer to the two residential zones as 'townships', the European Township and the Bantu and Native Township. It was only later when the two townships were officially named, that the European township was replaced by the Ruacana *Dorp* and the Bantu /Native township by Oshifo township¹⁰². This leads one to ask whether the term 'township' was used in the same context. However, given the meaning of the concept at a time, one can only suggest that, in the case of the European township, the concept referred to a 'small town'.¹⁰³

Oshifo township provided accommodation to the black labourers who were first in compounds, constructed from prefabricated materials and located on both sides of the Angolan-Namibian border. The compound north of the border was designed to accommodate 350 labourers, while that south of the border accommodated 500 labourers. With such a high number of occupants this type of mass accommodation was deemed to be devoid of family

¹⁰² Oshifo means 'green - vegetation - area' in Zemba language.

¹⁰³ Vestbro, 'Housing in Apartheid City', 2.

type structures and thus ‘incapable of fulfilling the most modest human endeavours’.

Therefore, Oshifo Township with its permanent brick houses came to replace these compounds that were destroyed upon the completion of the township in 1976. Since Oshifo is located about 21 km from the power station, a bus service was provided to transport personnel from both the townships to and from work.

The two townships were planned by different governmental institutions that were established. The planning and service provision in the ‘Bantu township’ was a responsibility given to the Department of the Bantu Administration and Development.¹⁰⁴ However the department only bore the financial responsibilities for the establishment of the township as it had to award tenders to specialised contractors that would carry out the said responsibility. In this regard the Department of Water Affairs planned and executed the provision of bulk water supply.¹⁰⁵

The infrastructural configuration in the two townships was profoundly marked by apartheid in ways that shows patterns of privilege, seclusion and exclusion. Resources were allocated so inequitably that Oshifo residents were excluded and marginalised from the many facilities that their counterparts in Ruacana *Dorp* enjoyed. For instance, the size of the houses and the surrounding gardens varied in the two townships. While the Native Township comprised small single-storey one-family units built in the middle of a plot of standardised measures, with the measurement of approximately 240 m², the houses in the Ruacana *Dorp* were double the size of the houses in the Native Township. A visit to the two townships today (even though apartheid has officially come to an end) reveals that the European Township’s houses are surrounded by green gardens that are covered with lawns, trees and flowers. The Native Township’s small gardens are empty although some have trees. Town planning from this

¹⁰⁴ NASA, Reference and Volume WW24/3/1, Ruacana Township – Permanent White Township and Bantu Township, 17 March 1972.

¹⁰⁵ NASA, Reference and Volume WW24/3/1, Ruacana Township – Permanent White Township and Bantu Township, 17 March 1972.

period was informed by the belief that in general gardens in low income residential areas tend to be badly kept in contrast to those in higher income areas. Also public housing schemes were afforded smaller gardens as they were more likely to be nicely kept than a bigger one.¹⁰⁶ Houses in Ruacana *Dorp* had a full bathroom, three bedrooms, a bigger living room, kitchen and dining room, garage, and a store room, the floors were carpeted. Houses in the Native Township though had only two bed rooms, a half bathroom, a small living room, a kitchen, and bare cement floors.

To ensure that each residents keep to their township basic services such as education, health care, communications were also provided for in the township but just like housing, along racial lines. In the European *Dorp*, the school was placed at the centre of residential precinct so that it is within walking distance from each house, while in Oshifo the school was located on the western edge of the township. Other amenities that proved costly to build for each township such as the post office, and primary health care centre were located in the European township and residents had to share. The configuration of amenities were organised in such a manner, that, even though Ruacana *Dorp* was planned to be a temporary facility and Oshifo Township a permanent residential zone, segregatory measures were enforced, and it was thus the *Dorp* that housed all basic amenities. A case in point are the post office, police station and prison where each racial group had its sections where service was to be provided to them. Further to ensure a rich associational life and socialisation beyond social boundaries and property fences, recreational facilities in the form of tennis, netball, volley ball courts , a swimming pool and a social club created spaces where people were provided for in the European Township.¹⁰⁷ These recreational facilities were located in a green park with

¹⁰⁶ Sparks, 'Apartheid Modern', 106; Vestbro, 'Housing in Apartheid City', 5.

¹⁰⁷ NASA, Reference and Volume A14/14/1/4/13/3, Beplanning + Ontwikkeling van Dorpe in Bantowoonbuurt: Ruacana: Behusing, 06 September 1974.

benches under shady trees.¹⁰⁸ The park was designed to be the heart of the *Dorp* where the inhabitants would meet for social gatherings or commemorative functions. Oshifo residents were only provided with a netball court and a soccer pitch as recreational facilities.

While other townships that were developed from the early 1950s were zoned according to ethnic differentiation, Oshifo Township lacked such a classification. Its model is very much in line with the meaning that the state attached to Ruacana, that of a heritage of modernity. Although the European township was very much superior to the Oshifo Township, Oshifo's infrastructures was meant to be a 'respectable' township, developed as a 'superior housing area for the aspirant black middle class'.¹⁰⁹

While there was an emphasis on egalitarianism in both the two townships, the class stratification typical of company towns was inscribed in the plans from the town's conception. In each of the residential precinct housing requirements were coordinated to ensure that houses were similar to avoid comparisons and tangible class formation. In the European township a special request was made by the Department Administration and Development for a 'uniform standard of housing which will exclude any dis-favourable comparison of accommodation'.¹¹⁰ But some 'zoning' still occurred as 'professional people and artisans were segregated as far as possible'.¹¹¹ Segregation also occurred in the two townships based on the marital status as single quarters were provided for unmarried persons.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ NASA, Reference and Volume A14/14/1/4/13/3, Beplanning + Ontwikkeling van Dorpe in Bantoe woonbuurt.

¹⁰⁹ Maylan, 'Explaining the Apartheid City', 30.

¹¹⁰ NASA, Reference and Volume A14/14/1/4/13/3, Beplanning + Ontwikkeling van Dorpe in proclaimed itself to be the government of an independent Angola. Bantoe woonbuurt: Ruacana: Behuising, 06 September 1974.

¹¹¹ NASA, Reference and Volume WW24/3/1, S.W.A.V.E.K., 15 June 1971

¹¹² NASA, Reference and Volume WW24/3/1, S.W.A.V.E.K., 15 June 1971

1.8 Ruacana Becomes a Military Post

In 1975, just three years after work on the Ruacana hydropower scheme commenced, another landscape was established in Ruacana, which transformed Ruacana into a military camp.

Several events contributed to the transformation of Ruacana into an encampment. In 1975, Angola became independent from the Portuguese colonial rule and the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola declared itself to be the government of an independent Angola.¹¹³ In the same year a civil war broke out in Angola with People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola fought against each other, with hopes of taking over the country.

A change in government in Angola also meant that relations between South Africa and Angola changed dramatically, and improving diplomatic relations with the new Angolan government was beyond any possibilities. The South African government not only, no longer had a friendly neighbour there, but was now faced with the prospect of a hostile government in Luanda, one that would give support to the South West Africa People Organisation and would provide military training bases for the Umkonto we Sizwe cadres.¹¹⁴ The hosting of South West Africa People's Organisation's armed wing the Peoples' Liberation Army of Namibia in southern Angola, who opposed the Ruacana hydropower scheme, and the outbreak of civil war made the Ruacana hydropower scheme as a target for attacks. The scheme was previously guarded by the Portuguese army, and thus the army's withdrawal left the engineering crews to the mercy of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola and National Front for the Liberation of Angola.¹¹⁵ A month after the Angolan civil war started, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola soldiers failed to allow a South African engineer to visit the Ruacana hydropower scheme facilities under

¹¹³ Chris Saunders, 'The South African-Angola talks: A little-known Cold War', 5.

¹¹⁴ Saunders, 'South African talks, 5; Athony Turton, *A South African Diary: Contested Identity, My Family - Our Story*, (2010), 5.

construction in Angola, and ten other South African engineers were held against their will at Calueque. Such events not only inhibited the progress on the Ruacana hydropower scheme's infrastructure in Angola,¹¹⁶ but also indicated that the Ruacana hydropower scheme was going to play a crucial role in the border war.¹¹⁷

The threat of an attack on the Ruacana hydropower scheme facilities became a reality on 01 August 1975 when People's Liberation Army of Namibia took advantage of the open frontiers between Angola and Namibia and attacked the Calueque Dam. It was this attack that finally pushed the South African government to send the South Africa Defence Force to occupy Calueque permanently, on 10 August 1975, to safeguard the Calueque Dam.¹¹⁸ It soon became clear to South Africa that setting up a large army base in the border area would make it easier for troops patrolling on the site. This decision coincided with the need to protect South West Africa Water and Electricity and other staff working on the power project both in Namibia and Angola. An army base was established in the Ruacana Dorp. In order to 'protect her interests' at both Ruacana and Calueque, South Africa erected a heavy-gauge wire fence enclosing an area 12 km by 32 from Calueque to Ruacana.¹¹⁹ Mitchell maintains such a move not only allowed South Africa to protect transmission lines and facilitate the movement of men and equipment but was also to protect Ruacana Dorp residents.¹²⁰ The Ruacana army base consisted of 51 Battalion, established under the command of Commandant Lambrecht. Attached to the army base was the South African Air Force Mobile Air Operations Team, a contingent from Namibia Special Field Forces, Koevoet, and a detachment of troops from 201 Battalion.¹²¹ The main task of the Ruacana air force crew was

¹¹⁶ Athony Turton, *South African Diary*, 6.

¹¹⁷ See for instance Mitchell, 'politics of water'.

¹¹⁸ Turton, *South African Diary*, Conteste, 644.

¹¹⁹ Mitchell, 'Politics of Water', 68.

¹²⁰ Mitchell, *Politics of Water*, 68.

¹²¹ Dick Lord, *From Fledgling to Eagle: The South African Air Force During the Border War*, (Johannesburg: 30 Degrees South, 2008), 391.

to patrol the power lines, which were then connected into the national grid of South Africa.¹²²

To make this task possible the air force crew were equipped with one Bosbok and two Alouette aircraft.¹²³ While the Bosbok was housed at a small tarred airfield known as the Hurricane, the helicopter operated from the base.



Figure 4. An Alouette aircraft at the Ruacana army base. South African Defence Force sadf. Sentinelproject.com. Accessed on 12th October 2013.

The Ruacana army base, like all other landscapes in Ruacana, was constructed on the notions of modernity. The army base, being one of the largest in northern Namibia, was equipped with armaments as well as personnel. For instance the army base had its own clinic with doctors of varied specialities that did not only attend to the South Africa Defence Force but also to civilians with both general ailments or war casualties.¹²⁴ For serious cases that were beyond the abilities of the doctors or facilities at the clinic, patients were airlifted by helicopter to the nearest army hospital in Ondangwa. Joelle Chessellet and Susan Levine,

¹²² Lord, *Fledgling to Eagle*, 391.

¹²³ Lord, *Fledgling to Eagle*, 391.

¹²⁴ Joelle Chessellet and Susan Levine, 'The heart of the Cheetah: Biography, Identity, and Social Change in North-western Namibia', *Anthropology Southern Africa*, Vol 27, (2004), 12.

maintain that, by 1983, Ruacana army base was a significant techno-military nexus point inscribed into the north-western Namibian territory.¹²⁵ The armaments kept at the base were said to be the latest military hardware. Rhetorics of modernity can also be traced, from photographs of facilities located within the Ruacana army base such as the swimming pool and sporting complex. An army base according to Nathan Landman, often common to invokes strange feelings of not- at-homeness, but Ruacana army base seemed to be a military environment that was designed to evade a mood of war and create a home-like environment.



Figure 5. A swimming pool and the sporting complex in the Ruacana army base. sadf.Sentinelproject.com. Accessed on 12th October 2013.

The army base also indirectly transformed Ruacana into a place of significance as the presence of military made Ruacana Dorp a secure site for hosting the South Africa/Angola talks, mediated by the Western Five Contact Group, held between April 1976 and June

¹²⁵ Joelle Chessellet and Susan Levine, 'The heart of the Cheetah: Biography, Identity, and Social Change in North-western Namibia', *Anthropology Southern Africa*, Vol 27, (2004), 12. abbreviate

1980.¹²⁶ The talks were necessitated by the dispute between the Angolan and South African governments. The Angolan government did not approve of South Africa's support of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, South Africa Defence Force raids and attacks on South West Africa People's Organisation military and refugee camps in Southern Angola, and South Africa Defence Force transgressions in northern Namibia. Thus the Angolan government ordered that construction on the Calueque dam cease and for closure of sluices on the dam in an attempt to get South Africa to cut its military activities in the concerned territories.¹²⁷ However both parties would not give in. The dispute was only solved in 1980, when South Africa agreed to remove its troops from southern Angola.

My research reveals that while the involvement of the South Africa Defence Force in northern Namibia and southern Angola receives some attention in academic literature, access to the archival documents for the Ruacana army base is very limited and in some cases non-accessible. For instance in the South African National Archives files on the army base are said to have been removed by the South African Ministry of Defence and transferred to the secret files that cannot be accessed by the public.¹²⁸

In conclusion, while this study does not rule out the existence of Ruacana as a space, it argues that Ruacana was transformed into a place through selected key moments. I argued in this chapter that it was these key events that presented Ruacana to the world and thus transformed Ruacana both into a place. It is therefore argued in this chapter that the processes of place-making in Ruacana emerged from technologies of mapping, water technologies, racialized urban planning and military zoning. These processes became intertwined in what I call the articulations of a heritage of modernity

¹²⁶ Saunders, 'South African-Angola talks', 10.

¹²⁷ Chris Saunders, 'South African-Angola talks', 9.

¹²⁸ NASA, Reference and Volume X49/2146/9, Militêre Basis en Opleidingsterrein: S.A. Weermag, Ruacana, 24 February 1975.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Ruacana becomes a centre of modernization in Namibia

A 'place is both a specific setting as well as a constructed image',¹ with the latter closely intertwined with the processes of knowledge production in both the public and academic domains. This chapter examines place-making of Ruacana in a project of development under South African colonial rule. The analysis will be on how Ruacana is represented in three publications *South African Panorama* 1969 - 1980, *South West African Survey* 1974 and *Passport to Truth*, 1972. Although all publications focus (some partly) on Ruacana, the latter differs in its representation of Ruacana. It is the messages and their meanings in these publications that form the core of this chapter. It will be argued in this chapter that this literature not only exposes how the South African government treasured Ruacana but also unveils the propaganda wars in the 1960s and 1970s between the South African government and those that were opposed to it both in South Africa and Namibia. I will argue in this chapter that the representation of Ruacana in the *South African Panorama* and *South West Africa Survey* 1974 should not be viewed as an isolated phenomenon, but rather as connected to the politics surrounding the South African government in the 1960s and 1980s. The representation of Ruacana in the *South African Panorama* and the *South West Africa Survey* 1974 was two-fold. First the magazine aimed to cleanse the South African Defence Force and the entire South African Administration of claims to brutality and ruthless actions in northern Namibia and the rest of Namibia. Secondly the representation articulates a heritage of modernity where ingenuity, civilisation and modernity took centre stage. Ruacana hydropower scheme had become a strategy that the South African government had envisaged to win over the hearts and minds of the international community, especially the United

¹ Cresswell, *Place*, 133.

