

Evoking Memory: A Curatorial Perspective on Botswana's Presidential Heritage

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to start a dialogue on how the heritage of Botswana's heads of state can be preserved after their term in office. It was inspired by the private cataloguing of the second president of Botswana, Festus Mogae's farewell memorabilia in 2010, after his term ended in 2008. The documentation of his collections revealed an existing gap of the curation of presidential heritage and memory in Botswana based on the lack of systematic preservation of the three former presidents' collections. A presidential museum in Botswana can be established as one of the specialised museums recommended by the 1983 Oram and Nteta Report. Museums are places where past memories can be evoked and contested through collections and stories. The questions that this paper asks through the case study of Mogae's collection are: What happens to the collections of Botswana's presidents post-term? How can their heritage be preserved? Are their memories personal or national? Lastly, who is supposed to create and preserve them? In conclusion, we recommend the establishment of a presidential museum that can become a place of national memory.

Introduction

Museums are spaces where a society's past and present is defined and shaped (Dean and Rider 2005). They are places of personal or collective memory where the cultural and historical identity of individuals or society can be created (Crane 2000). Historical figures and their events or actions are the ones mostly remembered. Museums by virtue of keeping objects are, therefore, places of memory and as Rivera-Orraca (2009) posits, they offer opportunities where history and memory can meet. They collect objects for various reasons as articulated by the International Council of Museums' (ICOM) definition of a museum as 'a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment' (ICOM 2007).

There is strong evidence to support the existence of museums and other related heritage institutions as places of memory (Crane 2000). This is despite the critique that it is the fear of loss of heritage that forces people to remember and that museum memory is often distorted (Crane 1997). Museum objects have stories to tell about their past because of their lives pre-museum acquisition. These objects were created, used and owned by people and their stories are collected for posterity. Therefore, memory is imbedded in objects and do not attain or earn their objecthood in museums (Jarrett 2009). The objects are supposed to trigger the memory of museum visitors into remembering their past heritage.

Debates of national museums as agents of nationalism are introduced in this section because of their contested establishment histories (Macdonald 2006; Macdonald 2003 and Coombes 1988). While most museums in Africa were established during the colonial era (Arinze 2003), some national museums were established immediately after the Independence period as the new nation states were eager to construct their national identities after long narratives of colonial legacies (Hall 1996). For example, when Botswana attained Independence in 1966, its national museum was established through the 1967 National Museum and Art Gallery Act (Government of Botswana 1967). The establishment of Ghana National Museum in 1957 also occurred immediately after Independence (Fogelman 2008).

The recommendation for the preservation of presidential heritage through a presidential museum

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can be seen to appropriate a nationalistic discourse because it cannot be assumed that all Batswana identify with the former presidents due to political or ethnic ideologies and differences. Lowenthal (1997) states that heritage can be oppressive; hence Somjee's (2000) call to address the 'others' in contemporary museum exhibitions especially in national museums. On the other hand, the ability for presidential heritage to unite a nation with diverse people like in Botswana can be used positively for collective memory. Perhaps, it could be classified under what Werbner (1998) calls postcolonial memorialism.

The basis of this paper is of a presidential figure whom the citizenry can identify with despite what can be termed constructed differences. It will be one whose heritage would be valuable because as an official figure with national value, presidents become part of the country's heritage. In museological theory, the value of the presidential heritage would then be transferred to all his collections, that is, all the objects he created, used or valued. Every object is transformed and attains value which leads to its significance in museum acquisition. The memory in this context will be public and collective. In other words it is shared in relation to the shared history of the presidents of Botswana by its citizenry. This memory is linked to nationhood (Petrovato 2006).

