

Appropriating commemoration: The University of Pretoria – 1960, 1980 and 2008

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Samevatting

Die herdenking van 'n universiteit se geskiedenis is 'n belangrike wyse om gewig en egtheid aan die inrigting se posisie te verleen. In die algemeen is die mees erkende inrigtings van hoër onderwys ook die oudstes, en die viering van 'n universiteit se verlede is een manier om sy status as 'n gerespekteerde inrigting te verhoog. Hierdie artikel oorweeg die herdenking van universiteitsgeskiedenis deur die Universiteit van Pretoria (UP) as 'n gevallestudie te bestudeer. In 1960 het UP 'n gedenkboek gepubliseer om die vyftigjaarherdenking van sy onafhanklikheid as die Transvaalse Universiteitskollege (TUK) in 1910 te vier. Twintig jaar later, in 1980, het die Universiteit weer 'n jubileum gevier, met die herdenking van die TUK se universiteitswording van 1930. Die Universiteit se eeufees in 2008 het egter 1908 as die geboortejaar van die inrigting gereflekteer. In elk van hierdie gevalle is die verkose mylpaal betekenisvol as 'n aanduiding van die prioriteite en belange van die Universiteit se heersende bestuur.

Keywords: University history; Commemorations; University of Pretoria; Transvaal University College.

Introduction

The commemoration of a university's history is an important means of lending weight and legitimacy to an institution's standing. In general, the most recognised institutions of higher education worldwide are the most ancient ones, and the celebration of a university's past is one way of adding to its status as a respected institution. This article will consider the commemoration of university history by looking at the University of Pretoria (UP) as a case study. In 1960, the UP published a commemorative history to coincide with 50 years since its autonomy as the Transvaal University College (TUC) in 1910. Twenty years later, in 1980, the University again had a jubilee festival, commemorating the TUC's 1930 elevation to university

status. The University's centenary in 2008, however, looked back on 1908 as the birth of the institution. In each case the chosen landmark was significant as an indication of the priorities and interests of the University's prevailing administration.

Commemoration

Commemoration, a form of public memory and history, is in many respects a contested practice. Apparently benign commemorative activities can be linked to "...identities and memories [which] are highly selective ... serving particular interests and ideological positions."¹ Furthermore, public memory can be conceived "as a kind of "symbolic power" that can be marshalled in much the same way as material power."² The matter can be drawn even further to say that "[c]ommemorative activity is by definition social and political, for it involves the coordination of individual and group memories, whose results may appear consensual when they are in fact the product of processes of intense contest, struggle, and in some instances, annihilation."³

Commemorations relate largely to a collective's present perspective and valuation of the past. In this way they correspond with the production of history which, as Hans Stoltén confirms, "is an important part of a nation state's collective memory" and is "often an answer to demands of the present."⁴ This is in line with Johan Huizinga's provisional definition of history, that is, "the form in which a culture becomes conscious of its past."⁵ Thus, commemorations, like history writing, allow us "to discern a culture's fears, expectations, desires, and repressed elements by taking into account how it gave form to its past."⁶ These collective activities of remembering highlight how a particular group understands and interprets the past, thus illuminating the present concerns and ideologies of that group.

1 JR Gillis, "Memory and identity: The history of a relationship", JR Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations. The politics of national identity* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 4.

2 G Baines, "The politics of public history in post-apartheid South Africa", HE Stoltén (ed.), *History making and present day politics. The meaning of collective memory in South Africa* (Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2007), p. 168.

3 JR Gillis, "Memory and identity..." *Commemorations. The politics of national identity*, p. 5.

4 HE Stoltén, "History in the new South Africa: An introduction", HE Stoltén (ed.), *History making and present day politics...*, p. 7.

5 Quoted in FR Ankersmit, *Historical representation* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 1.

6 FR Ankersmit, *Historical representation*, p. 1.

Due to its collective and apparently popular nature, commemorations are related to prevailing public memory, a collective memory which represents the way in which a society perceives its past, present and future.

This [p]ublic memory reflects the structure of power in society because that power is always contested in a world of ideological differences and because cultural understanding is always grounded in the material structure of society itself. ... The major focus of this communicative and cognitive process is not the past, however, but serious matters in the present such as the nature of power and the question of loyalty to both dominant and subordinate cultures. Accordingly, historical memories are constantly refashioned to suit present purposes.⁷

These purposes include the justification of the present, validation of social order and the legitimization of the status quo.⁸ They share much in common with E Hobsbawm and T Ranger's "invented traditions" in that commemorations also "attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past"⁹ and "use history as a legitimator of action and cement of group cohesion."¹⁰

Whose history becomes public history is a political and social question. It reflects not only political and historical ideas, but also ideas about the public.¹¹ As Gillis states, "[t]he core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely, a sense of sameness over time and space, is sustained by remembering; and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity."¹² Versions of the past nurtured by commemorations "are discursively constructed and promoted in the public sphere, which usually serve to unify citizens and create hegemonic narratives of a national identity..."¹³ Thus, the celebration of aspects of the past is an important part of creating identity and unity and "...public historical imagery supplies the myths and symbols that hold diverse groups in political society together." A "shared history—elements of a past remembered in common as well as elements forgotten in common" are vital for the formation of what Benedict Anderson called an "imagined community".¹⁴

7 G Baines, "The politics of public history...", HE Stolten (ed.), *History making and present day politics...*, pp. 168-169.