Nations General Assembly. Finally I will argue that the format of representations of Ruacana as a project of development demonstrates how Ruacana was an invaluable resource to the South African government. Through the appearance of Ruacana in the *South African Panorama* the South African government could not only show development projects that were aimed at modernising Owambo but could also demonstrate to the world how modern it was to have such large financial and technical abilities that could be used to develop Namibia. However the state's glorification was contested by Georg von Konrat in his book *Passport to Truth*. The book relates the daily routine at different construction sites of the Ruacana hydropower scheme. The book shows how such sites were infested with Security Police brutality, emanating from apartheid practice. I argue that the book placed von Konrat and Ovambo artisans as the sole crafters of the Ruacana hydropower scheme. It will be thus further argued that Ruacana was perceived as a precious and symbolic place to both the South African colonial government and von Konrat. Von Konrat presented Ruacana as a site not only where his hydro-engineering expertise defeated nature's extreme test, but also a place where he shed off his Nazi associations to become a humanitarian. I therefore argue that the presentation of the book positioned Ruacana as a space, but making it into a place crucial in the modernization processes of Namibia.

2.1 The South African Panorama

The *South African Panorama*, a 'photo-essay' magazine, was first 'published as in 1950s and disappeared in the late of years of apartheid'.² The magazine was published and distributed abroad by the South African Information Services.³ To increase the magazine's credibility, the government secretly funded this journal and the *Citizen* newspaper. It communicated

² John Pepper. *Art and the End of Apartheid* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); 104; Luvuyo Dondolo, 'The Construction of Public History and Tourist Destinations in Cape Town's Townships: A study of routes, sites and heritage', (MA diss., University of the Western Cape, 2002), 18.

³ John Pepper, *Art and the end of Apartheid*, 104.

business issues, social development in the 'homelands' and in townships, political issues, important social and sports events.⁴ These issues were reported on, in a way that boasted South Africa as economically booming, with fast tracking modern infrastructures such as industries, roads, railway lines, hospitals, and schools. Although the magazine was first published in the 1950s, and its last issue published in 1989, and thus was published for many years, the magazine has received scant attention in the academic field.

Unlike the meaning of 'panorama' in its name, the *South Africa Panorama* was definitely a not 'wide or complete view', or covering issues 'viewed from within, and in all directions' of South Africa. The magazine rather focused on the 'comfortable surfaces' and ignored the 'violent realities of conquest and conflict on which white domination was built'.⁵ I agree with Paulette Coetzee, who argues that in *Panorama* 'black experience is rendered invisible, the smiling faces are all white and South Africa is a land of scenery and sunny skies'.⁶

According to Luvuyo Dondolo and John Peffer, *South African Panorama* was 'in some ways a propaganda machine of the apartheid regime' and was indeed a response to the political atmosphere both within South Africa and the world.⁷ It had become a mouthpiece of the South African government through which the government could retaliate, distract, and cover-up bad publicity, arising from the brutality and atrocities of apartheid. An analysis of the magazine reveals how the government desperately attempted to show how life in South Africa was different from that represented in the numerous anti-apartheid media.⁸ Between the early 1950s and the late 1980s the South African government endured harsh international

⁴ Dondolo, 'Construction', 18.

⁵ Dondolo, 'Construction', 2.

⁶ Paulette Coetzee, *South African Panorama: The Novels of Delphine Rooke*, (Grahamstown: Rhodes University, 1997):2

⁷ Peffer, *Art*, 104; Dondolo, 'Construction', 18.

⁸ Though their efforts were discouraged by the government through 'bans, greater harassment and other restrictions', differed media houses reported on the brutalities committed by the apartheid government in both Namibia and South Africa. This includes *New Nation*, *Weekly Mail*, *Vry Weekland*, *The Namibian* newspapers. Edward, Bird and Zureida Garda, 'Reporting the Truth Commission: Analysis of Media Coverage of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa', *International Communication Gazette* 59, no. 4 (1997): 336.

criticism. Instead *Panorama* would claim to report on South Africa, 'in a positive light'. The magazine was published in both English and Afrikaans, allowing it to reach and attract a local and international audience. Clearly, the *South African Panorama* became a tool through which the government strengthened and widened its abilities to legitimate and validate itself in a space where the practice of apartheid became a daily mockery.

The magazine focused on different themes throughout its lifetime. For instance Dondolo argues that from the mid-1970s, when South Africa was politically and economically isolated from the rest of the world, *South African Panorama* was used as a new way of marketing apartheid South Africa as a tourist destination, as J.B. Voster and later P. W. Botha devoted the magazine to the promotion of South Africa to outside world.⁹ Also Peffer argues that between 1982 and 1992, the magazine 'carried half a dozen feature articles boasting of the country's military strength'. Peffer further charges that in one striking example, President Botha's introductory remarks for the issue commemorating twenty-five years of the republic 'consisted entirely of paranoia, doublespeak, and euphemism: The Republic of South Africa as a bastion against communist enslavement'.¹⁰ Botha justified the ruthless actions of the South African Police and Prison Services as motivated by the grit to 'protect white minority from domination'.¹¹ The rest of the issue was covered with photo essays 'highlighting the global independence of South Africa's armed forces and the home grown character of its arms industry'.¹²

I suggest that the appearance of Namibia in *South African Panorama* should also be interpreted in this light. In general very few articles on Namibia appear in the magazine, but those that appear shows development projects that South Africa committed for Namibia.

⁹ 'South Africa stood alone in the world, condemned by its enemies and shunned by the countries that urged it to intervene in the war', Dondolo, 'Construction' 18; Willem Steenkamp, *South Africa's Border War 1966 – 1989*, (Gibraltar: Ashanti Publishing Limited, 2014), 59.

¹⁰ Peffer, *Art*, 104.

¹¹ Peffer, *Art*, 104.

¹² Peffer, *Art*, 104

Ruacana first appeared in the *South African Panorama* in 1969, six months before the Lisbon Water-use Agreement of 1969 was signed. The four-paged article appears to have been set to highlight South Africa's monetary and workforce contribution to the Cahora Bassa hydropower scheme.¹³ Though the representation of Ruacana hydropower scheme was only on a sketch map of Southern Africa, it shows an 'existing and planned extra-high-voltage power network' running from Cahora Bassa to Cape Town, with Port Elizabeth and East London transmission lines streaming out,¹⁴ it already showed the enthusiasm that the South African government had for the project, as it was labelled as an 'exciting project'. The map also shows the planned power grid from Ruacana branching to both coastal and central Namibia, seemingly Tsumeb and Walvis Bay. This section of the map is captioned to indicate the 'proposed new network of the South West Africa Water and Electricity Corporation which will utilise hydro-electric power from Ruacana on the Kunene River'.¹⁵

It was in the 1970s and 80s that the Ruacana hydropower station and Ruacana waterfalls received large coverage in the *South African Panorama*. The representation of Ruacana hydropower scheme became crucial in 1972 when South Africa needed to prove to the United Nations that they were developing Namibia. The appearance of Ruacana intensified with the adoption of a United Nation resolution ruling out South African administration over Namibia. The Ruacana falls was presented as a 'magnificent asset' as it could make a great tourist destination as well as a resource for the generation of power at the hydropower station.¹⁶ The article describes the waterfalls poetically as:

... shaped like a horse shoe, is natural splendour at its best. Curtains of water cascade over green water-shrubs and down on the rocks more than a hundred metres below. In the summer months it is a roaring mass, and in the dry season, still an awesome spectacle.¹⁷

¹³ South African Information Services, *South African Panorama*, December 1969, 42.

¹⁴ *South African Panorama*, 42.

¹⁵ *South African Panorama*, 42.

¹⁶ *South African Panorama*, 34

¹⁷ *South African Panorama*, 34.

When coupled with photographs showing the waterfalls and its surrounding landscape such an expression encouraged a visit to the waterfall and thus a need for tourist development. It was a clear invitation to both tourists and investors to make Ruacana waterfalls a destination.

The same article also narrates the Ruacana hydropower scheme in greater detail. An elaboration provides an outline of the 320 kilometre long water development scheme that channels water from Calueque, across the borders to Mahanene, where the canal branches into the Calueque-Okatana and Etaka-Oponono water canals, to supply water to about 100 000 people in northern Namibia.¹⁸ The existence of these canals is said to have been made possible by the interim power station that had been completed in 1972, to ‘pump the water from Mahenene into the main canal to Owambo’.¹⁹ It is further stated that the two open canals will be ‘paved with cement tiles’ and ‘with about 100 tiles used over one metre, millions of tiles will be used’.²⁰ Also the author makes an elaboration on the Lisbon water use agreement of 1969. Here it is stated that ‘six cumec of water may be pumped from the Kunene for consumption as well as initial irrigation in Owambo’.²¹ Finally the article concludes with an insert on the Ruacana hydropower station with an output capacity of 300 MW which at the time was still in the planning phase, and was to be linked with the Van Eck Power station network. The *South African Panorama* describes the project as the ‘most spectacular example of an ongoing development process which has involved pouring millions of Rands into South West Africa by the South African government’.²²

The irony is that Ruacana was never accorded an article of their own but rather featured in articles on Owambo. This is not to say Ruacana was not significant enough to be accorded a whole article of its own, but I argue that the use of Owambo as a broader focus was a strategy

¹⁸ *South African Panorama*, 33.

¹⁹ *South African Panorama*, 33.

²⁰ *South African Panorama*, 33.

²¹ *South African Panorama*, 33.

²² *South African Panorama*, 34.

for the South African government. Owambo was one of the key battle grounds in the Namibian liberation struggle. The South African government had been heavily criticised by the international community for committing atrocities in the area and thus Ruacana hydropower scheme and other development projects had then become a way of concealing the brutalities of apartheid and presenting the South African administration in Owambo and the entire Namibia as caring and sensitive towards the needs and material wellbeing of the inhabitants. Simultaneously the *South African Panorama* pronounced the official liberation movements in Angola and Namibia, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola and South West Africa People's Organization as enemies of progress whose guns, mines, and actions were not only killing innocent civilians but also destroying South African government's efforts to develop an 'infrastructure for progress and to spiritually unite the diverse people of the "last frontier"'.²³ For instance an article from 1980 reported that:

Angolans have cut off the water supply to Owambo from the multi-million Rand South African-built Calueque Hydro-electric Project on the upper reaches of the Kunene River in their territory. This step would have brought all Owambo advancement to a dead stop had not the South African government stepped into the breach with a R 3.5million project for pumping water up the Gorge of the lower Kunene (on the border) to the trans-Owambo Canal.²⁴

The same article did not dwell on the reasons why the Angolan government had the works on Calueque called off, nor did it express an opinion on the cruelties that the Owambo communities endured at the hands of the South Africa Defence Force. Instead the purpose of the South Africa Defence Force in Owambo was depicted as that of protecting inhabitants and infrastructures from the 'blunt terrorism' of People's Liberation Army of Namibia.²⁵

Consequently the representation of Ruacana in the *South African Panorama* masked the South African government's form of power and replaced it with various development projects and thus justifying and legitimizing the presence of its administration over Namibia, and

²³ *South African Panorama*, 33.

²⁴ *South African Panorama*, 32.

²⁵ *South African Panorama*, 33.

thereby establishing notions of superiority. The South African government positioned itself as an 'accomplished state', with 'scientific knowledge and the experience' of development and could legitimately guide Namibia along the modernisation path.²⁶ This is apparent in two key articles,²⁷ 'Owambo' and 'Frontiers of Faith', whose authors boast of all development projects such as education, health care and agriculture that the South African government had set in 'Owambo Homeland'.²⁸ The Ruacana hydropower scheme receives more elaboration but they also signalled a rhetoric of modernity,²⁹ that the articles argue the South African government has caused for Owambo. In these articles Ruacana hydropower station is presented as a project of development, an epicentre of development / modernity and indeed a 'beacon to a brighter future' through which modernisation is possible in Owamboland and Namibia at large.³⁰ Ruacana falls is said to 'symbolise man's effort to bring civilisation, in the form of power and water to the wilderness,³¹ and the Ruacana *Dorp* is said to be where the 'people's world begins again'.³² Clearly, infrastructure meant much more than building railroads, a hydropower station, and canals. It was also about establishing rule based on technological innovations. I therefore argue that to the South African government, Ruacana was not only a place but also an avenue through which it could 'institutionalize its power' and 'draw its material sustenance through the conduct of development'.³³

This emphasis on the South African government abilities to use its own immense technical and monetary resources to set up a project which was, supposedly, not of any benefit to them

²⁶ Cooper, 'Development', 11.

²⁷ The two articles are more elaborative on Ruacana, unlike other articles that only mention Ruacana in passing.

²⁸ 'Northern SWA/Namibia territories boasts 600 schools, 13 hospitals, 30 clinics, and 20 agricultural projects. There are 8 beds per 1000 people which is good by world standards'. *South African Panorama*, April 1980, 30.

²⁹ I am aware of the heavy ideological baggage carried by the terms modernization and modernity. The concept are 'highly charged social constructs whose characters change continuously and whose meanings can only be understood in their specific political and historical contexts'. But in this study the concept of modernity is used in its basic meaning and context that the South African government has used, that is a 'linear progression from'. Cooper, 'Development', 38.

³⁰ *South African Panorama*, 30.

³¹ *South African Panorama*, 31.

³² *South African Panorama*, 31.