It can be asked who is responsible for creating presidential memory. The question arises as to how presidential legacies could be best preserved in the form of objects based on the notion that heritage is a public good that must be preserved by the public in instances where individuals fail to do so (Desvalles and Mairesse 2010). In museology, it is unethical to fail to preserve intangible or tangible heritage (Bounia 2014). The government institutions mandated with object-preservation in Botswana are the Department of the National Museum and Monuments and the Department of Arts and Culture. Unfortunately, the National Museum and Monuments or regional museums do not have any systematic plan in place to acquire or create specific memories of former presidents. There are examples of government-owned museums such as the Nelson Mandela Museum in South Africa which was established in 2000 in Umtata to honour the country's first democratically elected president –Nelson Mandela. Perhaps, this was expected based on the liberation icon that Mandela became (Rassool 2000). The Mandela Museum was established to house his lifetime gifts, awards and stories which were to be memorialised collectively and publicly. He also became a symbol of reconciliation after the traumatic divisions of the apartheid era. The decision to honour him through a state-funded museum was a government initiative based on this premise (Rassool 2000). This is in contrast to countries such as Botswana with ill-equipped regional museums apart from the National Museum and Monuments.

The other method of museum establishment is by private institutions/organisations or individuals as is the case in other parts of the world such as in the United States of America. Examples are The George Bush Presidential Library and Museum established in 1997 and The Clinton Presidential Center opened in 2004 (Martin and Pugsley 1999; Clinton Foundation 2004). In such instances, the individual former president becomes part of the creation of his legacy and memory. Anticipated visitorship is high in countries with museum cultures such as the United States which attracts organisational sponsorships. The creation of presidential museums and libraries in that country was founded on President Franklin Roosevelt's (1933-1945) belief that the papers, books, and memorabilia from his administration were part of the heritage of the United States and as such should be preserved and made available to the public (The Franklin Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum 2015). This is how the first presidential library and museum, The Franklin D Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum was established in 1941 (Hufbauer 2001).

The rationale for noting how presidential museums were established in other countries is because there is a need to avoid turning self-commemoration into public memory (Hufbauer 2006). One can ask if there is any other preservation mechanism for public memory apart from establishing presidential museums, as these have been critiqued for pushing certain narrative into public spaces. This is evidenced

by examples of American presidential museums which portray mostly the positive about the represented former presidents (Hufbauer 2006). The argument is from the perspective that heritage is shared and is a non-excludible public good (Ready and Navrud 2002).

Botswana with its few and financially challenged museums has in the past struggled to attract its locals to its museums. This has also been the case in other Africa countries where concepts such as Africanising museums were theorised in order to address the challenge (Vivan 2014 and ICOM 1992). This paper argues that this background is the basis for the establishment of presidential museums. It should be noted that the first formal review of the status of museums in Botswana was published in 1983 (Oram and Nteta 1983). The recommendations proposed the establishment of specialised museums which this papers notes that presidential museums could fall under.

Presidential Objects and Memory

This section discusses how the memories of the former presidents of Botswana, Sir Seretse Khama (1966-1980), Sir Ketumile Masire (1980-1998) and Dr Festus Mogae (1998-2008) depicted in Figure 1, can be preserved through their material culture. It was inspired by the lack of any systematic collection and preservation of their collections post-term which can lead to loss of national heritage. The emphasis on preserving their legacies is mostly in literary form through numerous publications. A president is the head of state in Botswana appointed according to the country's Constitution after democratic elections held every five years. The conceptual framework for this paper is based on how objects create memory and specifically presidential collections and the creation of their memory in the context of Botswana. The presence of other forms of memory such as books detailing their life histories or stories did not include those of objects. This paper argues that material culture of people with national value such as presidents can best be accessioned into museums, whether private or public. Museum objects are for the public good preserved for public benefit (Crane 1997).