8 G Baines, "The politics of public history...", HE Stolten (ed.), *History making and present day politics...*, p. 169.

9 E Hobsbawm & T Ranger (eds.), *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge, University of Cambridge Press, 1992), p. 1.

10 E Hobsbawm & T Ranger (eds.), *The invention of tradition*, p. 12.

11 D Glassberg, "Public history and the study of memory", *The Public Historian*, 18(2), Spring 1996, p. 11.

12 JR Gillis, "Memory and identity...", *Commemorations. The politics of national identity*, p. 3.

13 R Wodak & JE Richardson, "On the politics of remembering (or not)", *Critical discourse studies*, 6(4), November 2009, p. 231.

14 D Glassberg, "Public history ...", *The Public Historian*, 18(2), Spring 1996, p. 11.

The above discussion provides an interesting framework for interrogating the manner in which an institution, such as the University of Pretoria, has commemorated its history, over a century of great political change in South Africa. For the purposes of this article, attention will only be given to the commemorations which have celebrated the origins of the institution.¹⁵

Jubilee

The first official commemoration of a major milestone was in 1960, fifty years after the promulgation of Act No. 1 of 1910 on 17 May 1910 by which the TUC in Pretoria became “a body corporate with perpetual succession.”¹⁶ The institution had, however, for all intents and purposes, been operational in Pretoria since February 1908, when Arts and Sciences classes were begun there as a branch of the then Johannesburg based TUC. The scheme of opening other branches of the College had been controversial at the time of its inception, as critics felt that it would invariably cause the decentralization and division of higher education in the Transvaal Colony. And so, it was perhaps not surprising, that after only two years, the Pretoria and Johannesburg branches split to become two separate institutions for higher education.¹⁷

Practically, the Act of 1910 made very little immediate difference to the activities of the TUC. *Ad Destinatum* describes how it “made absolutely no difference to the daily work in Proes Street. The Pretoria Standing Committee held its final meeting on 12 May 1910. When the members gathered together again on 14 June, the whole “Pretoria side” was still there with three additional members.”¹⁸ In the new minute book it was resolved that “the college be carried on with the statutory name of the Transvaal University College instead of “Transvaal University College Pretoria Committee”, and that all the necessary alterations be made.” Legally, however, the TUC in Pretoria had become a separate autonomous entity, which, to a limited degree, could begin to pursue its own course. This was the fact that would be emphasized in the later celebration of this “genesis” moment in the College’s history.

15 A noteworthy commemoration which does not fall into this scope, is the 1982 jubilee commemoration of the “Afrikaanswording” of UP.

16 *Transvaal University College Incorporation*, Act No. 1 of 1910.

17 CH Rautenbach (ed.), *Ad Destinatum. Gedenkboek van die Universiteit van Pretoria* (Johannesburg, Voortrekkerpers, 1960), pp. 22-23.

18 University of Pretoria Archives (UPA), B-4-1-2, Minutes of the Council of the Transvaal University College, 14 June 1910.

The 1960 jubilee commemoration was actually quite low key. In fact no mention is made of the commemoration in the Public Relations Officer's report for 1960.¹⁹ The reason given for this was so as not to detract from the jubilee commemorations of the Union of South Africa.²⁰ An arts festival was held in the University's auditorium, the Aula, the *Bond van Oudstudente*²¹ produced coin calendars and other memorabilia, including commemorative crockery. Apart from giving the dates for all the Sundays in 1960, four dates were printed on the coin calendars: 17 Nov 1943, the date of the establishment of the *Bond van Oudstudente*; 17 May 1910, establishment date of the TUC; 10 October 1930, the date of UP's independence and 13 September 1932, date of the adoption of Afrikaans as medium of instruction. There was also a special edition of the student newspaper, *Perdeby*. The crowning tangible commemoration of the jubilee and the high point of the celebrations was the "monumental publication"²² of a history of UP, *Ad Destinatum, Gedenkboek van die Universiteit van Pretoria*. On 13 May 1960, four days before the institution's official birthday, the publication was officially handed over to the Rector, prof CH Rautenbach, and other dignitaries, with 3 000 people in attendance, accompanied by a lunch hour concert given by the combined SA Air Force and Navy Orchestra on the main lawn of the University²³. The student magazine *Trek* celebrated the event with a special photo section entitled "Vyftigjaar Trek", featuring images of the campus and poetic text, while the editor developed the "Trek" metaphor, praising the sweat of the "trekkers" who had gone before (see Images 1 and 2):²⁴

19 UPA, B-4-1-2, Verslag van die Skakelbeampte vir die Raadsvergadering op 13 April 1961.

20 CH Rautenbach, "Oor die gedenkboek...", *Skakelblad*, 6(1), Jun/Jul 1960, p. 1.

21 Past Students Association.

22 "Ad Destinatum. Gedenkboek van die Universiteit van Pretoria", *Skakelblad*, 6(1), Jun/Jul 1960, p. 15.