³³ Cooper, 'Development', 29.

is further echoed in an article from 1980. In an article titled, 'Frontier of Faith', the author strategically started off by creating a milieu of the areas surrounding Ruacana, Kaokoveld on the extreme northwest and the landscape on the southern Ruacana falls. The Kaokoland landscape appears as desolate, with 'deeply - incised ravines' and is unforgiving to the inhabitants and the travellers alike.³⁴ Travelling to Kaokoland is said to be like traveling to space as one has to 'take life supporting systems with one-everything from food, water, and fuel, to spare tyres and spare everything else'.³⁵ A tyre is said to get 'punctured four times in a one kilometre distance'.³⁶ On the other hand Owamboland is described being as renowned for its morass of shallow summer time rain-lakes, or *Oshanas* that are almost as unnegotiable as the rocky Kaokoland. The *Oshanas* 'can bog down even a four-wheel drive in the mud'. In 'winter the lakes dry-up and one drives for miles in search of water'.³⁷ This milieu not only helps in conveying the level, or even absence of development in the north – western Namibia, but also unveils the enormous challenges and difficulties that South West Africa Water and Electricity staff endured in constructing the access roads, water canal and the power station at Ruacana. Overcoming such challenges it is claimed not only required ingenuity but also heavy financial commitment.

What is not said becomes crucial as it reveals the intentions of the article and the type of magazine the *South African Panorama* was. The article and the magazine in general did not highlight the importance of the Ruacana hydropower scheme to the mining sector in Namibia. This leads me to argue that the representation of Ruacana as a project of development was aimed at retaliating against the bad publicity of the South African government's policy in northern Namibia or Owambo. This explains the heavy focus on Owambo as this is where most atrocities were reported. The *South African Panorama* does not only present the South

³⁴ *South African Panorama*, 30.

³⁵ *South African Panorama*, 30.

³⁶ *South African Panorama*, 30.

³⁷ *South African Panorama*, 30.

West Africa People's Organisation's armed wing the People's Liberation Army of Namibia as terrorists, but also, together with the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola, as enemies of progress, who were damaging infrastructural development set up by the South African government.

The use of photographs requires analysis. Though most articles cover only two to three pages, the photographs are all presented on the opening pages, where the articles begin. The photographs are also numbered as a key to their captions. However, the captions do not only indicate the content of the photographs but also what is not depicted in the photograph. For instance, a photograph which depicts the Ruacana waterfalls is captioned as 'Ruacana Falls, harnessing power and water, symbolise development aid for northern Namibia territories'. The author proceeds to highlight developments projects established in Ovamboland such as school, hospitals, and even the ratio of the hospital beds to the population in the area.³⁸ It is as if the layout of articles is designed in such a way that readers are able to know the content of the article, just by reading the title and photographs. The most depicted landscapes are the Ruacana falls and Kunene River. However in 1980, *South African Panorama* showed a photograph of a Himba boy captioned as 'herdboy from the traditionalist Ovahimba tribe on the banks of the Kunene River'.³⁹ Photographs accompanying essays on Ruacana confirm the depictions of Ruacana as a picturesque place with primordial inhabitants. Aerial images of the densely-wooden and mountainous terrains reflect the 'virtual impenetrability' of the Ruacana area.⁴⁰ I therefore suggest photographs are used to further convince and confirm the technical ingenuity of the South African experts for overcoming such a rugged terrain to establish a hydropower plant. At the same time such scenic views present Ruacana as an adventurous tourist destination.

³⁸ *South African Panorama*, 32.

³⁹ *South African Panorama*, 32.

⁴⁰ *South African Panorama*, 32.

2.2 The South West African Survey 1974

The South West Africa Survey 1974 was published in 1975, and was available in South Africa, Namibia and internationally.⁴¹ It is worthwhile to point out that, while the book shows that it was published by the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Africa, it appears that the main author of the book was Roelof Fredrick Botha (*Pik*), whom at the time was working for the Department of Foreign Affairs as an ambassador and a Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations. He also acted as tour guide for the reporters who came to review the development progress enabled by South Africa in Namibia.⁴² He was also a member of the legal team that represented South Africa at the International Court of Justice.⁴³ A letter by Botha, addressed to the United Nation Security Council, lists the *South West African Survey 1974* as one of the many publications that his government had published to ensure that complete and factual information on Namibia was available for everyone genuinely interested in acquainting himself with conditions in Namibia. The book appears like a progress-report-type, 'providing information on the latest developments and progress',⁴⁴ caused by the South African government in Namibia.⁴⁵ Thus given the position of the author and that of the South African government and United Nation over Namibia, it becomes clear that the book was borne out of these interactions.

More than anything the book appears to be an argument against the United Nations. It was published during the course of the South Africa – Namibia – United Nation debates and thus a quarter of the book is dedicated to the South African/Namibia/ United Nations relations. In 1969 the United Nation Security Council adopted resolution 264 'in which it recognised the

⁴¹ It appears that, in exclusive of Tore Linné *et al* and Richard Moorsom (who only briefly discussed the book in one sentence), the book has never been subjected to academic critical study.

⁴² Von Konrat, *Passport*, 102.

⁴³ Von Konrat, *Passport*, 102.

⁴⁴ Roelof Botha, 'South West Africa and the United Nation: South African Letter Addressed to the United Nation Secretary-General', 27 January 1976, 5.

⁴⁵ Botha, 'Letter', 3.

General's Assembly's purported termination of South Africa's right to administer Namibia'.⁴⁶ In August 1969 the United Nation Security Council called upon the South African Government to 'immediately withdraw its administration from Namibia before 4 October 1970'.⁴⁷ Subsequently more resolutions were adopted, all in general denouncing and calling the South African occupation over Namibia to come to an end.⁴⁸ In all these regards the South African government refuted the United Nation's authority, claiming to have already started with development projects in Namibia, where it had it invested huge financial and human resources.⁴⁹ There can be no doubt that the book's intended audience was the United Nation member states, and in particular members of the Security Council, so that they could have a 'clear grasp of fundamental realities in Namibia', and thus develop a 'proper appreciation of the impressive developments which have been achieved and which continue to be achieved in Namibia'.⁵⁰ The book claimed that:

...Its inhabitants live secure and enjoy a growing standard of living based on modern communications and transport systems, on scientific and technical expertise and planned economic development. Its children go to schools and colleges; its inhabitants receive medical facilities of the highest standards; its workers enjoy increasing wages and facilities to improve their skills.⁵¹

The intentions of the author are clearly set in a pattern of representation, which unfolds in the form of deliberate inclusions and exclusions of information. In this regard the content of the book is in two parts, the text and pictorial survey. The latter comprises a photo collection that totals ninety-one pages with wide ranging themes, containing, for example, views of the terrain, wildlife, peasant farming, road, water, health, banking, agriculture infrastructure, educational settings, leisure activities and a few local factories.

⁴⁶ Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Africa, *The South West Africa Survey 1974*, (Cape Town and Pretoria: Cape and Transvaal Printers Limited, 1975), 19.

⁴⁷ Department of Foreign Affairs, *Survey 1974*, 19.

⁴⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs, *Survey 1974*, 19.

⁴⁹ Department of Foreign Affairs, *Survey 1974*, 26 -29.

⁵⁰ Botha, 'Letter', 3.

⁵¹ Botha, 'Letter', 18.

The text section can be divided into four parts: Namibia's geographical and demographic features, historical background, the United Nations and South African government over Namibia, and general economic development. Each of these sections serves a specific purpose. For instance the demographic and geographic features shows the South African administration as triumphant in the task of developing Namibia despite being confronted with 'incontrovertible realities' and unconquerable terrains of a vast sparsely populated and arid territory, nearly four times the size of the United Kingdom.⁵² The author is bold enough to say the greatest hindrance to a prosperous Namibia was the 'lack of water and not as a result of any ideology or policy on the part of the South African Government'.⁵³

Elaboration on the mandate period and the United Nation-South Africa case over Namibia not only shows the principles underlying the South African government's approach to the whole issue but is also structured to remind the audience of how South Africa acquired control of Namibia in the first place and thus established its claims to the legality of its administration over Namibia. Seen from a South African government's perspective, this formulation makes the United Nation's call against South Africa's administration over Namibia a 'virulent, malicious conduct, and a completely biased campaign'.⁵⁴

Ruacana is presented in the section on general economic development as the key infrastructural development project in Namibia. The representation of Ruacana in the *South West Africa Survey 1974* pertains to four key issues. Through these key issues Ruacana appears to be more than a project of development. It is clearly represented as proof of the South African government's unshaken commitment to the wellbeing and development of an Owambo homeland in particular and Namibia at large. First and foremost, Ruacana hydropower scheme is shown as the project that would inaugurate the development process in

⁵² Botha, 'Letter', 8.

⁵³ Botha, 'Letter', 8.

⁵⁴ Botha, 'Letter', 3

Namibia, as though without the project Namibia would not prosper. Here it is the Ruacana hydropower scheme that is singled out and is carried as the highest capital expenditure in all the development projects in Namibia at the time. The author shows how the absence of a ‘country-wide power grid’ led to high costs in power generations that could only be achieved with diesel fuel, and imported coal, and thus inhibiting development process in Namibia.⁵⁵

The author also shows how the development process initiated and run by the South African government led to high demands in power. A projection of future power and water demand in Namibia is also presented. In this way the author does not only establish a dire need for developing the Ruacana hydropower project but also signifies Ruacana hydropower scheme as an invaluable infrastructure to the economic development of Namibia. This significance is further heightened with an elaboration of the establishment of South West Africa Water and Electricity. Though brief, it shows that the hydropower project was significant enough to lead to the establishment of an independent development corporation, which was responsible to ensure ‘bulk generation and distribution of electricity as well as the bulk supply of water in the territory’.⁵⁶

Secondly, the installation of water infrastructure at Ruacana and Calueque were said to be exclusively to the benefit of the Owambo communities. The said community was also said to have benefited more than any community in Namibia from the installation of power infrastructure at Ruacana, mostly through the provision of employment, where an estimated 2,000 Ovambos were employed during construction, rising up 3,000 at peak periods. The R 2.75 million road system which is associated with the power and water scheme and ‘falls

⁵⁵ Department of Foreign Affairs, *Survey 1974*, 50.

⁵⁶ Department of Foreign Affairs, *Survey 1974*, 50.

entirely within Ovambo is yet another feature of the infrastructure for further progress in the area'.⁵⁷

It is further asserted that new opportunities for the production of food and cash crops were opened up, with the 'R3- million Ovambo canal scheme'.⁵⁸ The power generated at Ruacana was said to be vital in ensuring a 'sustained and adequate supply of water for the first time available to the majority of the Ovambo people'.⁵⁹ The irony here is that while the *SWA Survey* names the Ruacana hydropower scheme's' water canal system the 'Ovambo canal', in the planning documents and other official reports the name of the canal appears as 'Calueque- Oshakati water canal' system or 'Calueque water canal system'.⁶⁰ The different naming of the water canal appears to be an attempt by the author to emphasize the location of the development project as Ovamboland. Other than the low priced power supply and 'establishment of quarries which may later be used for road building purposes',⁶¹ the book fails to compile the exact benefits that the hydropower would provide to Namibia. I suggest this too was intentional as such a compilation would not include Ovambo communities but rather central, southern and coastal towns as well as mining corporations in Namibia. It is this content and structure of its presentation that leads one to pay attention especially to what was happening in Namibia at the time the book was published. Tore Eriksen and Richard Moorsom argued that in the early 1970s the South African government was promoting Ovambo as a 'Bantustan without tears', whereby Ovambo was presented as a place with modern health, education, agricultural, and banking infrastructures. *South West Africa Survey*

⁵⁷ *Survey 1974*, 51.

⁵⁸ *Survey 1974*, 51

⁵⁹ *Survey 1974*, 51.

⁶⁰ Department of Foreign Affairs, 'The Report of the Odendaal Commission of Enquiry into the Affairs of the South West Africa' Report. No. 12 of 1964); Renfrew Christie, 'The Political Economy of the Kunene River Hydro-electric Schemes', (MA diss., University of Cape Town), 140.

⁶¹ *Survey 1974*, 49 – 51.

1974 presents Ruacana hydropower scheme as a project that had completed the process of modernisation in Owambo.⁶²

Thirdly, the project is said to have been costly, but financed entirely by the South African Government.⁶³ Here the author states all the components of the Ruacana hydropower scheme, and makes extensive use of statistics to demonstrate the cost of installation, capacity, and expanse of infrastructure, and, generally to emphasize the scale of the project. For instance, the ‘Owambo scheme’ which entailed the pumping of 6 cubic metres of water per second from the Kunene River into the 280 km Calueque-Okatana canal water system is said to have cost about R6-million.⁶⁴ The total cost of the Ruacana hydropower scheme which was designed to ‘generate 320 MW is said to have expensed up to R 141.1 million’.⁶⁵ It is further stated that the territory’s own financial resources were inadequate, and thus Ruacana hydropower scheme was only able to be executed with a combination of both capital sourced from the South African government, and foreign concerns.⁶⁶

I suggest there is more to the use of statistics. I argue that the use of statistics was a strategy to buy publics and thus aimed at getting the reader to sympathise with the South African government, and refrain from supporting the termination of the South African administration in Namibia, as such a move would have left development projects uncompleted and thus a total waste of human and monetary resources. The figures given not only demonstrate the cost of the projects but most importantly are used to demonstrate the level of commitment to the wellbeing and progress of the Namibia inhabitants. In this regard the *South West Africa Survey 1974* shows how the South African government turned Ruacana not only into a development project but also into a ‘showpiece’ and a shield that the South African

⁶²Tore Linné Eriksen and Richard Moorsom, *The Political Economy of Namibia: An Annotated Critical Bibliography*, No. 69, Nordic Africa Institute, (1989), 113.

⁶³ *Survey 1974*, 51.

⁶⁴ *Survey 1974*, 51.

⁶⁵ *Survey 1974*, 51.

⁶⁶ *Survey 1974*, 38.

Government used against criticism of its administration over Namibia. It is as Tore Eriksen and Richard Moorsom argued, that the *South West Africa Survey 1974* is very defensive of the South African administration in Namibia, and was a ‘serious attempt to bolster the South African case’.⁶⁷

The final part of the book, the pictorial survey is presented in a photo album style. Here Ruacana is represented both as a tourist destination as well as a development project. There seems to be a greater visual representation than textual representation in this publication. Ruacana is only briefly stated in the text section, but the photograph section displays 17 photographs that were selected to represent Ruacana. With exception of Oshifo township and Ruacana *Dorp*, the photographs show all the components of the Ruacana hydropower scheme in Namibia such as the installation of a turbo generator and construction of a tunnel for Ruacana power station, Ruacana interim power station, Calueqe-Okatana water canal, water pipe line, power lines, and Oshakati-Ruacana tarred road, as well as aerial views of Ruacana falls. All the photographs on Ruacana hydropower scheme components are placed on one double page, left and right. The reader does not view the Ruacana hydropower scheme in fragments, but is able to get a complete narrative of the project from the perspective of the government. However these photographs seem to have been chosen and / or taken with specific intentions. For instance two photographs both captioned and showing the tarred ‘road to Ruacana’, taken at aerial and ground level, conveys different messages. The aerial photograph shows the part of the road where it runs only through the dense-wooden and mountainous terrain and thus shows that road construction was an immense task. The second photograph taken at ground level shows much more details about the road. It is apparent that the quality materials used for constructing the road and markings on the road shows that the road is good by international standards. The background of the same photograph shows

⁶⁷ Eriksen and Moorsom, *Political economy*,113

power lines and a mini power station, further showing the efforts South Africa made to develop Namibia.