Figure 1: 2008/FM/0101: Canvas Painting of Khama, Masire and Mogae



Source: Painting by T Motoloki (gift from Barlow World)

The first president, Seretse Khama, was in office from Independence until his death on 13 July 1980. A small section of his collections and history are preserved and exhibited at Khama III Memorial Museum in Serowe where he originates. Included on the display are pictures of his funeral in Serowe. Sir Seretse Khama's highly controversial marriage to an Englishwoman, Ruth Williams (later Lady Khama) in 1948 is popular and documented in literary heritage such as Parsons *et al* (1995). It would be interesting to know where Lady Khama's wedding dress and her husband's wedding suit are because they are likely to attract many visitors if preserved and exhibited. Their wedding regalia is national heritage that deserves preservation. Their marriage is also visualised in documentaries such as 'Black King' and 'White Queen in January' by Heritage Media House (*Mmegi* 29 January 2015).

An important development is his memorialisation through a statue in front of the parliament building at the government enclave in Gaborone (Figure 2). The statue is a gazzetted national monument due to his role as the first president of the country and was unveiled in 1986 in commemoration of Botswana's 20th anniversary of Independence.

Figure 2: Sir Seretse Khama's Statue in Gaborone



Source: Photograph taken by the author (2015)

Sir Ketumile Masire was the second president of Botswana from 1980 until his retirement in 1998. Just like Seretse Khama, he also possess heritage worth preserving, for example, his inauguration attire, among other items. He carries memory of national mourning as he was inaugurated on 1 July 1980 following Seretse's death. The question is, where are the collections that tell his various personal, public and political stories? Masire made an enormous impact on the lives of Batswana as he was responsible for the introduction of comprehensive social service programmes which resulted in the betterment of Botswana's education and health among others. This is why his leadership is described as a significant aspect of Botswana's success (McGann 2010). His material culture and speeches can be preserved in museums and played in exhibition halls. His late wife, Lady Olebile Masire (Figure 3) was a strong force behind her husband's success (Masire 2007).

Figure 3: Sir Ketumile Masire and Lady Olebile Masire



Source: Botswana Daily News (19 May 2013)

The advantage for a living former president is that he can be one of the primary sources of his stories. This means he becomes part of his memory creation when his collections are developed into a systematic heritage. Masire established the Sir Ketumile Masire Foundation in 2007 that has the potential to establish his own library and museum in the future (Sir Ketumile Masire Foundation 2014). At the moment he, like Festus Mogae, do not have any statues, but it is possible that they will be honoured after their death as it seems to be the policy in Botswana (Otlogetswe 2015). Apart from historical publications which include his autobiography *Very Brave or Very Foolish?: Memoirs of an African Democrat* (2007), there is no systematic preservation of his collections in any museum including Kgosi Bathoen II Museum in Kanye –Masire's home village. Just like other community museums in Botswana, the museum is struggling financially as it mainly survives on government's annual subvention allocated to all community museums which is dispensed through the National Museum and Monuments.

The third president of Botswana, Festus Mogae, was in office from 1998 until the end of his ten-year term in 2008. He is well remembered for championing the fight against the HIV/AIDS scourge through

which Botswana developed several international partnerships and funding. A good example is the Baylor Children's Hospital in Gaborone. The farewell events at the end of Mogae's tenure (see Figure 4), which will be case-studied in a latter section of this paper, are the ones which specifically influenced the conceptual framework of this paper.

Figure 4: Mogae receiving two horses during first farewell tour in Mmadinare



Source: Mmegi (22 January 2008)

