

Abstract

The research examines the process and dynamics involved in the upgrading for tourism purposes of three sites associated with the 19th century Mosotho prophet, Mantsopa, found on the Anglican retreat centre at Modderpoort and facilitated by a R15 million government grant. In the research, this small parcel of land, located on the long-disputed border between the Eastern Free State and Lesotho, emerges as a source of contestation. It is the object of a variety of competing claims, from a wide-ranging group of stakeholders that include the Anglican Church, pilgrims to the Mantsopa sites, members of the Bataung tribe, and local and national government.

What this research demonstrates is that these claims extend beyond the commonly accepted premise of legal ownership and are founded on the bases of religious practice, political rights, administrative control, occupation, economics and tourism potential. The research highlights the complex issues surrounding heritage sites in a multicultural populace, all the more so in post-1994 South Africa, where restitution of land is a valued sign of healing and redress against the injustices of the past, and strongly symbolic of a post-apartheid society.

The research encompasses consultation and interviews with the various stakeholders, observation of the annual Cave Sunday ceremony of major significance to Mantsopa's pilgrims and the Anglican Church, and the study of archival record, working documentation and academic texts.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts by Coursework and Research Report at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

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