These photographs while appearing to be proof of progress at the same time familiarise the reader with the rugged terrain of Ruacana as well as progress of work on Ruacana hydropower scheme. I suggest that the photographs can also be read differently. When one pays attention to the assertion that ‘the power station complex and town at Ruacana [Ruacana *Dorp*] could eventually develop into an attractive tourist resort’⁶⁸, the photographs, it could be argued, were a strategy to promote tourism activities in Ruacana. For instance, while the road indicates easy accessibility to Ruacana, other photographs such as those of the waterfalls presents Ruacana as a picturesque site.

2.3 *Passport to Truth*



I devoted my time to the larger projects at Ruakana. There were really building. There was to be a weir dam, and a construction camp for several thousand men. We were excavating an access tunnel to the hydro power house, laying a water supply pipeline and building access roads. The construction work was beginning to run smoothly, but now we started to receive daily visits from the police, which upset both the natives and myself. It was not unusual for the cops to burst in and take somebody away without consulting me. The police questioned me incessantly, about my movements, my motives in speaking to some natives, what I said, and what they said to me.⁶⁹

The passage above is from a 241 paged biography authored by Georg von Konrat,⁷⁰ and published in 1972. The book gives an account of his work on the Ruacana hydropower scheme, and his escape to Britain via Angola. He was fleeing from a warrant of arrest put on his head by the South African Security Police in Namibia, as he was accused of treason.⁷¹ His knowledge of Namibian prisons and the Security Police led him to conclude that he would

⁶⁸ Republic of South Africa, *South West Africa Survey 1974*, (Cape Town & Pretoria: Department of foreign Affairs, 1975), 51.

⁶⁹ Von Konrat, *Passport*, 23.

⁷⁰ Georg von Konrat is not his birth name but an assumed name that he adopted in order to evade ‘prisoner of war punishment by execution’.

⁷¹ Konrat, *Passport*, 189.

not live if the Security Police arrested him.⁷² He presents Owamboland as ‘an area masked in terrorism carried out by the South African Security police’.⁷³ George von Konrat and his eight-year old daughter came to Namibia in January 1971. He had been invited by the South African government to take a lead in the construction of a ‘huge hydroelectric project, involving the building of dams, pipelines and canals on a tremendous scale’.⁷⁴

I found the original copy of the book at the Namibian National Archives through the suggestion of the Chief Archivist, whom, however referred to von Konrat’s book as fiction. The chief archivist warned me of the dubious nature of the book’s many claims that were not truthful, and which he avowed were an exaggeration. Von Konrat seems to have had used other people’s experience and presented them as his own. This comes to light as von Konrat presents himself and at times his daughter, as lucky, victors and always surviving even the oddest events that seems impossible. Also he uses an assumed name, so that, even when one does research on him it is impossible to find out anything about his past. I had difficulties finding out information about von Konrat. Thus despite its claims to be a ‘Passport to Truth’, there are still many suspicions about the claims that Von Konrat makes especially around his own biography. My attempt to find more information on von Konrat though, proving difficult, led me to a book that von Konrat published first, a book in 1970, titled *Assault from Within*.⁷⁵ The book suffers the same doubts as *Passport to Truth*, as not everyone is convinced about claims that von Konrat’s makes in the book. For instance, one reader stated that the book is an

engaging read as long as you do not take it too seriously as there are too many factual inaccuracies to accept the publisher's assurances of authenticity. Konrat and his gang of gung ho 18 year olds sow destruction in the Soviet rear, the book comes to an end at the

⁷² Konrat, *Passport*, 189.

⁷³ Konrat, *Passport*, 23.

⁷⁴ Konrat, *Passport*, 29.

⁷⁵ *Assault from Within* is Konrat's account of his experience as he served in a secret German commando unit, that spoke fluent Russian and penetrated the Russian army during the Second World War. The commando unit was spying for the German army so that the war on the eastern front could easily be won.

time when Germany's military successes are at their height. A strange place to stop - no doubt Konrat took up stamp collecting at this stage and Germany therefore consequently went on to lose the war.⁷⁶

Another reader echoes similar assertions:

Do not waste your money!!!! Here are some reasons I believe this is a work of fantasy, rather than non-fiction:

- 1) During the opening stages of the war, author stated about operating in conjunction with Panzergrenadier Division GrossDeutschland near Taurogen, Lithuania. In reality the GrossDeutschland did not operate in Lithuania.
- 2) Author allegedly encountered Russian T-36 tanks. There were no T-36 tanks.
- 3) During the first few days of war, author observes a column of Russian prisoners being sent to Germany to join the new anti-Soviet army under General Vlasov. Vlasov's army was not formed until late 1944.
- 4) At the start of the war, author's unit is parachuted into the Soviet Union. The unit forms up and marches off singing "Katyusha" in Russian. The song "Katyusha" did not gain popularity until a little later in the war.
- 5) Author was allegedly drilled into assuming an identity of a Soviet army lieutenant. He goes on in great detail how he was taught his false family background and geography of the city where he was allegedly born. Not a word was mentioned about him learning about Soviet military. I'm not sure if the author even served in the military. At one point he mentions marching in the dark across a field, off road, singing. Anybody serving in the ground forces knows that you do not march in step off road, especially in the dark. In the US Army it's called "route-step" Again, don't waste your money. Get a copy from a library to get your own opinion.⁷⁷

Nevertheless, the book seems to have had reached a wide audience since it was made available in many libraries and bookstores, especially in Europe. Book reviews shows that the book was read by many people, of which, some took it by its title. For instance an anonymous reader from Edinburgh, maintains that, amongst books that attacked apartheid, *Passport to Truths*, 'has the ring of truth!'⁷⁸ The reader further asserts that 'without a doubt the Afrikaner regime discovered - too late - that it had allowed into its country someone who was ten times more believable than all the other anti-apartheid writers put together'.⁷⁹ Throughout the book, von Konrat interpolates the early years of his life in relation to international events. In the preface, Konrad narrates about the year he was born, 1924, as the year East Prussia was

⁷⁶ juliangh@iafrica.com review of *Assault from Within* by George von Konrat,

<http://www.amazon.com/Assault-within-Georg-von-Konrat/1998/12/> 26, Accessed on 26 October 2013.

⁷⁷ Victor Kamenir review of *Assault from Within*, <http://www.amazon.com/> 2014/07/07, Accessed on 28 October 2013.

⁷⁸ Anonymous, review of *Passport to Truth: Inside South –West Africa: An astounding story of oppression and escape*, http://books.google.com.na/books/about/Passport_to_Truth. Accessed 26 October 2013.

⁷⁹ Review of *Passport*.

annexed to Lithuania by the League of Nations, and the new borders ran in his family estate, (where they were members of the Prussian aristocracy).⁸⁰ Though it is indicated in the front flap that von Konrad was an ordinary man, he presents himself as an extraordinary subject who went to a private school in Lithuania, and later enrolled in the Hitler Youth Movement. He further states that his intelligence led to his transfer to an Adolf Hitler School in Bavaria, where, it was ‘hoped future leaders of the everlasting Reich would be trained’.⁸¹ After successfully completing five months of training at this institution, he was sent to other institutions where he finally graduated as a ‘Hauptmann, a Bachelor of science in civil engineering, a fluent Russian speaker and an expert in the most sophisticated techniques of modern warfare’.⁸² He refers to himself as a ‘fully programmed fighting machine’.⁸³ After serving as a commander of a unit that infiltrated into the Russian army in 1941 and upon his return to Berlin, he claims he was promoted to work as an expert adviser to Hitler on Russian matters.⁸⁴ However with the defeat of Germany in the Second World War, he says, he was placed ‘under sentence of execution’, and was wanted as a war criminal, but he escaped to England.⁸⁵ He launched his career in engineering as a junior engineer with the British Public Works Department in Kuwait. He was then employed by an American firm and was sent to work on construction projects in Peru, Mexico, Argentina, Cuba, West Pakistan, Colombo, Penang, and then finally settled in Australia in 1957. He later moved to New Zealand where he joined the Napier Harbour Board and later moved to Canterbury University as a senior Lecturer in Engineering.⁸⁶ Then in 1970, he maintains he received a letter from the South African government offering him work on a hydroelectric project.⁸⁷ He found the project in

⁸⁰ Konrat, *Passport*, x.

⁸¹ Konrat, *Passport*, ix.

⁸² Konrat, *Passport*, x.

⁸³ Konrat, *Passport*, x.

⁸⁴ Konrat, *Passport*, x.

⁸⁵ Konrat, *Passport*, x.

⁸⁶ Konrat, *Passport*, xi.

⁸⁷ Konrat, *Passport*, xi.

‘a mess and had it cleaned and speeded up work on the project’.⁸⁸ By sheer chance he ‘became one of the very few neutral white observers to enter the trouble- torn’ Ovamboland and writes that he ‘was the only white man on the construction grounds who treated natives humanly’, a position that put him in trouble with the Security Police.⁸⁹ He asserts that he was the only resident engineer who was arrested and treated like a political prisoner. When he finally fled to Luanda in Angola he was hunted down by Angola’s military police. During this time, his friend referred to him as the ‘most wanted man in the world since the end of the Second World War’.⁹⁰

The book concentrates on the practice of apartheid system, at Ruacana hydropower scheme construction grounds, as well as Ovamboland as a whole. The author narrates about his interactions with his workforce, but also on the nature of South African administration over Namibia. With the *Passport to Truth* von Konrat seems to have the intention of asserting a truth about certain issues raised in the *South African Panorama*. It is apparent from the construction of the narrative and title of the book that von Konrat declares his publication to be one of the most truthful representations of life specifically in Ovamboland. Though written in the same context and thus echoing similar assertions of Ruacana’s transformation into place of modernity, there could be no doubt that *Passport to Truth* was authored to counter arguments formulated in publications such as the *South African Panorama*. Von Konrat ‘s uses his position as Resident Engineer and his experience to argue that information published by the South African government such as the *South African Panorama* was all blatant propaganda.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Konrat, *Passport*, 22 – 23.

⁸⁹ Konrat, *Passport*, 22 – 23.

⁹⁰ Konrat, *Passport*, 195 - 197.

⁹¹ Konrat, *Passport* 2 - 3.

Notions of factuality are asserted right from the cover page. The front cover page, is coloured with yellow and black copies of a certificate of identity issued in Wellington by the New Zealand's Department of Internal Affairs, in June 1968. This document shows his personal data, including that of his spouse, parents, date and place of birth, and nationality. The back-cover page shows his travels through visas issued by different authorities, including that of South Africa. The inside front cover page shows a sketch map of the Ruacana area, featuring all the sites mentioned in the narrative. The function of the sketch map is multifaceted. The sketch map not only defines the contained geographical place but also signifies and proves knowledge of territory, and clearly represents Ruacana as project development.

Passport to Truth echoes similar reflections of Ruacana to those of the South African government. Ruacana is represented as a very wild and difficult terrain, which was conquered only through sheer ingenuity, to house the only complex,⁹² hydropower scheme in Namibia. Already, on his arrival in Windhoek, Namibia's capital city, von Konrat declares it a 'Godforsaken part of the country',⁹³ leaving an impression in the reader's mind that the rest of the country, including the remote area of Ruacana, should be worse off. Such rhetoric is confirmed with an account of his first visit to Ruacana. Though not much information is provided about the area, von Konrat describes Ruacana as unspoiled, and untamed, with a rich and diverse wildlife.⁹⁴

Passport to Truth, further confirms notions of spatiality. Von Konrat's book shows how he and the South African government perceived Ruacana both as a place and symbol. His portrayal of Ruacana is contradictory, displaying Ruacana as both a centre and symbol of civilisation and of backwardness. Von Konrat's vivid narrative of the Ruacana hydropower

⁹² Being a globe trekker, he compares the Ruacana hydropower scheme to other projects he worked on and judges it as the most daring and complex he had worked on.

⁹³ Konrat, *Passport*, 2.

⁹⁴ Konrat, *Passport*, 12 & 15.

scheme shows how hydraulic engineering work formed a development practice that treated Ruacana as an object of development and at the same time reorganized Ruacana into a very significant place. He describes Ruacana as a ‘priority area’ as it housed a hydro-electric plant. Von Konrat depicts the progress he made on all components of the Ruacana hydropower scheme, leaving it to the imagination of the reader to conceive how Ruacana was altered. At the same time the execution of hydraulic engineering work at the power plant at Ruacana is presented to be laden with complexities and thus an arduous task. He maintains that he found the project in a ‘dreadful state’, but he slowly organised the project and speeded up the work.⁹⁵ Therefore, to Von Konrat, Ruacana became a memorable site, where his expertise was executed and put to extreme tests, which were all conquered through sheer ingenuity.

Moreover, Ruacana becomes a symbolic place for von Konrat, a site where he acquired a new identity. His work as Adolf Hitler’s special adviser on Russian matters suggests that he was a firm believer or at least a sympathiser in Nazism, an ideology on which apartheid was in some respects modelled on. It is therefore only right for one to expect von Konrat to support apartheid policy. However, von Konrat presents apartheid as a backward policy and claims to have had ‘learned from his experience’ and thus become an ‘anti-apartheid activist’, and even a ‘freedom fighter’.⁹⁶ Ruacana became a symbolic site where von Konrat became cleansed of his past, and therefore becoming a humanitarian. He differentiates himself from other ‘white men’ as he could see past the skin colours and treat ‘natives’ just as his equals. In this regard, Ruacana is presented beyond its materiality, to take on an identity of a vital artefact not only in the processes of modernising Namibia, but also earning a good reputation for an international engineer and an ex-Nazi soldier. I therefore argue that it is the ‘artifactual

⁹⁵ Konrat, *Passport*, 14 - 15.

⁹⁶ George von Konrat, *Passport to Truth: Inside South –West Africa: An astounding story of oppression and escape*, 1972, 163.

effect⁹⁷ created by the engineering work of Ruacana hydropower scheme and the ‘symbolic force’⁹⁸ that transformed Ruacana into a place.