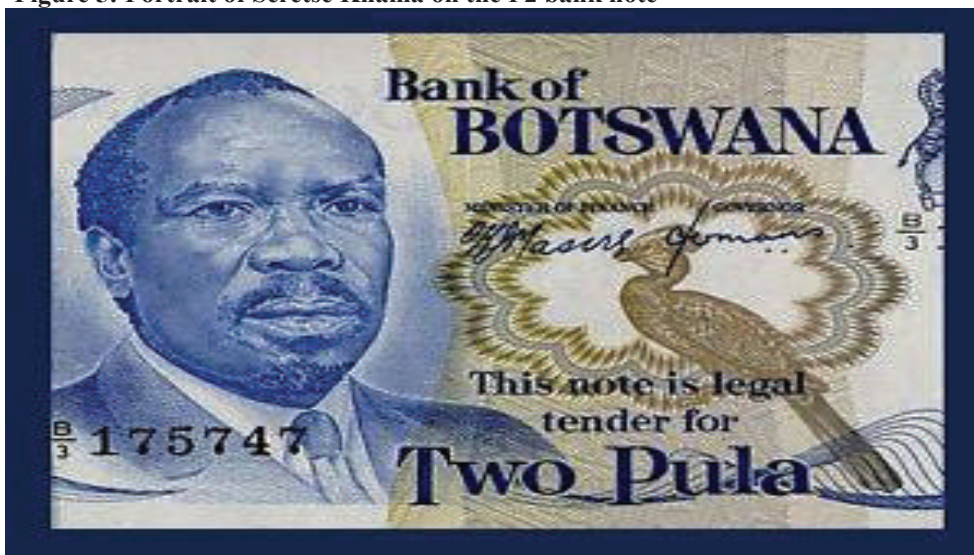
Memory of Presidents as National Heritage and Public Memory

By virtue of being presidents of Botswana, the memories of the three former presidents deserve to be preserved as national heritage and through public memory. The argument is that museums can also shape public memory by the selection of what to preserve, store and interpret to the public (Davison 2005). The debate between private and public memory surfaces because of the thin line between the two when one is a national or public figure. The memory will, therefore, become national. The emphasis here is on public memory that can be either good or bad. Each museum visitor with their own memory of the former presidents becomes part of the collective public memory because of the shared history and heritage. As Dickinson *et al* (2010) argue, public memory is created when a group of people with a common identity share a belief about their past that can be represented through events, people, places or objects. For example, in Rwanda and Burundi, memorial museums were established to address the identity of the 'other' that was appropriated and resulted in the 1994 genocides (Hintjens 2001). A presidential museum in Botswana can therefore become a nation-building tool where differences are acknowledged and celebrated through the national heritage of past presidents. It would play a positive role in case of future national crisis as Bassey (2011) argues about the important peace mediation role that museums can play during conflicts.

In this section, the public memory of past presidents of Botswana commemorated through objects

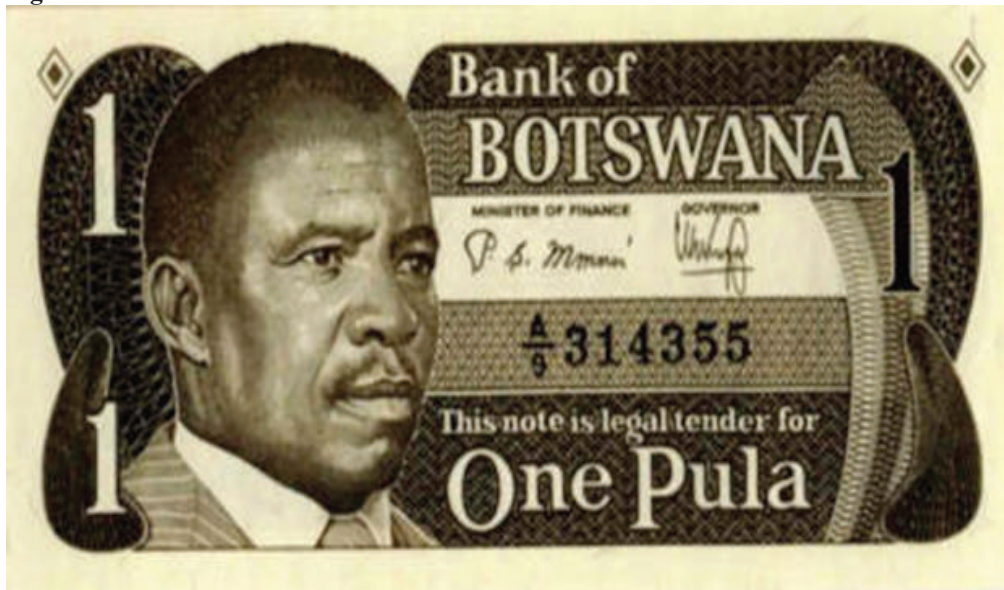
is highlighted. All the three former presidents have stories and histories that can be collected and exhibited in befitting thematic ways in permanent and temporary exhibition spaces. The first president, Seretse Khama is deceased and cannot be part of his memory creation. The task becomes the responsibility of the government and stakeholders. It should be noted that there are other forms of memories outside the museum that honour the three former presidents. Firstly, all the presidents' portraits are on some notes of the country's Pula currency (Figures 5, 6 and 7), since its adoption in 1976 (Bank of Botswana 2015). Although the P2 and P1 bank notes are no longer in circulation, they are of great historical significance.