23 "Ad Destinatum...", *Skakelblad*, 6(1), Jun/Jul 1960, pp. 15-17.

24 *Trek*, 48(56), 1960.

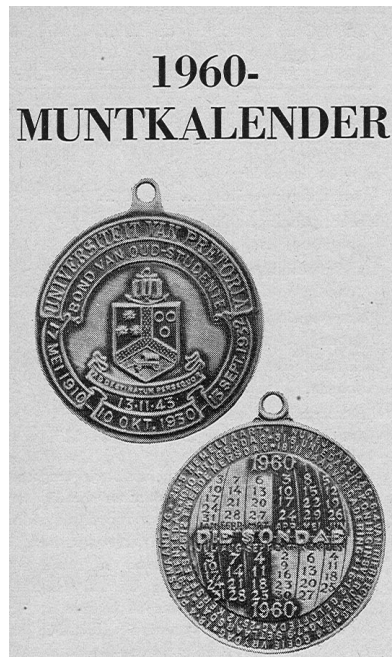


Image 1: Commemorative coin calendar



Image 2: Prof CH Rautenbach at the official handing over of *Ad Destinatum*

The backdrop of the commemoration and view of the University's progress thus far was full of sentiment inspired by the celebration of the jubilee of Union. In his foreword to *Ad Destinatum*, the chancellor, Advocate Charles te Water points to this parallel history when he comments that "[d]ue to the fact that the development of the University of Pretoria is so intimately determined by national events since Union, the growth of the University of Pretoria is to a certain extent also a reflection of the historical growth of our country."²⁵ Prof Rautenbach, also encouraged the university community to share their joy in the University's proud past through their participation in the Union commemorations when he stated in *Skakelblad*, "Ons het besluit om sover moontlik eie blydschap, dankbaarheid en feesviering te laat opgaan in die Uniefeeste en om nie 'n aparte feesreeks van stapel te stuur nie wat die aandag mag aftrek van die groter geheel – ons Vaderland, die Unie van Suid-Afrika."²⁶ (We have decided to let our own joy, gratefulness and celebration join the Union celebrations as far as possible and not to launch a separate commemorative series which might draw attention from the greater whole – our Fatherland, the Union of South Africa.) A special Union opera festival was organized in June 1960 in the Aula.²⁷

The commemoration of Union and the commemoration of the University's first moment of independence, both celebrated the acquisition of a degree of autonomy. The Union of South Africa represented a step towards eliminating imperialism and strengthening white supremacy in the region by consolidating white power.²⁸ In 1960, the year of the referendum for the establishment of the Republic of South Africa, Union represented a symbolic step in this direction.

The University also looked back on the 1910 event as the first in its path to autonomy and an eventual kind of self-determination in which it would nurture its own particular characteristics. The foreword of *Ad Destinatum* furthermore looks to 1930 as the moment of true independence. The 1910 Act meant that the TUC in Pretoria would have an independent existence but it would still not be completely autonomous. A greater amount of autonomy was acquired when the TUC along with other university colleges became part of the federal University of South Africa in 1918. But total autonomy was only achieved in 1930 when the College obtained "university status" and

25 CH Rautenbach (ed.), *Ad Destinatum*..., p. v.

26 CH Rautenbach, "Oor die gedenkboek...", *Skakelblad*, 6(1), Jun/Jul 1960, p. 1.

27 UPA, B-4-1-2, Notule Reëlingskomitee vir die Aula, 29 Oktober 1959.

28 EM Ashton, "The historiography of the formation of the Union of South Africa", (MA, UP, 2008), p. 95.

became the University of Pretoria.²⁹

The second jubilee

It was this event of 1930, in which the Transvaal University College was transformed, through obtaining university status, into the University of Pretoria, which was commemorated in the second jubilee held by the University in 1980. On 24 March 1930, the *Private Act on the University of Pretoria* (Act No. 13 of 1930) was passed. In a step described as “fitting”³⁰ by *Ad Destinatum*, the chosen date on which this Act would come into effect was 10 October 1930, the anniversary of the birth of the former president of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR) Paul Kruger, also known then as Kruger Day, a public holiday. By obtaining university status, through the provisions of this Act, the institution was now entitled to administer examinations and confer degrees. It was now completely independent of the University of South Africa and more at liberty to pursue its own course.

The 1980 commemoration had a much greater scope than the 1960 jubilee. To a large degree this can be attributed to the activities of the Department of Public Relations, under the leadership of former student C.H. (Bags) Cilliers. Cilliers’s involvement with UP spanned almost the entire fifty years in question. He was a student at UP, obtaining a BSc in 1937, during which time he was not only rugby captain, but was also responsible for writing the University song, *UP Lied*.³¹ In 1952 he became the first public relations officer at the University, a position he held until his retirement in 1980. Cilliers was an exceptionally energetic member of the University community, playing an active role in not only his official position, but also in the *Bond van Oudstudente* and in various aspects of student life.³²

Another key figure in the commemorations was the Rector at the time, prof EM Hamman. His involvement and career at the University also spanned the period of the jubilee. In fact, he had been a first-year student in 1930 and was also set to retire, after ten years in office as rector in 1981. In a sense, the jubilee of the University was also his jubilee. It was therefore fitting that the

29 CH Rautenbach (ed.), *Ad Destinatum...*, p. v.

30 CH Rautenbach (ed.), *Ad Destinatum...*, p. 45.

31 “Oom Bags groet”, *Die Perdeby*, 10 Oktober 1980, p. 4; “TuksAlumni verloor ‘n getroue vriend”, *Die Tukkie*, 9(1), Junie 2001, p. 26.