But, there is a sharp distinction between von Konrat’s narrative and that of the South African government’s preceding publications, especially the *South African Panorama*. While the *South African Panorama* was authored by an institution, *Passport to Truth* was authored by an individual. Von Konrat, as per the title of his book, dismisses government publications including the *South African Panorama* as ‘politically motivated distortions’.⁹⁹ He thus presents himself as an authoritative figure, an eyewitness, and his agency unhindered by any institution. It is stated on the back-cover of his book that what the book narrates is the ‘reality’, as he experienced and saw the events with his own eyes. In this case, Ruacana becomes a place (geographical unit) as well as a place (an avenue) through which von Konrat exercises a separation of reality from its sanitised version, which opens up to the flaws and brutal practice of apartheid administration, otherwise concealed in *South African Panorama*. Virtually every page is laced with police brutality committed against himself, his black workforce and at times even the community members, as the two passages below shows.

In the morning John tore into the office. Did you hear those shots last night?
Yes, I think they came from the South African side.
It was the South African police. They were having a target practice on our people-on our women and children!
You are crazy!
No I’m not - I’ll show you, and he brought an African woman into the office, with her husband, who was one of my workmen. He lifted up her skirt and unwrapped a filthy bandage and I saw the wound where a bullet had entered the leg. Horrified, I called in the first-aid man to put a fresh dressing on the wound.
She’s lucky, he told me. It’s only a flesh wound, and it’s clean.
I asked the husband what happened.
Master, we have got no terrorists. It was the police.
I asked if his wife was the only casualty.
Three little children are dead, six outside need attention, one woman got shot through the head and an old man died this morning. I asked the first-aid boy to attend to the victims.
I felt utterly helpless.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Mitchell, *Rule of experts*, 36.

⁹⁸ Mitchell, *Rule of experts*, 36.

⁹⁹ Konrat, *Passport*, 3.

¹⁰⁰ Konrat, *Passport*, 24.

The following pages, the author narrates how he himself narrowly escaped gun shots from the South African Police Force:

About thirty feet away from the pipeline someone started shooting at us. We stopped dead on our tracks. I shone my torch in the direction of the fire and saw two policemen approaching us. One had a revolver in his hand, the other a machine gun. They were both very drunk. Put out your light, you bastard, one of them ordered, We're the police.

I put it out. They stank of alcohol and weaved unsteadily on their feet. One was a Boer, the other Rhodesian. I could see they recognised me. Like a little child, the Afrikaner yelled out, We've got you now, you bastard! Pushing his revolver against my temple, while the other rammed his sub-machine gun into my belly. For moment I did not dare even to breathe. You're not on the Angola side, the first one spluttered, you're on the native side, now we've got you.

What have you got? I calmly asked him.

You, in the native area.

Wrong, I corrected him. According to my plans this is my construction area, whether the natives live here or not.

This area is under my jurisdiction, and I'm the government representative here.

We are the police, we're the Government, and we say you're in the native area, said the man, pushing his revolver harder against my head. You think you're better than we are, you think you're the great Boss of Ovamboland and we're the idiots. We don't know what you came here for, but we were waiting for you.

Yes gentlemen, I said patiently, I knew you were waiting for me.

Who? Who told you? Yelled the Rhodesian.

For a moment I thought-what can I say? I'll have to give him an answer. I said, It was my general foreman. He told me you were hidden in bushes all over the place.

Was he drunk when he said that? Screamed the other one.

No he wasn't drunk.

So answer me, do you think you're better than us?

Yes, if I wasn't I'd be a policeman, but I'm Resident Engineer of Ovamboland.

Shoot the Bastard, snapped the Boer in Afrikaans.

I can understand Afrikaans too, I interrupted in that language.¹⁰¹

Clearly this book was written to counter arguments formulated by the South African government such as in the *South African Panorama*. Von Konrat argues that the South African government did not care for the Namibian people, especially those that were in Ovamboland. The Security Police that government claimed to be placed in Ovamboland to protect civilians was the very force that treated innocent, unarmed civilians as terrorists. It is as if the government did not even care for the project's completion. Throughout the book, Von Konrat shows how he and his team were constantly harassed by the Security Police.

¹⁰¹ Konrat, *Passport*, 50.

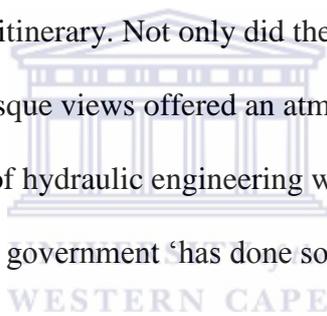
Some of his workers were beaten to death, or even shot, on duty under suspicion of being terrorists. Von Konrat charges that it was his 'humane treatment of the natives' that led him into trouble with the Security Police, which he likened to the Gestapo. He was harassed by the security police on a daily basis, his house was searched, he was arrested, jailed for three weeks and treated just like any political prisoner. His basic human rights violated, he claims he was taken around the country and even to South Africa, with attempts at hiding him from his lawyers. Thus von Konrat's narrative of government policy and practice of apartheid transforms Ruacana into a place of police brutality, agony, and torture.

The Ruacana hydropower scheme which the government presented as proof of commitment to the upliftment and economic progress for the Namibian people was not going to benefit them. Von Konrat's formulation was strongly pronounced during the United Nation reporters visit to Ruacana.¹⁰² Here von Konrat argues that the South African government 'hood-winked' the United Nation about the truth regarding its development and administration policy in Ovamboland. He specifically refers to the Ruacana hydropower scheme as an accessory and Ruacana as a place that the South African Government used to hide its real intentions of 'extracting minerals' in Namibia to develop their own country. He charges that the project was for supplying the 'uranium fields with water, and Swakopmund and Walvis Bay, and in an emergency all the other white towns-but none of it's for the poor bloody Ovambos. There's no irrigation scheme whatsoever for the natives'.¹⁰³ In the 'dry season Ovamboland has absolutely no fresh water. Even in flood times the water is virtually unusable, the floods disperse the sewage and waters spread cholera and yellow fever all around. The whites are inoculated against these diseases, of course but the 450 000

¹⁰² This was intended for the South Africa to prove to the United Nations that they were really developing Namibia. A delegation of journalists was send to Namibia to view developments.

¹⁰³ Konrat, *Passport*, 106.

Ovambos stay unprotected'.¹⁰⁴ He writes he could not say any of this to the reporters, as no private persons were allowed to talk to them. His speech to address the reporters was prepared by the Security Police and he was warned to stick to it and not change a word as he had himself and daughter to think about.¹⁰⁵ He further maintains that information in his speech was fabricated, especially the wages of the Ovambo labourers, who were said to be paid between 120 – 220 Rands per month when in reality they were paid four cents per hour.¹⁰⁶ As evidence, fake pay-sheets were prepared for the reporters to view. Though such a formulation brings to the fore the real beneficiary of the hydro project, it also articulates Ruacana, even with its partially completed Ruacana hydropower scheme, as a place worthy to be visited. Though the United Nation reporters visited other places in Ovamboland, Ruacana weighed much in their itinerary. Not only did they spend a weekend there but the place with its scenic and picturesque views offered an atmosphere of pleasure, through sightseeing yet with a glimpse of hydraulic engineering work that had the UN reporters admitting that the South African government 'has done so much for the natives'.¹⁰⁷



The book also denies the South African government's asserted legacy of having modernised Namibia. Von Konrat further counters the notion of a legacy and a 'heritage of modernity' constructed at Ruacana by the South African government. Though the government boasted of expertise from South Africa as the constructors of the Ruacana hydropower scheme and therefore applauding them for technical ingenuity, endurance and unwavering courage to work tirelessly to bring civilisation to Ovamboland, von Konrat claims otherwise. Accordingly he maintains that civilisation in Namibia, especially through Ruacana hydropower scheme came about through his blood and sweat, and that of the Ovambo labourers only. Together they endured persecution, racism, poor wages coupled with long

¹⁰⁴ Konrat, *Passport*, 106.

¹⁰⁵ Konrat, *Passport*, 1972, 109.

¹⁰⁶ Konrat, *Passport*, 3.

¹⁰⁷ Konrat, *Passport*, 106.

hours, to 'bring civilisation to the white man'. Instead the South Africans that he referred to as 'Afrikaner Staff', were members of the 'Security Police who posed as construction workers' and lacked skills and knowledge 'to successfully execute their job descriptions in a construction unit'.¹⁰⁸ They were therefore committed to 'nepotism, squandering government money, drinking coffee, liquor, and terrorising those that were dedicated to their duties'.¹⁰⁹ Those that had the required expertise could not work without 'supervision and could not see past the skin colour'.¹¹⁰ It is such distinctions that becomes the foundation, or basis through which a new understanding of Ruacana as a place is created and through which a different narrative is constructed. His narrative is presented as though it is defining Ruacana as geographical space while that of the South African government is conceptualising Ruacana as a social constructed or imagined place. However his narrative is further concerned with the history of such representation.

In all the literature discussed above, Ruacana is represented as a project of development. Clearly, Ruacana appears to be a place that needed to be developed, a place that has been developed, and most importantly the only place from which economic development in Owambo and other parts of Namibia could be driven from. However it has been argued in this chapter the hydropower project at Ruacana had come to coincide with the South African-United Nation case over Namibia and was therefore appropriated by the South African government not only as a shield to refract harsh criticism but also a reason not to terminate its administration in Namibia. Ruacana hydropower scheme was used to prove that the South African government was not a notorious government but one that was only defending the interests of Namibians against the South West Africa People's Organisation. It is such appropriations that led to differences in the representation of Ruacana in *South African*

¹⁰⁸ Konrat, *Passport*, 38.

¹⁰⁹ Konrat, *Passport*, 109.

¹¹⁰ Konrat, *Passport*, 29 - 38.

Panorama, South West Africa Survey 1974 and *Passport to Truth*. Though in the government publications Ruacana hydropower scheme appears to be the key economic project by the South African government in Namibia, an ingenious creation by the skilled South African experts claiming to construct a heritage of modernizing Namibia, in the *Passport to Truth* this assertion is contradicted and thus shifting credit to the expertise of an individual and Owambo labourers.

The three sets of literature show varied narratives of Ruacana, but each claims to be an authentic representation. However, despite such claims to truth, they all have been doubted. The *South West African Survey 1974* and the *South African Panorama* are state publications and served the interests of the South African colonial government. The timing of the two publication shows publication were intended to buy sympathy for the South African colonial government in its battle against the United Nation over Namibia. The South African colonial government took advantage of the print media to exaggerate its development efforts in Namibia, especially at Ruacana and thus used Ruacana as evidence to prove to the United Nation that they really cared about Namibians to make such enormous financial commitments. On the other hand *Passport to Truths* though disqualifying government publications as blatant propaganda, is also said to have made some rather dubious claims, just like he did in his other book published two years earlier. It was argued in this chapter that he exaggerated his narratives to denounce the nature of apartheid rule in Namibia.

CHAPTER THREE

3. Picturing Ruacana: The Visual Representation and narrative of Ruacana in the National Archives of Namibia.

This chapter explores the visual representations of Ruacana in the Namibian National Archives. It is an analysis of a collection of photographs taken in the different areas of Ruacana. The photographs were taken between 1925 and 1990, by different photographers, and represent a variety of themes. I will argue in this chapter that the visual transformation of Ruacana into place occurred at three levels. The first act of transformation involved the selection of Ruacana as a destination and the actual travelling to Ruacana as well as the photographing processes. I argue here that Ruacana was deemed to be a picturesque place and the visual narratives shows that travellers were attracted by the waterfalls, the hydropower station, and Kunene River. The hydropower station is represented both in its aesthetic and symbolic values, and thus presented as a monument symbolising the beginning of modernization processes in Namibia. The second level of transformation involved processes of circulations and uses of the Ruacana photographs, which I will further argue exposed Ruacana to varied audiences both inside and outside Namibia. Finally the third level of transformation occurred in the archive. The processes of archiving involves first of all, the selection of documents reasoned ‘archivable’. This is further strengthened with additions of captions, digitization, and accessibility to a wider audience of researchers. The three levels of transformation amalgamated to create a heritage of modernity in Ruacana. The photographs show acts of tourism, a modern generation of power, modern weaponry as well as archiving, all made possible through the use of a camera.

3.1 The Visual Narrative of Ruacana in the National Archives of Namibia

I found the sets of black and white photographs discussed in this chapter at the National Archive of Namibia, in my quest to find more information about Ruacana. Though the National Archives of Namibia archives are in possession of the original photographs, I only had access to the digitized version of the archive. The archive is filed under the National Archives of Namibia's Image Database. The archive is accessible through the archive's search system through its title 'Ruacana Visual Archive', and comprises all photographs in its possession taken in Ruacana and the surrounding areas. Only photographs taken in the Ruacana area are discussed in this chapter.

The photographs were taken by Heinz Roth, Paul Hoefler, John Liebenberg, S. Davis and Erastus Uutoni.¹ Some of these photographers are known only by their name and the archive has no background on them. Equally some of the photographs are orphaned as the archival staff have no knowledge of the photographers' identities, especially those images donated by institutions. My own attempts to unveil such identities also proved futile. Additional information such as photographer, provenance, copyright holders, key words, place, and date are also provided in the archive where these are known.. In cases where the photographs were not captioned by the photographer, the archivists captioned them by giving a brief description of the content of the photograph. In the digitized folder the photographs are arranged in a chronological order, narrating the transformation of Ruacana into a place, between 1925 and 1990.

The organisation of the Ruacana Visual Archive is a reflection of an assertion that archives are not just storehouses but also sites of knowledge production. The National Archives of

¹ The positions of these photographers are discussed in the following sections.

Namibia's classification, and an attempt to create a specific order has led to the re-contextualization of the Ruacana Visual Archive, and thus creating a narrative of their own. This was achieved through the archival ritual of cataloguing, where photographs taken by different photographers at different time periods were all grouped together, and classified as one entity. 'Collections of photographs offer ways of seeing the pictures that viewing of individual photographs do not'.² Such a classification earned these photographs new meanings, as viewers are able to contextualize the images as a unity to plot a narrative of Ruacana as place. Thus the archiving of visual materials cannot be separated from processes of representation.³

It is also apparent that the captioning of photographs by the archive re-contextualises photographs, that even in the archives, the photographs continued to make an impact on Ruacana. A 'single picture, it is said, is worth a thousand words, but a single word can also be worth a thousand pictures because it may bring images to mind'.⁴ Captions highlight aspects the viewer attends to, and in what light this should be done.⁵ Therefore captioning photographs loads the image with 'culture, a morality and imagination', and thus influences how the viewer comprehends the images.⁶ Both captions and photographs compliments each other, captions which by themselves remains at a level of generalisation, are given specific authenticity by the seeming irrefutability of the photograph, and thus together the two become powerful, an open question appears to have been fully answered.⁷

² Robert Gordon, *Picturing Bushmen: The Denver African Expedition of 1925*, (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1997), 4.