Figure 5: Portrait of Seretse Khama on the P2 bank note



Source: Bank of Botswana (2015)

Figure 6: Portrait of Sir Ketumile Masire on the P1 note



Source: Banknotes.com (2016)

Figure 7: Portrait of Mogae on the P10 note



Source: Banknotes.com (2016)

Embedding portraits of a president on a country's currency is an honour that ensures that people remember the head of state because of the daily exchange of the money. In Botswana, the bank notes are some of the very few mediums whereby presidents can be honoured while still alive (Makgala 2008). Philatelic collections (postal stamps) have also been used to honour and memorialise the presidents of Botswana as depicted in Figure 8. Most of these are exhibited at the Philatelic Museum in Gaborone and at the National Museum and Monuments.

Figure 8: Philatelic collection of Seretse Khama (1981)



Source: Philatelic Museum and at the National Museum and Monuments

The other type of memory that can be associated with the presidents of Botswana is 'built heri-

tage'. This would include the official residence of the president such as the state house where all the three presidents resided. The building can become a national memorial and preserved while in use. Stories of the presidents' residencies and their families can be documented in audio visuals and exhibitions curated at museums. Hence, the state house can become a living museum and declared a national monument. It has an advantage of housing living presidents and with intensive heritage tourism marketing, the place can become a public artifact. For example, some of its spaces can be re-designed to become accessible to the public where guided group tours such as school tours can be allowed. This gesture can result in instilling national pride into the citizenry from school-going ages. However, this suggestion does not ignore issues of security. The visits are already popular at the National Museum and Monuments in Gaborone. Presidents' memories such as their places of birth also need to be protected and preserved. In 2014 the house that is believed to be the birthplace of Seretse Khama was reported to have deteriorated due to lack of care (*Mmegi* 4 July 2014). This raises concerns because valuable heritage can be lost if measures are not formulated for its protection.

President Festus Mogae Catalogue Project

Festus Mogae, as already mentioned, is the one whose farewell stories captured my curatorial interest in his possessions because it was covered by the state-owned Botswana Television (Btv). Mogae began his nation-wide tour in Mmadinare on 22 January 2008, a few months before the end of his second and final term in office where some of his gifts were horses as depicted in Figure 4. As it is the custom in many societies, Mogae was given numerous tangible presents in all the centres he visited as tokens of appreciation for his leadership. The catalogue project was undertaken from April to September 2010 and it was composed of the gifts he received during his farewell tour of the nation. As noted above, among his vast accomplishments, he is mostly remembered for his campaign against HIV/AIDS which can be preserved through related artifacts and audio-visuals. As the first African president to win the coveted Mo Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership in 2008, Mogae's legacy can be documented for future generations through his collections.