32 UPA, D-6-6-1, Skakelafdeling, Direkteurs: CH Cilliers, 1952-1980.

Student Representative Council paid tribute to him as part of the jubilee by awarding him with a medal of honour and by unveiling a bust of him in the foyer of a new University building.³³

The main events of the 1980 commemoration (captured in Image 3) were held over the few days leading up to the University's official birthday on 10 October. The culmination of the celebrations was on 9 and 10 October. It included various exhibitions on the campus and the academic departments were open for visitors. On 9 October there was an opening ceremony in the Musaion, followed by a flag raising ceremony by the UP Military Unit outside the historic Old Arts Building, the arrival of the torch from the Voortrekker Monument and a SA Airforce fly-by. On 10 October a tree planting ceremony was held at the experimental farm, followed by a march past by the mounted South African Police and a special graduation on the main campus in which seven honorary doctorates were conferred on candidates with strong ties to UP. The day ended with the unveiling of a commemorative plaque at the Old Arts Building and a retreat ceremony attended to by the State President's Guard. A special memorial service was held in the Aula on the following Sunday, 12 October.³⁴

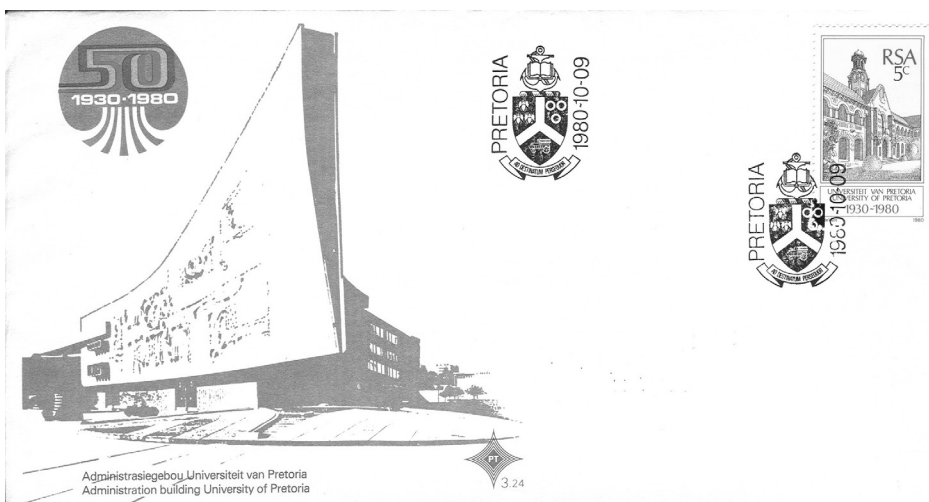


Image 3: First day cover of the commemorative jubilee postage stamp

33 FJ du Toit Spies & DH Heydenrych (eds.), *Ad Destinatum II. 1960-1982. 'n Geskiedenis van die Universiteit van Pretoria* (Pretoria, Universiteit van Pretoria, 1987), p. 15.

34 UPA, A-6, Program Halfeeu fees.

The 1980 commemoration was initiated and spurred on to a large degree by the *Bond van Oudstudente* who fell under the Public Relations Bureau.³⁵ The *Bond* used the opportunity to hold an intensified recruitment campaign, and also promoted activities which emphasized the “verweefdheid van die Universiteit se alumni met hul Alma Mater” (the interwovenness of the University’s alumni with their Alma Mater).³⁶

The commemorative activities were also testimony of the University’s close relationship with the government of the day. The commemorative issue of the annual student magazine *Trek* opened with a message from State President Marais Viljoen. He praised the University for producing people who strove for the maintenance of Afrikaans culture, and for delivering high level manpower in the domains of research, trade, industry and the State.³⁷ Chancellor, Hilgard Muller’s message in the same magazine also highlights UP’s close ties with the State when he comments that a third of South Africa’s government ministers are alumni of the University. He states that “[o]ne must simply accept that the alumni of the largest residential University in South Africa will, in an increasing measure, play a role in the country’s government.”³⁸ (‘n Mens moet eenvoudig aanvaar dat die alumni van die grootste residensiële Universiteit in Suid-Afrika in toenemende mate ‘n rol in ons land se regering sal speel.)