³ Patricia Hayes 'Visual History in photographs' review of *The Face of the Country: A South African Family Album, 1860-1910*, by Karel Schoeman, *Journal of African History* 39, no. 01 (1998), 168.

⁴ Gordon, *Picturing Bushmen*, 4

⁵ Gordon, *Picturing Bushmen*, 4

⁶ Gordon, *Picturing Bushmen*, 4

⁷ John Berger, *Another Way of Seeing* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 92 in Gordon, *Picturing Bushmen*, 4

These archiving procedures have further ‘obliterated the inter-relatedness of the various documents and their historical conditions’.⁸ Most of the photographs that are discussed here were once part of albums that were separated completely from written sources and re-arranged according to places they were taken. Even the digitized folder does not provide a link between the written documents that were produced together with the photographs. The written documents are accessible through a different search key. Such archival practices give photographs ‘agency beyond contexts in which they were produced’.⁹ Also, the arrangement of the Ruacana Visual Archive in a chronological order constructs a narrative of events that took place at Ruacana from the earliest times of 1920s to 1990s. The narrative appears to be uninterrupted, and the photographs appear to be innocently and continuously depicting what the photographers deemed interesting. The photographers appears to have had taken over from where the others left, as events changed at Ruacana.

3.2 The Denver Africa Expedition

The Denver Africa expedition was undertaken between July 1925 and April 1926. The expedition was headed by Earnest Cadle, with Paul Hoefler and Dr. Grant John as photographer and physician respectively. They were also joined by South African A.J. Goodwin, an archaeologist, and Donald Bain, the expedition’s South African guide. The expedition was intended to document the Bushmen and establish the ‘true missing link between the highest anthropoid age and the highest type of manhood’.¹⁰ In addition, the ‘avowed purpose of the expedition was “publicity” and credibility for the city of Denver.’¹¹ Hence the journey was sponsored by sixteen Denver businessmen. Newspapers, especially

⁸ Lorena Rizzo. ‘A Glance into the Camera: Gendered Visions of Historical Photographs in Kaoko (North-Western Namibia)’, *Gender & History*, 17, (2005), 688.

⁹ Patricia Hayes and John Liebenberg, *Bush of Ghosts: Life and War in Namibia 1986 – 1990* (Cape Town: Umuzi, 2010), 23.

¹⁰ Gordon, *Picturing Bushmen*, 16 – 17.

¹¹ Gordon, *Picturing Bushmen*, 16.

the *Denver Post* updated the audience on the milestones of the expedition. When the expedition reached Namibia, they gathered the Heikum Bushmen at Etosha took photographs and filmed them.

The expedition included leisure in its itinerary. In this regard, Ruacana was one such destinations. According to the journal kept by Heofler, the expedition camped at Ruacana between the 10th and 11th December, 1925. Hoefler's 'journal was obviously a personal one, intended for a limited audience-namely his family'.¹² It has 'little of what passes under the rubric of scientific observation and is more an attempt to impress the reader with how the expedition heroically coped with Africa'.¹³ At Ruacana, the journal indicates, the expedition transcended its scientific duties to that of pleasure. Hoefler's description narrates how they abandoned their mission to explore Ruacana and its surrounding areas. At Ruacana they engaged in sightseeing and hunting birds such as Egyptian geese.

Hoefler's journal however shows that photographs might have been staged. For instance, Hoefler shares his disappointment with the reader as wild animals were too quick for him, or were not in a good range for photographing. Similarly, he also states that they spent a whole day (10th December) fishing for crocodiles that they hoped to haul out with the truck and thus making a good scene for a photograph, but they had no luck in such a venture.

'Officially, the expedition was supported as an attempt to boost tourism and settlement in Namibia'.¹⁴ It is not clear whether this was the reason why the expedition travelled to Ruacana, but what is apparent is that Ruacana is presented as a place that challenges and at the same time offers adventure activities to travellers. Thus, while the expedition focused their camera lens on people, the Heikum Bushmen at Etosha and the Kwanyama at Ondjiva,

¹² Gordon, *Picturing Bushmen*, 14.

¹³ Gordon, *Picturing Bushmen*, 14.

¹⁴ Gordon, *Picturing Bushmen*, 15.

at Ruacana, the photographic focus was diverted to the landscape. Here the photographs constructed landscapes where Ruacana is presented as ‘picturesque spectacle’, awaiting the adventurous European traveller.¹⁵ The Ruacana Visual Archive shows that at Ruacana, the expedition only took pictures of the Ruacana waterfalls. The absence of photographs with other landscape features, people, or even animals, brings to the fore uncertainties as to whether the expedition did not photograph any of such features, or whether photographs with such features were just not donated to the National Archives of Namibia. Thus the Ruacana Visual Archive comprise two photographs of the Ruacana waterfalls taken at different angles.



Figure 6. This photograph showing a section of the Ruacana Falls. Captioned as ‘Denver African Expedition, Oruwa Hacana (Ruacana) Water Falls’, Paul Hoefler, (National Archives of Namibia, 03337).

Figure six is one of the photographs that were taken during the Denver Expedition. Like all Denver images, the photograph is imprinted “Denver African Expedition” at the lower part of

¹⁵ Ryan James, *Picturing empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 194.

the photograph. The photograph is also marked with a code “A-90” on the right-bottom-corner. The photograph shows two streams of water falling over a rugged rocky cliff to make up the Ruacana water falls. The falling water then runs off from the foot of the waterfall downstream as the Kunene River proceeds its flow to the west. The trees and bushes seen up the waterfall show that the photograph appears to have been taken at the foot of the falls. The expedition visited Ruacana Falls at the beginning of the summer rainfall season and thus the water fall appears to be at a minimum level.



Figure 7. The photograph showing a section of the Ruacana Falls. Captioned as ‘Denver African Expedition, Oruwa Hacana (Ruacana ‘Water Falls, Paul Hoefler, (National Archives of Namibia, 03339)

Figure seven shows Ruacana waterfalls captured from a different standing position from which more details of the area are included. The photograph shows a distant mountain range that forms a horizon. There is also a valley, with flowing water that joins the waterfall. The foreground of the photograph shows a current of water falling over a steep rocky cliff. There is also a rocky outcrop over which the water falls. The photograph is as well imprinted with “Denver Africa Expedition” and coded “A-91” on the right –bottom –corner.

3.3 The Bernard Carp Expedition to Kaokoveld

The Carp expedition which travelled to Kaokoveld, but also included Ruacana as a destination, departed from Windhoek in June 1951.

Headed by the Cape Town based Bernard Carp, an adventurer, hunter, and collector of Dutch origin, it comprised 15 men in a convoy of jeeps, trucks and vans suited to the north-western part of Namibia. The expedition was commissioned and financed by the Transvaal Museum, the King Williams Town Museum and the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia, with the purpose of collecting fauna and flora¹⁶.

On the Carp Expedition, photographs were taken by Heinz Roth, a businessman 'who belonged to a tradition of amateur photographers in the German-speaking settler society, professionalizing their photography in the context of scientific journeys and safari trips throughout colonial Namibia from the mid-1930s'.¹⁷ Roth produced more than 170 black and white photographs and a 16mm film.¹⁸

There are 172 photographs on Kaoko in the National Archive of Namibia Roth collection. Roth gave some of his photographs to the Scientific Society in Windhoek and to the Wolfskehlen/Rietstadt, Hessen library in Germany where his ex-wife lived. Most of the photographs are images of local people (43) and their houses (8), or of the natural environment (53). Only three are of animal species and plants. Thirty-eight depict the members of the Carp expedition and their cars. The rest (28) are images of colonial monuments, of game and of colonial personnel.¹⁹

The photographic occasions from which the photographs of Roth 'emerged depended on the social relations that framed the moment and place of production'.²⁰ Given the 'social lives of these photographs',²¹ there is no doubt that the photographs presented Ruacana as a place catering to the needs of both the scientific researchers as well as adventurers. Roth's photographs were intended for private and public audiences within the Namibian and southern African settler societies. The photographs were used by various members of the

¹⁶ Rizzo, 'Glance into Camera', 682.

¹⁷ Rizzo, 'Glance into Camera', 682.

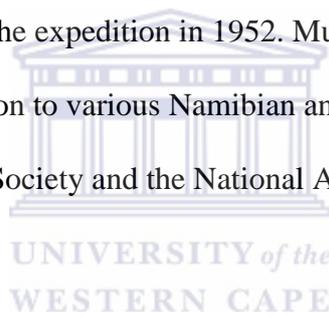
¹⁸ Rizzo, 'Glance into Camera', 682.

¹⁹ Rizzo, 'Glance into Camera', 707.

²⁰ Rizzo, 'Glance into Camera', 706.

²¹ Rizzo, 'Glance into Camera', 701.

Carp expedition and in various institutions, and a number ended in the Namibian archives.²² Their circulation and use made it possible that Ruacana became more widely-known. Though in Namibia, Roth availed his photographs to a rather limited audience, of his ‘private networks and his expedition fellows’, the South Africans and Europeans ‘successfully used the photographs in publications and in museums as arenas of public and popular expertise’.²³ For instance Dennis Woods exhibited the Roth photographs for talks at the Wildlife Protection Association; Bernard Carp did so at numerous lectures that he gave in the ‘Transvaal Museum, the Mountain Club in Cape Town and similar public and semi-public institutions, establishing himself as an expert with entrepreneurial flair’.²⁴ It was Lawrence Green who used the photographs most of all in his widely read book, *Lords of the Last Frontier*, published shortly after the expedition in 1952. Much later, in the 1970s, Roth donated his photographic collection to various Namibian and European archival institutions, such as the Windhoek Scientific Society and the National Archives of Namibia.²⁵



²² Rizzo, ‘Glance into Camera’, 701.

²³ Rizzo, ‘Glance into Camera’, 687.

²⁴ Rizzo, ‘Glance into Camera’, 687.

²⁵ Rizzo, ‘Glance into Camera’, 687.



Figure 8: This photograph is captioned as ‘Carp Expedition, June 1951; Ruacana Water Falls, the Gorge’, Heinz Roth, (National Archives of Namibia, 03033).

Although the photograph in Figure eight is captioned as Ruacana Falls, it does not depict the water falls per say. The caption is perhaps to illustrate that the photograph was taken in the vicinity of the Ruacana falls. Indeed the photograph shows the gorge or a steep rocky outcrops valley with Kunene River flowing at a high velocity. A horizon is also visible on the background of the image.



Figure 9. The photograph showing part of the Ruacana waterfalls in full swing, is captioned as ‘Carp Expedition, June 1951; Ruacana Water Falls’, Heinz Roth, (National Archives of Namibia, 03034).

The photograph in Figure nine shows the Ruacana Falls in full swing, with water falling in high velocity over, a steep cliff. The high, steep cliff which dominates the image forms a horizon on the background. There is also what appears as a cut-off pool of water, surrounded by rocky surfaces on the foreground. The surface surrounding the cut-off pool is covered by sparsely distributed bushes.

3.4 Contextualising the Carp and Denver Expedition

The two expeditions although dating from different times, seem to have had similar intentions. However, as soon as the two expedition parties reached Ruacana, the focus of the camera lens changed from the purpose of the expedition. With the Carp Expedition, collection of animal and vegetal specie is nowhere reflected on visual productions. At Ruacana, the camera was diverted mainly towards landscape. The dominating features in these photographs are therefore waterfalls, mountains, cliffs and dense-wooden terrain. As it is illustrated by the photographs above Ruacana is presented as an ‘unspoiled’, ‘untouched’, ‘natural’ landscape, with an unforgiving terrain. There is no visible sign of any economic or social activities or people, domestic animals, or game. It is an ‘empty land, natural scenery, lying calmly, passively, but wild and untamed before the viewer’s eyes’.²⁶ The images further emphasise the importance of Ruacana as a possible tourist destination. It is at Ruacana that a focus shifted from the inhabitants, or fauna or flora to the members of the expedition themselves. In these photographs the waterfall is constructed as the visual signature of Ruacana as it is most frequently featured in the photographs. Such landscape photographs evoke specific visions of the natural world and express value and meanings. The Ruacana expeditions could therefore be located in ‘colonial imagery of vacant land’, suggesting the absence of indigenous people and visualising territorial claims by the colonisers.²⁷ The

²⁶ Rizzo, ‘A glance into Camera’, 688.

²⁷Rizzo, ‘A glance into Camera, 688.

exclusion of the navigable landscape around the waterfall especially through which the expedition reached the waterfall lead me to suggest that the captured landscape appears to give an emphasis on the hostility of the terrain. It is as Rizzo puts it, as if expedition members would have the 'privilege of entering a region they perceived as inaccessible and unknown to all but a very few Europeans'.²⁸ Such assertions not only coincide with the tourist imagery at a time, but further construct such imagery. Being tourists themselves, the members of the expeditions showed, through photography, the interests of the tourist at a time. On the Denver expeditions the quest to see, explore and experience places that at the time were conceived as 'Africa untamed' or a 'virgin African space', a 'place where African life was allegedly untouched by modernisation and colonial economies'.²⁹ Upon reaching such areas, members of the expedition described Ruacana as a 'mystery land stripped of every vestige of civilisation'.³⁰ Thus photographs were not only a way of capturing the visual experience of Ruacana or its sense of place, they also were appropriated avenues where travellers proved their navigation and survival skills through tough terrains. For instance, Hoefler expresses his experience on the trail to see the water falls.

At daybreak we started for the Kunene Falls, about 20 miles distant. ... There we found ourselves on the edge of a 500 foot drop into the Kunene Valley. Their hillside was covered with large rocks, so passage down for our faithful truck was impossible. Meanwhile we hit the trail for a very strenuous eight miles walk. None of these hikes would be harder than those taken for pleasure in our Colorado Mountains, but for the intense heat we are very near equator here, the sun beaming down with great weight. The perspiration came off me in little streams, all my clothing were soaking wet within an hour. Several brands of flies pestered us almost to desperation, stocking on our eye lids, nostrils, ears or wherever the eyes showed. But in spite of all we walked the distance in 3 ½ hours. ... I walked in front, on the heels of the headman who acted as guide, and then en route secured some film of a baboon family, being in front, I was the first to see the falls, and have been assured that I have the honour of being the first American to see these beautiful falls.³¹

²⁸ Rizzo, 'Glance into Camera', 682.