The daily broadcasts of his farewell on Btv triggered questions in my mind of where the accumulating presents would be kept. The other questions were: what will happen to the gifts (collections)? Where and how would he store them? What else did he have? Could I see all the collections and create a digital record for the collection? *Mmegi* (25 January 2008) echoed one of the questions when it asked 'Who will gather Mogae's presents?' Prior to my work, the National Museum's Art Division had assessed some of the art works and initiated its cataloguing in order to compile an inventory but was not yet implemented at the time of this project due to unforeseen staffing challenges at the Museum. When I enquired about their intentions, they responded positively that according to their knowledge, all former presidents' collections belong to the government due to their national significance. The only challenge was lack of legislation or policy to direct their work. The Botswana National Library Service had also accessioned his gifts of books and personal acquisition into a library at his official retirement residence in Phakalane suburb on the outskirts of Gaborone. This became my base during the cataloguing project that Mogae agreed to fund privately for six months.

In preparation for the project, a tour of all his collections was undertaken where he gave an overview of the collections' background and their storage. Mogae appreciated the catalogue initiative but the challenge was his voluminous presents. I was shocked by the large quantity of the collections and how most were stored unsystematically in a metal container in his yard. These were not just presents for an ordinary person, but objects that bore testimony of how the nation appreciated him and wished him a good retirement life. I imagined how the present givers would be delighted to see their gifts preserved and even exhibited for the rest of the public to appreciate.

Documentation is central to collections management of any form of heritage as it becomes preservation by record (Setlhabi 2010). The short-term goal was to preserve Mogae's farewell memorabilia through record while awaiting long-term plans such as a museum. The preparation for the cataloguing process began through firstly formulating a manual catalogue form where the information would be captured before digitisation. The second process was compiling a classification index that would guide the cataloguing process as per museum object classification (Roberts 1995). Even though the procedure has been critiqued by museologists for adopting Eurocentric division (Setlhabi 2012), if properly conceptualised it becomes a vital tool in the management of objects.

The actual cataloguing process began with registering each object on a manual form that captured information such as object identification, formulated as 2008 (year of collection, farewell memorabilia (FM), and then the number of the collection. All objects were identified as 2008/FM/Number. The other attributes were object name, place of manufacture, place of collection, and the maker. Finally, each object was photographed for identity purposes and the image was inserted into the object's digital record. A total of 257 objects were catalogued both manually and digitised on Microsoft Access database. Mogae received various types of gifts that included food utensils, paintings, drawings, sculptures, clothing, jewelry, furniture, agricultural implements and even livestock that was still kept at the givers' cattle posts. Some of the presents were personally carved or decorated for his farewell as the mat in Figure 9 reads '*Tsamaya Sentle Rre Mogae*' [Farewell Mr. Mogae]. Its only information was its collection place which is Gumare in the North-West District.