Viljoen and Muller’s emphasis on this close relationship is in the context of the increasing atmosphere of uncertainty and international pressure with regard to the South African government’s apartheid policy at the time. The State President spoke of the great responsibility which rested on UP students to study and solve the complex problems of the country and especially its multicultural society.³⁹ Muller used stronger terms, speaking in a number of places of the “threat to white South Africa”. For him, the student leaders of the day were to be the “volksleiers” (leaders of the nation) of the future. Students needed to “arm themselves” in their student years in order to manage the responsibilities of safeguarding the future ahead.⁴⁰

The jubilee was without a doubt a good marketing opportunity for the University. A commemorative postage stamp was also produced for the occasion and a commemorative issue of the University magazine *Skakelblad*

35 UPA, D-6-2-2, Departement Bemerkingsdienste: Notules, 8 Maart 1979.

36 UPA, D-6-2-2, Departement Bemerkingsdienste: Notules, 23 November 1979.

37 M Viljoen, “Boodskap van die Staatspresident”, *Trek*, 67(75), 1980, p. 6.

38 H Muller, “Boodskap van die Kanselier”, *Trek*, 67(75), 1980, p. 8.

39 M Viljoen, “Boodskap...”, *Trek*, 67(75), 1980, p. 6.

40 H Muller, “Boodskap...”, *Trek*, 67(75), 1980, p. 8.

was also released on 10 October 1980. This bumper edition featured all the faculties, institutes and centres of the University, giving a brief overview of their history, research and achievements.⁴¹

The commemorative *Skakelblad*, as well as special newspaper inserts,⁴² emphasized the development of UP. The period directly preceding this commemoration was one of rapid growth and expansion at the University, both in terms of student numbers and facilities. Growing campuses, the increasing use of technology and the addition of a host of new buildings in the two decades preceding the jubilee, gave the University much of which to boast.

Similar to the 1960 celebration, a second volume of *Ad Destinatum* was planned. Due to the resignation of the research officer involved in the project, the publication could not be completed in time for the 1980 celebrations and it was decided to postpone it to include the 1982 jubilee of the adoption of Afrikaans as the primary medium of instruction at the University.⁴³ *Ad Destinatum II* begins in much the same manner as the first volume, by quoting the Act which brought the institution into being. In this case, with the focus on the jubilee of university status, the quoted act is Act No. 13 of 1930, through which the autonomous University of Pretoria was brought into existence.⁴⁴

The emphasis was again, like 1960, on the notion of autonomy. The University's acquisition of independence was an important step in its move towards becoming an Afrikaans medium institution. Within two years of independence, in September 1932, the Council of the University passed the motion "that the services of the University be instituted primarily to meet the needs of the Afrikaans-speaking section of the community."⁴⁵ From this point, the University would increasingly become an institution in service of the Afrikaner and a champion of Afrikaner culture and national sentiment. Thus, the autonomy gained in 1930 paved the way for the creation of an institution with a strong nationalistic character. The close association with Kruger Day also strengthen this notion, as Kruger can be regarded as representing Afrikaner national and republican aspirations (see Image 4):

41 *Skakelblad*, 27, 1980.

42 *Hoofstad*, 6 Oktober 1980; *Transvaler*, 7 Oktober 1980; *Oggendblad*, 7 Oktober 1980.