²⁹ Rizzo, 'Glance into Camera', 707.

³⁰ Gordon, *Picturing Bushmen*, 85.

³¹ Paul Hoefler, 'Paul Hoefler Journal: The Kaokoveld Expedition', (1951).

Thus it was at Ruacana where the expeditions became social events themselves. The expedition members changed the primary focus and purposes of their journeys, to just enjoy the Ruacana as holiday destination.

3.5 Ruacana as Hydropower Scheme

As discussed in the presiding chapters, the Ruacana hydropower Scheme was viewed by the South African colonial government as a prestigious project. Even before completion of the Ruacana hydropower scheme, the project was proclaimed to be Namibia's core power supply system. Additionally the terrain of Ruacana made construction very difficult and completion of the project was admired by the South African government as a triumph over nature and a celebration of ingenuity. It is therefore not surprising that the project became a subject of documentation especially through photography. The hydropower scheme was especially photographed at different phases and sites of construction.



Figure 10. This photograph which shows Ovambo artisans paving the Calueque – Okatana water canal is captioned as ‘Ovambo Artisans at work on one of the Ruacana Water Scheme Canal, 1971’, S. Davis, (National Archives of

The photograph shows three male artisans working on the Caluque – Okatana water canal scheme. They appear to be filling spaces between the tiles with concrete mixture drawn from a machine on the left bank of the canal. Though only one worker is wearing shoes, they are all wearing protective helmets. There are another two male workers standing on the banks of the canal, and it is not clear whether they are standing as observing fellow workers or supervising them. In the distance is a group of men who appear to be working on a bridge to be placed over the canal. In the background of the photograph are Mopane trees that make up a horizon.

The photograph was taken by S. Davis, who was a photojournalist for the *South West Africa Annual*. The *South West African Annual* was a government-funded publication that was published annually. The publication updated its audience about the latest development or progress of development projects in Namibia. Davis had written an article about the Caluque - Okatana canal, which was published in the *South West Africa Annual* of 1964. However, this photograph did not feature in the article. Indeed none of the photographs featured in the article were taken by Davis. According to Davis the Caluque – Okatana project would ‘forestall famine for ever’,³² a solution that would put an end to a ‘series of droughts, affecting both livestock and people’.³³ A large area of Ovamboland ‘is now free from the spectre of famine’. In the same article, it is stated that the ‘Ovambo artisans were trained by a specially selected European instructor’.³⁴

Given this background, it is best to read this image in relation to the socio-political context in which the photograph was produced, which, brings to the fore issues of power relations. The publications discussed in chapter two, gave recognition and praised international expertise,

³² S. Davis, ‘Kunene River Dam: Ovamboland Canal and Hydropwer project Promise End to Famine for Ever’, *South West Africa Annual*, (1964), 65.

³³ Davis, ‘Kunene River’, 65.

³⁴ Davis, ‘Kunene River’, 67.

and the South African government for the technical ingenuity and funding of the Ruacana hydropower scheme. Publications such as the *South African Panorama* and *Passport to Truth* illustrate the model of division of labour where local staff were in the low ranks of skills and thus wages. The inadequate safety gear for the employees also shows the poor working conditions that unskilled labourers were subjected to at the time. The publications discussed in chapter two also presented local people as though helpless, and only rescued by the South African colonial government, to supply them with water. However figure 10 depicts the agency and contribution, in the form of artisanal labour, by local communities, to the construction of the Ruacana hydropower scheme and thus the alleviation of the water shortages that were claimed to be eased by the government.

The Ruacana hydropower scheme did not only transform Ruacana into an epicentre of economic development but also a contested ground. Chapter ten shows that People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola supported South West Africa People's Organisation in their fight against South African colonial government. Ruacana hydropower scheme was used as evidence. The People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola led Angolan government refused to allow water to be pumped from their territory into Namibia until the South African government adhered to all the conditions pending regarding Namibian independence. It is such events that figure eleven seems to have been representing. The photograph shows one of the Ruacana's hydropower scheme component, the storage dam and the surge tunnel, lying empty without water. The background of the photograph is occupied by a distant range of mountains and a horizon visible.

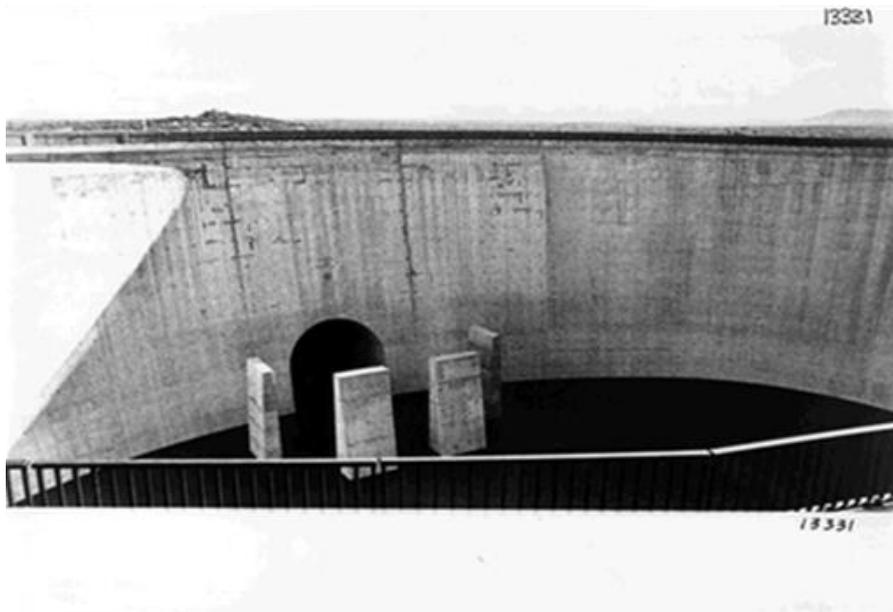
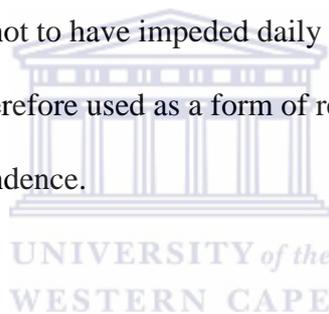


Figure 11. The photograph shows the Ruacana storage dam. It is captioned as: 'ill-fated Ruacana hydroelectric Scheme on Angola/Namibian border stands idle while the future of Namibia remains in the balance, costing nearly 175 million, funded by South Africa and built by an international consortium of engineers. This storage tank and surge tunnel stand in Namibia. Power station 600 metres below is ready. Water comes from the Kunene and storage dam in Calueque in Angola. Angola won't allow water into power station until Namibia gains full independence', International Defence Aid Fund, photographer is unknown, (National Archives of Namibia, 13331).

The caption inserted on figure eleven narrates how the power project became entangled in the liberation struggle for Namibia. It is apparent from the caption that the Ruacana hydropower scheme was not functional upon its completion and laid idle while negotiations between the three parties were in progress. The caption further shows the cost of the dam and surge tunnel and the status of the other components such as the power station. Analysing photographs by unknown photographers beset ambiguity on an image, and thus locating provenance of figure eleven to the International Defence Aid Fund eased some of such uncertainties.

The caption indicates that the photograph was part of the photo collections, films, and videos that were returned Namibia and South Africa from the International Defence Aid Fund.³⁵ It thus becomes clear that the photograph was used as a form of resistance against the South African colonial government. The photograph therefore shows how Ruacana, the very same site that was used the South African government to deflect its bad reports about its administration against Namibia, became a symbol that signified resistance against the South African colonial government over Namibia. The project was presented as though it change the ‘whole future of Ovamboland and Namibia’,³⁶ as an infrastructural development the said people could not live without. The photograph shows how the Ruacana hydropower scheme was after all an insignificant project in the lives of Namibians at the time. The dormant status of the hydropower plant seemed not to have impeded daily routines in Ovamboland or Namibia. The photograph was therefore used as a form of resistance against colonial rule and advocacy for Namibia’s independence.



³⁵ The International Defence Aid Fund was an organisation that raised over US \$ 100 million over of thirty – year period for legal defence of political prisoners in South Africa and Namibia and aid for their families. International Defence Aid Fund published briefing papers and books, and produced films and television documentaries to educate the international community about the realities of apartheid and to counteract the effective pro-apartheid propaganda put out by the white government. Before its closure in 1990, collections were returned to Namibia and South Africa. In Namibia, collections were deposited in the National Archives of Namibia. Joan Fairweather, ‘Secret, Lies, and History: Experiences of a Canadian Archivist In Hungary and South Africa’, 186.

³⁶ S. Davis, ‘Kunene River’, 64.



Figure 12. The photograph showing a visit by President Lucas Mangope at Ruacana hydropower station. Captioned as ‘President L.M. Mangope (Bophuthatswana) and his Company at Ruacana Hydro) Electric Power Station, 18. 07. 1980, Suidwester Copyr, (National Archives of Namibia, 06327)

Figure twelve shows a group of men, all dressed formally. They are being addressed by Polla Brand, who was at the time the director of the South West Africa Water and Electricity Commission. He is dressed in boots, shorts and laboratory coat. The group is in the control room of the Ruacana hydropower station. The caption provides more information, especially on the date of the visit and identity of only one delegate, Lucas Mangope.³⁷

At the time of the visit Lucas Mangope was the president of Bophuthatswana.

Bophuthatswana, established in 1961, was one of ten Bantustans (also known as homelands) in apartheid South Africa. It was also one of the four Bantustans that were granted independence in 1977 by the South African government. But such independence was only recognised by South Africa and the Transkei only. In order to gain independent country status

³⁷ Lucas Mangope became the first Prime Minister of Bophuthatswana in 1972, and retained the position until independence in 1977 after which he was appointed as the first President of the country. He remained in this position until 1994, when the country was reincorporated into South Africa.

internationally, its President, Lucas Mangope, launched a campaign to build top-class facilities, including hospitals, schools and sports stadia. Bophuthatswana's application to be declared an independent state outside the rule of South Africa was turned down in 1986.

Bophuthatswana was one of the homelands established in South Africa. The idea of the homeland was for each 'ethnic group' to have its own and independent political and economic structures. The construction of the Ruacana hydropower scheme in Ovamboland not only stood as good a example of a homeland with independent economic infrastructures, but also stood as evidence to the South African government abilities to deliver such developments in other homelands in both Namibia and South Africa. The delegation visited the hydropower station when it was just completed and commissioned in 1980.

The Ruacana hydropower scheme became emblematic of this powerful vision of modernisation. It is such a vision that turned Ruacana hydropower scheme into a spectacle of modernisation, people from all walks of life were encouraged to take a tour of the power plant. Documentation of famous people visiting the Ruacana hydropower station was also carried over to an independent Namibia. Ten years after Lucas Mangope's visit, Sam Nujoma, the then sworn in president of the Republic of Namibia visited the Ruacana hydropower project under the company of Botswana president Quett Masire and visited the power plant, as shown in figure ten. The photograph further shows a third person Polla Brand, the Managing Director of South West Africa Water and Electricity Commission, since 1980, as a tour guide to the two presidents. Polla Brand was the same person who oriented Lucas Mangobe around the Ruacana hydropower plant. Polla Brand's arm is in motion and appears to be demonstrating something to the two presidents who appears very attentive.



Figure 13. Botswana President Quett Masire and President Sam Nujoma visiting Ruacana Hydroelectric plant, in the middle: SWAVEK / NamPower Managing Director Polla Brand 12 May 1990, Utoni Erastus (National Archives of Namibia, 27800).

The representation of this photograph symbolise the Ruacana hydropower scheme as important, deemed significant enough to be visited by the president, on his first tour of the country, in the company of his Botswanan counterpart. The visit made headlines in *The Namibian* newspaper, as Quett Masire was the very first head of state to visit independent Namibia.³⁸ The article further reported that the tour began at Ruacana, and then proceeded to Etosha, one of the largest game reserve in the country, and closing at the only publishing house in Ovamboland, Oniipa.³⁹ From there, the party proceeded to the coast, where stops were made at the largest uranium mine in Namibia. The four - day tour concluded in Windhoek, with a visit to Windhoek Breweries.⁴⁰

³⁸ Gwen Lister, 'Masire First head of state to visit independent Namibia', *The Namibian*, (23 July 1990), 1.

³⁹ Lister, 'Masire', 1.

⁴⁰ Lister, 'Masire', 1.

Though both Nujoma and Masire were accompanied by more than thirty-two – high ranking government officials from their governments,⁴¹ the photograph shows only the two presidents. It is thus apparent that the perceptions of Ruacana as an epicentre of the Namibian economic development were carried over and also embraced in an independent Namibia. Although South West Africa People's Organisation was at the forefront of opposition campaigns against the construction of the Ruacana hydropower scheme, upon independence of Namibia, in 1990, the project was hailed to be the most crucial infrastructural development in Namibia. Visitors were to view the achievement of the South African government, the engineers and all the stakeholders that were involved in the making of Ruacana hydropower scheme. It is on these grounds that I argue that Ruacana as a place is adorned with notions of heritage of modernity. The Ruacana hydropower plant was presented by the South African colonial government as a triumph and as a major engine for the economic take-off in Namibia. The images represent a construction of projects, a symbolic promise of vast economic progress and modernization, in the form of water supply and power generation. They are a representation of a heritage of modernity bestowed on Namibia by the South African colonial government.

3.6 Visualisation of Ruacana hydropower scheme in context

The photographs in this section represent the components of the Ruacana hydropower scheme, at different life phases. But all photographs bring to the fore issues of representations, especially when they are analysed together. The sets of photographs represent Ruacana as a site of development. The photographs also shows both the intangible and tangible transformation of the place. In figure ten, trees on the background shows that the area is located in a mopane woodland that had to be cleared to make space for the sitting of

⁴¹ Lister, 'Masire', 1.

the canal. Similarly the structure of the dam wall on Figure eleven, as well as the land forms on the background shows that land had to be cleared and dug up for the construction of the dam. Finally the canal and the dam were new landmarks added to the area and thus changing the landscape of Ruacana.