Figure 9: 2008/FM/0123, Flat Mat. A farewell gift from Gumare

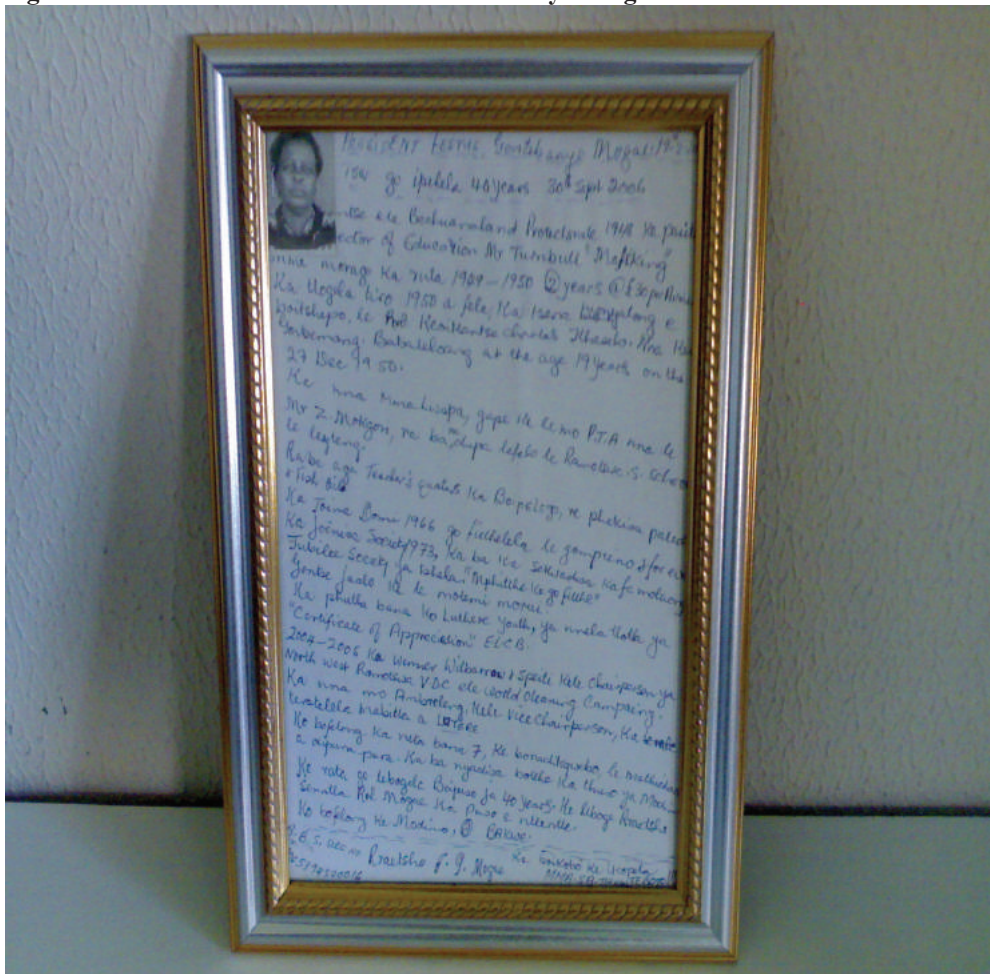


Source: Photographed by Keletso Setlhabi (2010)

The drawings had personal touches and because of the requirement of fine art, they mostly had information about the artists. Some objects were many such as the more than 30 walking sticks which were meant for him to use during his old age. These were of different shapes and colours and were symbolic of the life he would eventually live. A handwritten letter (Figure 10) depicting Botswana's 40th Independence anniversary celebration was given to Mogae by Tebogo Tlhaselo and it shows how some individuals re-

membered him, and how they also wanted him to remember them. Future research can expound on such traceable gifts with identity and pictures.

Figure 10: 2008/FM/0080 A handwritten letter by Tebogo Tlhaselo



Source: Photographed by Keletso Setlhabi (2010)

The Challenges

The main observation was that since the gifts were presents without any preservation intent, many lacked valuable information. Only artworks such as drawings and paintings had the artists' names. Furthermore, only a few other objects had name attachments that they could be traced to. The information can be collected systematically in the future through intensive research. The key people who travelled with Mogae could be the basis for the objects' stories. Labour intensive work such as this requires dedicated expertise to focus on the preservation of the heritage, hence the need for long-term measures for the presidential heritage.

The identification of farewell memorabilia in the storage was another challenge as there were other gifts from various occasions such as international official trips during Mogae' 10 years in office. The other type of collections outside the farewell gifts were letters (official and private) and decorative objects used in his retirement home.

The last challenge was the way the objects were stored in a metal container in his yard. This was especially the case with delicate ones such as paintings whose frames and glass easily break. The storage area was limited in capacity and the objects were stored too close to each other. The recommendation

then was that another temporary storage container had to be purchased to ease the load in the current one. This would enable systematic and safe arrangement for better preservation while awaiting permanent preservation measures. The proposed storage containers would be fitted with air controlling devices, as a preservation mechanism. A temperature-controlled storage is best for objects because humidity and heat are reduced. Infestation of pests and their elimination would also have to be factored in (Bradley 1994 and Mosole 2014).