43 DM Joubert, "Voorwoord", FJ du Toit Spies & DH Heydenrych (eds.), *Ad Destinatum II...*, p. i.

44 FJ du Toit Spies & DH Heydenrych (eds.), *Ad Destinatum II...*, p. 1.

45 CH Rautenbach (ed.), *Ad Destinatum...*, p. 66.

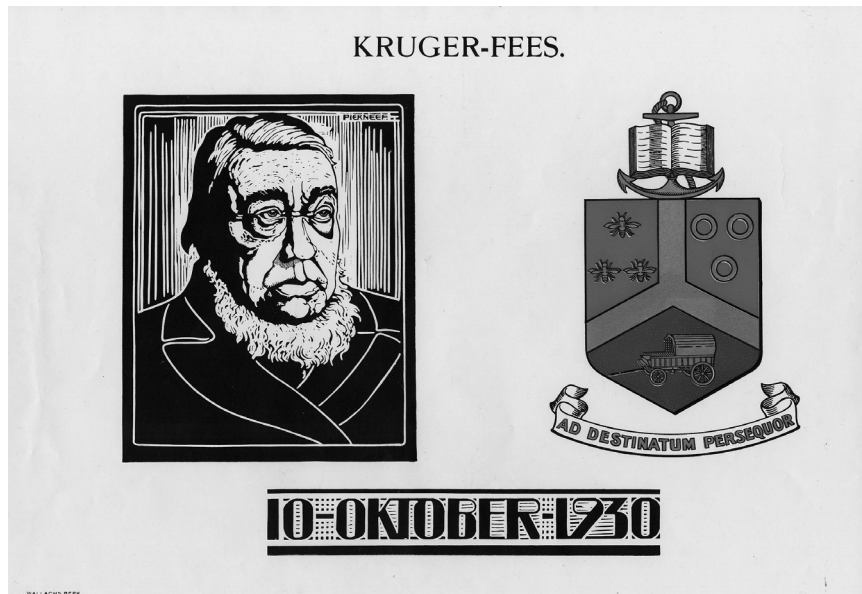


Image 4: 10 October 1980: Kruger Festival and University of Pretoria Jubilee

According to FA van Jaarsveld, the Afrikaner nation relied heavily on its past. In a study of the Afrikaner's historical concept, he pointed out how the Afrikaners' notion of history could be viewed as a by product of national feeling, and was used as a unifying factor.⁴⁶ In the 1980 commemoration, the University community was largely homogenous and had been so for most of the fifty years which were being commemorated. Furthermore, as shown earlier by the examples of Cilliers and Hamman, there was a direct link with the past through the presence of many key members of the University's staff who had been at UP throughout the whole period or for a substantial part of it. For them, 1930 was not a date with abstract meaning, but an event through which they had lived, and the University's progress was a process which they had witnessed firsthand. It is possible to say that at this point there was a general feeling of pride and confidence in the institution, directly related to its past and what it meant. For a variety of reasons, this emphasis on the past would not be as apparent when the University celebrated its centenary in 2008.

⁴⁶ FA van Jaarsveld, *Die Afrikaners se geskiedsbeeld* (Pretoria, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1958), pp. 6, 14 & 23.

Centenary

In 2008, the University of Pretoria held its centenary celebration, reverting back to 1908 as its year of origin. In post-apartheid South Africa, where a strongly culturally aligned institution has little place, the emphasis shifted from the celebration of self-determination and autonomy of the previous commemorations, to searching for the earliest point of origin, lending stature to the institution by its age, while at the same time looking to its future. The centenary commemorated the start of university classes in Pretoria in February 1908, when the Pretoria centre of the TUC opened.

In the twenty-eight years since the jubilee in 1980, the political landscape of the country and university had changed dramatically. The transformation of higher education meant that the demographic composition of the staff and student body was very different. The use of English as a language medium had increased, and the market from which prospective students were drawn had widened to include members of all races. The representative base of the institution had become diverse, reflecting more accurately the multi-cultural face of the country.

According to various scholars, “it is not always possible to reach a consensus on the interpretation of a historical event to which people attach considerable significance”⁴⁷, and for this reason, “public historical representations such as an exhibit, war memorial or commemorative ceremony are often deliberately ambiguous to satisfy competing factions.”⁴⁸ That UP accommodated a cross-section of the entire South African population was evident in its centenary celebration which reflected on a past from which many, who were now members of the University community, had once been excluded. The University’s mission in its Centenary year was to produce a programme that would “bear evidence of excellence, quality and diversity”,⁴⁹ including a wide range of internal and external stakeholders in the celebrations.⁵⁰

A number of the symbols and events which were created to mark the commemoration had no direct reference to the University’s past and could definitely be termed “ambiguous”. Examples are the Centenary Flame

47 G Baines, “The politics of public history...”, HE Stolten (ed.), *History making and present day politics...*, p. 169.

48 D Glassberg, “Public history...”, *The Public Historian*, 18(2), Spring 1996, pp. 13-14.

49 UPA, A-9-100, Centenary Preparations: Centenary Theme, “University of Pretoria Centenary Celebrations 2008 Strategic Plan”, p. 1.

50 UPA, A-9-100, Centenary Preparations: Centenary Theme, “University of Pretoria Centenary Celebrations 2008 Strategic Plan”, p. 2.

(although one could draw a parallel to the torch borne in the Great Trek centenary commemoration of which the UP students were custodians for a period), the Centenary Rose and the Centenary sculpture. The logo chosen for the centenary year also bore little symbolic reference to the University's past. Where University buildings were used on centenary memorabilia, the style in which they appeared was more modern than historical. Historical productions such as the Centenary book⁵¹ were not given a great deal of official support as were the publications of previous UP celebrations. There was a low key book launch and ultimately the book was not translated into English, moving it to the periphery of the central celebration.⁵² Furthermore, the Centenary Flame was placed at the main entrance of the University and not at a site with any particular historical significance. The lack of due given to the University's past was summed up well, when UP's Director of Marketing was heard to remark that the University's Centenary was not about the past.⁵³

The permanent Centenary sculptures erected on a main pedestrian thoroughfare between the Library and the Human Sciences Building on UP's main campus also illustrate the commemoration's ambivalent relationship with the past (see Image 5). The sculptures, created by UP alumnus Angus van Zyl-Taylor, are composed of four separate granite columns with bronze spheres on which appear highlights from UP's history.⁵⁴ Each sculpture represents a different period of the University's past and according to Van Zyl-Taylor, "the spherical forms depict the university's growth as a complex entity with different faculties and disciplines with overlapping roles."⁵⁵ A closer look at the creation of the text reveals that the historical information was a minor part of the sculptures, whose increasing columns and spheres express notions of growth and development while their form makes no specific reference to the University's past.⁵⁶

51 F van der Watt, *Tukkies oorskou sy eerste honderd jaar* (Pretoria, Universiteit van Pretoria, 2008).

52 This is based on the author's personal involvement in the production and marketing of the Centenary book between 2006 and 2008.

53 Interview, KL Harris (Director: University of Pretoria Archives)/B Strydom, 3 November 2010.

54 C Pretorius, "Nie almal hou ewe veel van eeufeeskuns", *KampusBeeld*, 20 Augustus 2008, p. 2; P de Kock, "Eeufees.....wat?", *Perdeby*, 1 September 2008, p. 5; "Celebrating 100 years", *Tukkie*, 15(2), October 2008, p. 34.