Equally, the photographs represent Ruacana as a symbol of development and thus one of the significant places in Namibia. The significance of Ruacana is mainly visible from the visits of two heads of state that visited the Ruacana power plants at different times, one in visit in 1980 and the other in 1990. Sam Nujoma was a leader of the South West Africa Peoples' Organisation, a political movement that heavily opposed the construction of the Ruacana hydropower scheme in the 1970s. His visit, at Ruacana, within three months of his inauguration as first president of a democratic Namibia, highly signifies Ruacana as an invaluable resource in the development of Namibia. The visits of the presidents in 1990, acknowledges the importance of the Ruacana hydropower scheme in the economic development of Namibia. It is through such visits that Ruacana's 'artefactual meanings',⁴² as asserted by the South African colonial government was sustained even in independent Namibia. It is further the excellent expertise that was on display to the presidents as visitors that strengthens this narrative. The visual representation of Ruacana in this manner, thus symbolically displays and embraces Ruacana as a 'working and living monument' of modernity and 'advancement' bestowed to Namibia by the South African colonial government.⁴³ On the same note, the technical ingenuity is praised at the plant

On the other hand, 'people and place are intimately integrated and locked into relations of power and thus allowing place to a dual character, as repository of elite or state power and as

⁴² Noeleen Murray, 'Building UWC: A Campus Apart', 2.

⁴³ Murray, 'Building', 3.

a site of individual and collective struggle or resistance'.⁴⁴ The four photographs appear to be photographs of resistance in different ways. While the dam image was used as a resistance tool against the South African colonial government by the International Defence Aid Fund, the very same organisation strived for the wellbeing of the South West Africa People's Organisation before 1990, where Sam Nujoma was president. Thus the depiction of Sam Nujoma at the Ruacana hydropower plant as an admirer and supporter of the scheme could be viewed as reverse resistance against Sam Nujoma. The depiction of the poor working conditions of the Ovambo artisan resists claims by the South African government that they care for the local communities. The image also resists the lack of agency in the development of their areas that local communities appear not to have.

3.7 Ruacana as army base: Normalising War

As the war in northern Namibia and southern Angola intensified, Ruacana hydropower scheme became a target. Chapter two confirms that the establishment of the army base at Ruacana saw yet another transformation of the place, this time into a military ground in the South African government's war with the People's Liberation Army of Namibia and People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola. The size and functions of the army base meant that the presence of armoured soldiers and weaponry was a daily sight in Ruacana.

All photographs that are discussed in this section were taken by John Liebenberg. They are part of a photographic archive, comprising of about 12 000 black and white negatives, all taken in Namibia.⁴⁵ However as I stated at the beginning, the National Archives of Namibia filed digitized photographs according to places where they are believed to be taken. Thus photographs, taken by Liebenberg at Ruacana, were included in the Ruacana Visual Archive.

⁴⁴ Leoh and King, 'Notion of Place', 53.

⁴⁵ See Hayes and Liebenberg, *Bush of Ghosts: Life and War in Namibia 1986 – 1990* (Cape Town: Umuzi): 2010, 12. In this book, Hayes Liebenberg discusses and contextualises several of the photographs from Liebenberg's archive.

However, not all photographs included in this archive were taken at Ruacana. I speculate that the inclusion of such photographs in the Ruacana Visual Archive was based on the content of the photographs. It could be that soldiers or armoured vehicles shown in the images were originally from the Ruacana army base. Still these photographs transmit the same messages of soft war images of Ruacana, similar to those that are discussed in this section.

John Liebenberg was born in Mayfair, South Africa,⁴⁶ and first went to northern Namibia in 1976 as a conscript of the South African Defence Force.⁴⁷ Though they were not allowed to have cameras, he had his camera which he kept in the toilet.⁴⁸ He then returned to northern Namibia as a news professional photographer in the mid-1980s. As an anti-military photojournalist, Liebenberg took the photographs in ‘semi - clandestine conditions’, in the ‘guise of circulation manager for *The Namibian* newspaper’.⁴⁹ Liebenberg also used ‘structures of support and other strategies to momentarily get close to the South African soldier’, capturing photographs for the radical newspaper that was reporting on the ‘war and abuses against civilians’.⁵⁰ Thus Liebenberg’s photographic archive displays brutality, atrocity, abuses of human rights, and trauma that many northern Namibians suffered at the hands of the South African Defence Force.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Hayes and Liebenberg, *Bush of Ghosts*, 13.

⁴⁷ Hayes and Liebenberg, *Bush of Ghosts*, 9.

⁴⁸ Hayes and Liebenberg, *Bush of Ghosts*, 9.

⁴⁹ Hayes and Liebenberg, *Bush of Ghosts*, 11.

⁵⁰ Hayes and Liebenberg, *Bush of Ghosts*, 12.

⁵¹ Hayes and Liebenberg, *Bush of Ghosts*, 16.



Figure 14. This photograph was captioned by the photographer as: 'A spent flare becomes a toy, Ruacana, 1987', John Liebenberg, (National Archives of Namibia, 12221)

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The photograph labelled as figure fourteen shows a toddler carrying a 'spent flare' which according to the caption was used as his toy. The heavy presence of the South African Defence Force not only depicts Ruacana as a battle zone of the War of Liberation Struggle, but also an invasion of civilian space by the South African Defence Force. The capturing of women and children in close proximity with heavily armed South African Defence Force fills the audience with worries of dangers these vulnerable categories might be exposed to.



Figure 15. The photograph showing family fun fair on the banks of the Kunene river. Captioned as 'Picnic on the Kunene River, Koevoet families at Ruacana near the border with Angola, 15 November 1987', John Liebenberg, (National Archives of Namibia, 13088). (National Archives of Namibia, 13088)

The photograph in Figure fifteen shows men, women and children on the banks of the Kunene River. Some are resting under umbrella shades, while others appears to be standing, occupied with tasks. There is also an army vehicle in the vicinity. The background of the image is occupied by still water, supposedly of the Kunene River, bushes as well as a mountain range. A horizon is only visible on the left hand corner of the image. These were permanent force members of the South African Defence Force with a vehicle owned by the counter-insurgency unit Koevoet – officers whose families were catered for in the military infrastructure in northern Namibia.⁵² The exposure of the scale of armament at Ruacana does not only show the importance of Ruacana to the South African government but also indicates just how Ruacana never wore off its identity of tourist destination even when the war was at its height. This assertion could be best explained with figure fifteen shows how the 'dangerous border space is normalised through the use of army vehicles for a family

⁵² Hayes and Liebenberg, *Bush of Ghosts*, 15.

picnic'.⁵³ According to Hayes and Liebenberg this photograph demonstrates how the South African military 'tried to domesticate the bush space, even turn it into a leisure site for the South Africa family picnic'.⁵⁴

What do these two images say about Ruacana? The two photographs present Ruacana as a unique and a safe place. 'Picnic' and 'toy' are uncommon terms to be mentioned in a war zone, which Ruacana was at a time. Both terms are soothing and relaxing and encourages certain views of Ruacana, as holiday destination and a unique place. At Ruacana both visitors and residents learned how to incorporate war in their daily routines. The boy carries a spent flare, without facial expressions of fear or curiosity. Soldiers, even on call were able to spend time with their families. Thus, the presence of soft war images, coupled with the absence of photographs depicting atrocities or violence, the photographs create images of the romanticised Ruacana.

To conclude, I have examined concepts of place making by focusing on the processes of producing meanings through photographs taken by travellers to Ruacana. I have shown how travellers to Ruacana expressed their experiences of the place through photography. The photographs discussed in this chapter not only illustrate the transformation of Ruacana but are themselves processes of knowledge production that created a history for Ruacana.

Though at the time Ruacana appeared to have no past, with these photographs, we are able to look back and study a history of Ruacana as moulded by and created by these images.

Though not visible or raised at the time the images were taken, today the National Archives of Namibia presents Ruacana as a symbolic site fixed with memories and coded with values, and of historical importance. Thus the landscape became a form of codification of history itself, seen from the viewpoints of personal expression and experiences. Ruacana, even

⁵³ Hayes and Liebenberg, *Bush of Ghosts*, 15.

⁵⁴ Hayes and Liebenberg, *Bush of Ghosts*, 15.

during the war, retained its mark, as a tourist destination. It is very interesting how Ruacana's presentation excludes the residential precinct. Instead Ruacana appears as a landscape, comprising the waterfalls, hydropower station, canal, and pipeline that will be features of historical importance in the future. Photographers that visited Ruacana chose to frame Ruacana in certain views that meant something to them. Thus, the photographs show not only how the visitors viewed Ruacana, but how Ruacana was viewed at a time especially as expressed in both government and individual publications. Such representations are crucial as they frame Ruacana, as a site of heritage modernity, and the different modes of productions that such a form of heritage was moulded. It is this framing of Ruacana through which a sense of place as constructed by photographers can be comprehended.



CONCLUSION

It is apparent from this study that Ruacana as place was both constructed physically and socially. Though Ruacana has always been in existence before the administration of Namibia by South Africa, it has been argued in this study that the South African colonial government and other actors such as explorers and the National Archives of Namibia, were able to remake Ruacana in their own image, as seen from different processes of knowledge as represented in varied genres of publications, where Ruacana is represented as both a tourist destination and symbol of modernity. The study identified key moments and sites in the history of Ruacana through which the transformation of Ruacana into place was strongly expressed: the boundary negotiations, the waterfall, construction of the Ruacana hydropower scheme with its residential precinct, army base, roads, canals, dams, power plant, power lines, and pipelines physically changed Ruacana's landscape. Some events, meant a tremendous physical transformation of Ruacana, there were meanings attached to the events, which I argued, signal a heritage of modernity.

In these publications, Ruacana was represented as a site of sophisticated water technologies, and technical ingenuity, a site that enabled industrial take-off and a genesis of economic development in Namibia. Ruacana was also presented as a unique place, which especially lacked violence. The spatialized urban planning of apartheid was characterised by violence of forced removals elsewhere in the country, but at Ruacana, racialized residential precinct a time were constructed at a time when spatialized apartheid was in practise, and thus the two landscapes were carefully planned that each racial group had their own area from the planning stage.

The study analysed how Ruacana became a constructed image, in both government and private publications such as the *South African Panorama*, *South West African Survey 1974* and *Passport to Truth*. Although all publications focus on Ruacana, the latter differs in its representation of Ruacana. The publications not only express how the South African government treasured Ruacana but also reveal how Ruacana became a propaganda tool used to create a sanitized image and glorification of the South African colonial government in its battle against the United Nations. It has also been argued that Ruacana was perceived as invaluable by private individuals who appropriated the space to forward their agendas. George von Konrat used the site to contest the state's glorification through his book, *Passport to Truth*. Von Konrat presents himself and Ovambo artisans as the main makers of the Ruacana hydropower scheme, while putting up with police brutality, unfolding in the form of assaults, unfair imprisonment, or even death. An ex-member of the Nazi Party, von Konrat presented Ruacana as a symbolic place, where he cleansed off his barbaric Nazi associations to become a modern being with a heart conducting humanitarian deeds. On the same note explorers such as those of the Denver and Carp expeditions, that made the Ruacana waterfalls one of their destinations, made it a point in their journals that they were the first from their countries to see the waterfalls.

Finally the study explored the visual representations of Ruacana in the Namibian National Archives. It has been suggested that the photographs should be viewed beyond their function as evidence to see how the National Archives of Namibia's organising schemas transformed Ruacana into place, through the archiving processes of selection, chronological arrangement, captioning of the images, and accessibility to a wider audience of researchers. The overall impression of Ruacana as constructed by the National Archives of Namibia presents Ruacana as a tourist destination, a site of modern generation of power, and modern weaponry.

Equally important is the contexts under which the photographs were produced. Photographers that visited Ruacana selected certain scenes to capture as representative of Ruacana. Thus, the photographs show how the visitors viewed Ruacana, through which a sense of place as constructed by photographers can be understood. When the photographs coupled with the travellers' journals, they show that Ruacana became a site where they broke away from duties, and undertook leisured activities. The photographs are also presented as a way of writing a history of Ruacana, with photographers writing themselves in this story.

However there are no images of residential precincts in the National Archives of Namibia or in any other publications discussed in this study. It can only be speculated that the racialized landscape of Ruacana does not fit in the grand narrative of modernity that has been created for Ruacana. While other landscapes such as the waterfalls, hydropower station, canals were glorified as South Africa's physical evidence to their quest of modernizing Namibia, the racialized residential precincts works against such notions, and were evidence of what, according to opponents, the South African colonial government strived for.

Throughout this study, I have attempted to answer the question whether the category heritage of is useful to study the representation of Ruacana? All the representation of Ruacana both by the South African colonial government and other actors shows that the key events and physical transformations that occurred at Ruacana were presented as enormously significant in the development of Namibia. The construction of the Ruacana hydropower scheme was even said to have been the only solution through which Namibia could become a modern state. This was acclaimed to both the cost of the project, the technical ingenuity and expertise required to construct as well the project's impact on Namibia's economy. Moreover, the worthiness of the project to the South African colonial government was expressed when the government appropriated the Ruacana hydropower scheme to defend and legitimate its occupation over Namibia. The project also became a shield for the South African colonial

government against international criticism that directed against its colonial administration policy over Namibia.

Hence I have argued that the South African colonial government appropriated the Ruacana hydropower scheme to build a legacy of development, and not of colonialism in Namibia, as it was asserted at the time by anti-government publications. The South African colonial government used publications such as the *South African Panorama*, the *South West African Survey 1974*, to construct and announce the legacy that they intended to make in Namibia, a hydropower plant, canals, roads, and dams. This is what I asserted in this study as a heritage of modernity. Ruacana as a place became symbolic to the South African government as it was a place that exhibited the South African government as a force for progress. Ruacana becomes a place where the atrocities committed under the South African colonial administration are forgotten as the government becomes an institution that provided water to hundreds of thousands of people that suffered for many years, and electricity. At Ruacana the South African colonial government could display themselves as humanitarian. It is such symbolic attachments that turned Ruacana into a place that held the legacies of modernity.

But it is a complicated question as to whether this can be constituted as heritage. Despite all the representation of Ruacana, there is nowhere, where it is referred to as 'heritage', but rather claiming to the future, modernisation as legacy. Also the current theorisation of heritage although arguing for complexity in heritage production, I could find no theoretical framework that is compatible to study. The current theorisation of heritage production asserts that heritage by its very nature looks to the past, where selections of past events or objects considered to important is preserved for posterity. Most of representations of Ruacana are future oriented, it looks to the future constantly, and it hardly looks to the past. While representations made no reference to the past, the focus is constantly on the future where the infrastructural development was to be admired and greatly appreciated.

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