Despite these challenges, opportunities to preserve and avail the heritage to the public exist. The catalogue is an important record for all future heritage projects such as museums and exhibitions. Further research can be undertaken and a full catalogue can be published into a book for information dissemination purposes. The electronic catalogue could be migrated onto new platforms later and managed as needed without a need to re-invent the wheel, as it were. One of the advantages of electronic catalogue systems is that they can be published online and availed electronically to a wider public (Honeysett 2011). A travelling exhibition of the memorabilia can be developed and opened at the National Museum and Monuments then rotated to regional museums in Botswana where the public can have the opportunity to enjoy Mogae's farewell memorabilia. This will have the effect of reviving the once popular but defunct mobile museum service called *Pitse-ya-naga mo maotwaneng* ('Zebra on the wheels'). At the end, I handed over the catalogue project to Mogae. Though not completed due to lack of information, it highlighted the importance of an urgent need for the systematic preservation of Botswana's statesmen.

It is hoped that through this paper, a dialogue into how best to preserve Botswana's valuable presidential heritage will begin as the country celebrated its 50th anniversary of Independence in September 2016. This is especially befitting as this celebration is linked to the country's Vision 2016, a strategic framework which was formulated to guide the country to its achievement of clearly formulated developmental strategies (Republic of Botswana 1997). From the seven pillars of Vision 2016, the most relevant to this paper is the fourth one, namely 'A United and Proud Nation'. The reason for this is that the discourse on a nation's unity and pride is rooted on its heritage. This led to formulation of policies such as the 2001 National Policy on Culture which aimed to promote a proud nation (Republic of Botswana 2001).

Conclusion

Heritage is used as a national tool in post-colonial Africa as in other countries of the world and memory narratives are often created around heritage. Presidents, as heads of state, especially the first generation post-colonial presidents, are perceived as national heroes who fought either ideologically or physically to liberate their people. Seretse Khama is celebrated as such a figure and his objects of memory and national holidays such as Sir Seretse Khama day on 1 July (his birthday), are geared towards a national memory. The kind of national identity created around the presidential figure can be linked to his emphasis of uniting all people of Botswana under a central government rather than tribal identity (Grant 1984).

The second and third presidents of Botswana, Masire and Mogae respectively are also national figures whose heritage can be created to be remembered as public memory in a presidential museum. The museum could become a place where people with diverse backgrounds can be united around national figures as part of the nation-building process. Mogae's farewell memorabilia catalogue project is a practical case of the existence of presidential heritage of the three former presidents of Botswana that remains largely undocumented.

Stakeholder engagement is key to the preservation of the presidential heritage that becomes part of the public memory. This can best be done through the establishment of an independent public funded presidential museum in Botswana. This is because the context of the country leaves the government with the main responsibility of spearheading the establishment of a presidential museum. Museum visitorship remains a challenge and a balance between preserving presidential heritage and avoiding individual

self-glory would be an independent public-funded museum for preserving presidential heritage. This step would also mitigate instances where a privately or community-funded museum could experience financial challenges as already mentioned. The Oram and Nteta Report (1983) already exists as a base framework for their establishment. The presidential heritage as shown by the catalogue project needs urgent attention before it is lost. The existence of other types of gifts and memorabilia collected throughout Mogae's term in office remains undocumented as it is the case with the other two former presidents of Botswana. The presidential museum, therefore, becomes an urgent salvage mechanism.

This paper recommends the review of Botswana heritage legislation in order to establish presidential museums where material culture of former presidents can be preserved. While the best preservation methods relevant to the culture of Botswana should also be discussed, the first step is to identify and inventory the presidential heritage of all former heads of state. In the meantime, preservation by record can begin and be migrated into permanent catalogues later.

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