55 Quoted in C Pretorius, "Nie almal hou ewe veel...", *KampusBeeld*, 20 Augustus 2008, p. 2.

56 This statement is based on my personal involvement, as a member of staff of the University's Archives, in the research for historical text used in sculptures in 2007 and 2008.



Image 5: Sculptor Angus van Zyl-Taylor next to one of the four columns of the Centenary sculptures

The use of the Centenary Rose during the commemoration year highlights in particular the lack of emphasis on the University's history. The centenary commemorations were in fact launched by the official introduction of the rose named "University of Pretoria Centenary" in October 2007. Whether by design or not, it is significant that the rose chosen for the commemoration soon became the most recognizable and employed symbol of the centenary, appearing on banners, brochures, invitations, postcards, bags, programmes and even as the centerpiece of a community project by the University's visual arts students. A review of the minutes of the Centenary's organizing committee also shows that a substantial amount of attention was given to marketing and promoting the rose during the Centenary year.⁵⁷ This use of the rose is noteworthy as, in itself, the rose has no reference to the institution, other than being selected by a designated committee for the Centenary commemoration (see Image 6):

⁵⁷ UPA, A-9-99, Centenary Office: Minutes.

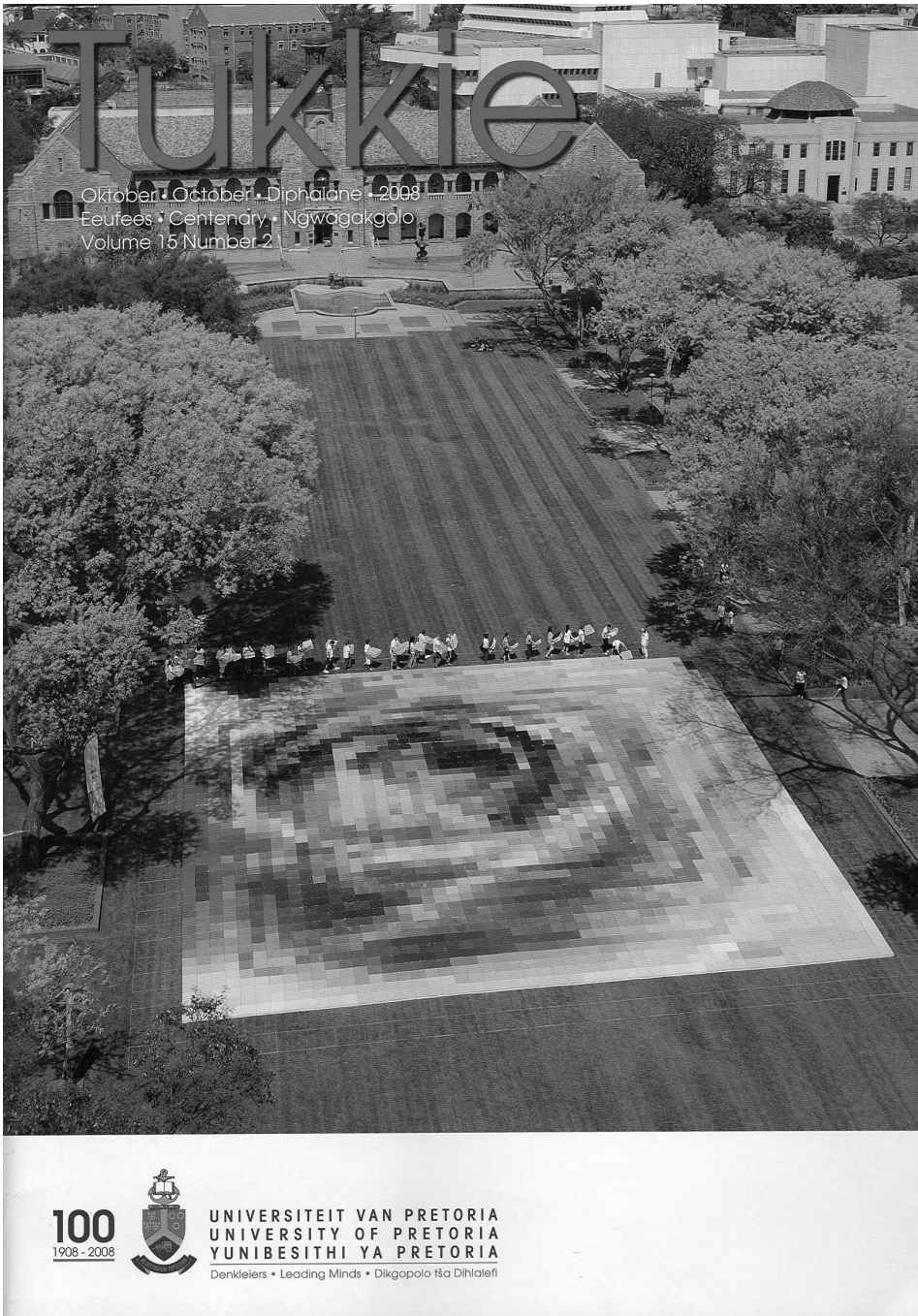


Image 6: Cover of the commemorative issue of alumni magazine *Tukkíe*

The University's intentional or unintentional methods of avoiding the question of the past at the time of the centenary, is in line with other trends in twenty-first century public history. The question has been asked whether mass culture in this century will eventually be a more powerful force than the nation state in the previous century.⁵⁸ The demand of mass or pop culture is "to appeal to the widest possible audience"⁵⁹ including as many as possible diverse backgrounds.

In another sense, while employing neutral symbols with a more universal appeal, the University's centenary commemoration also catered to a varied and diverse audience through the proliferation and multiplicity of events. There was something for everyone, from a Book festival to an Ibero American music festival, from specialized academic seminars and publications, to an Afrikaans collection of short stories and an African Kaross tapestry, to name but a few. In fact, one could say that the outstanding feature of the centenary was the magnitude and range of events. This is in line with the late twentieth-century international phenomenon of multiple identities and multiple memories⁶⁰ probably amplified by the post-apartheid "rainbow nation" situation in South Africa. In addition, the University's further growth, made it a much larger and impersonal institution than what it had been in 1980 where the commemoration was more tied to a limited and more homogenous community with specific personalities of the time. UP found itself, along with the rest of the world, in the global village of the early twenty-first century, where international competitiveness and relevance were vital elements for a tertiary institution.

The centenary was viewed as a marketing opportunity⁶¹ and the emphasis of the marketing related to the centenary was to position the University as a leading research institution worthy of international recognition. A feature of the commemorations was a series of guest lectures presented primarily by international experts over the course of the year. In a sense, the University put its past behind it in the centenary and developed a forward thinking image and rhetoric. Centenary Coordinator prof Schalk Claasen substantiated this idea when he stated that "the whole idea behind the centenary celebrations was to position the University for the next 100 years."⁶² In the words of the

58 D Glassberg, "Public history...", *The Public Historian*, 18(2), Spring 1996, p. 14.

59 D Glassberg, "Public history...", *The Public Historian*, 18(2), Spring 1996, p. 15.

60 JR Gillis, "Memory and identity...", *Commemorations...*, pp. 15-16.

61 UPA, A-9-94, Centenary Preparations: University executive, Rt 268/06.

62 Quoted in "Celebrating 100 years", *Tukkie*, 15(2), October 2008, p. 35.

prof, CWI Pistorius, at the time of the centenary:⁶³

The academic tradition, character and stature of the University have matured over a hundred years. It has withstood the test of time and is now firmly established as one of South Africa's leading research universities. In its centenary year, the University ... reflects not only on its past and its current position, but also on its future. This is the time when we, as the centenary generation, must commit towards vigorously pursuing ... the vision of a truly world-class South African university.

The motto chosen for the occasion, "A century in the service of knowledge" also highlights the emphasis placed on research and academic activity, befitting an academic institution.⁶⁴ The theme intended to sum up the University's contribution during the past century and also provide a focus for its future role.⁶⁵ Unlike the 1980 celebration in which specific cultural and historical themes featured, the centenary focused on the overall achievement of the passage of time. The University was disconnected from its previously strong cultural attachments, and its past was overshadowed by emphasis on the more neutral "pursuit of academic excellence".⁶⁶

Conclusion

Commemorations are significant marketing opportunities for universities, and thus underscore a university's public image and position. Like other South African universities, the University of Pretoria's history forms part of a century of great political and social change in South Africa. The University's commemorations illustrate how it has reflected and adapted to the environment in which it operates. Each commemoration is significant in the way in which it appropriated a certain milestone at a certain time and employed it to project and celebrate a certain aspect of the institution.

In 1960 and 1980, the autonomy of the University was lauded as it was decisive in its development into a strongly Afrikaner institution. In addition, these commemorations were more personal and parochial, at a period

63 C Pistorius, "A century in the service of knowledge and in pursuit of excellence", *Tukkie*, 15(2), October 2008, p. 2.

64 UPA, A-9-100, Centenary Preparations: Centenary Theme, "Universiteit van Pretoria Eeufeesvieringe: Sentrale Tema", Rt 34/06.

65 UPA, A-9-100, Centenary Preparations: Centenary Theme, "Universiteit van Pretoria Eeufeesvieringe: Sentrale Tema", Rt 34/06.

66 C Pistorius, "A century in the service of knowledge...", *Tukkie*, 15(2), October 2008, p. 2.

when South Africa was experiencing growing isolation internationally. The University, firmly loyal to the prevailing government, leaned strongly on its proud past which demonstrated the triumph of Afrikaner endeavour.

By 2008, the values embodied in the earlier jubilee commemorations were no longer suited to post-apartheid South Africa. Neutral commemorative symbols aimed at being more inclusive, while the University emphasized its position in an increasingly international higher education landscape. The Centenary certainly was a key marketing opportunity but, rather than dwelling on the details of its history, UP gave the past a passing nod, as an attestation of maturity and endurance.