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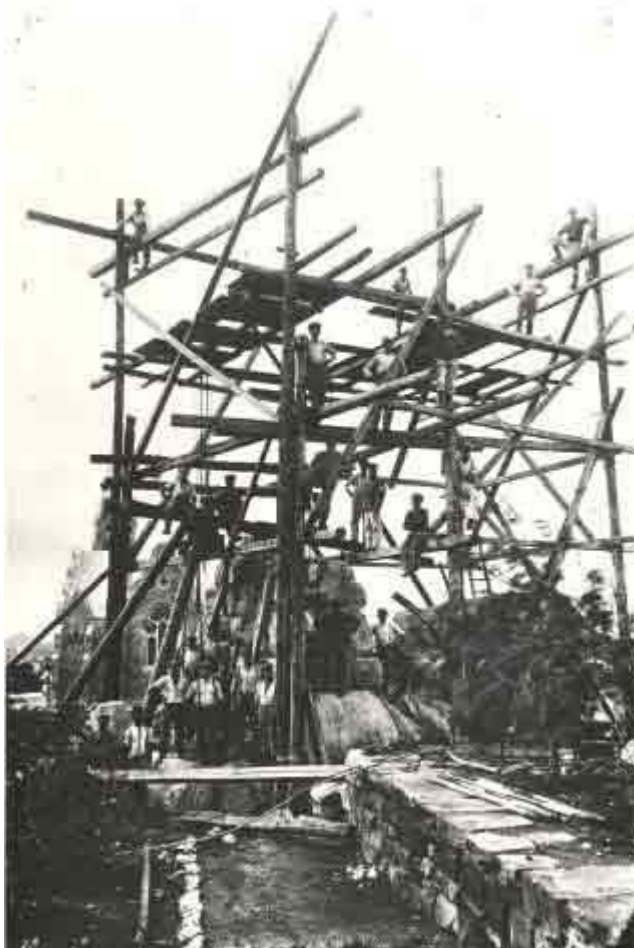
## To move or not to move:

Andreas Vogt

### On the relocation of the Equestrian Monument in Windhoek...

Problem definition:

"The National Heritage Council of Namibia does not have objections against the moving of the Equestrian Monument from its original site to a new site in front of the Alte Feste in Windhoek." "The site in front of Alte Feste in Windhoek is just as good as its original site; since the monument displays a mounted soldier actually blends well situated against the backdrop of a military building that once accommodated soldiers (Gabi Schneider, Vice-Chairperson of the National Heritage Council of Namibia, AZ, June 12, 2008, p.1).



*The erection of the Equestrian Monument in 1911.*

The cabinet resolution of 2001 regarding the relocation of the Equestrian Monument in Windhoek remain problematic. The question was left open, exactly where to the historical monument was to be shifted (it

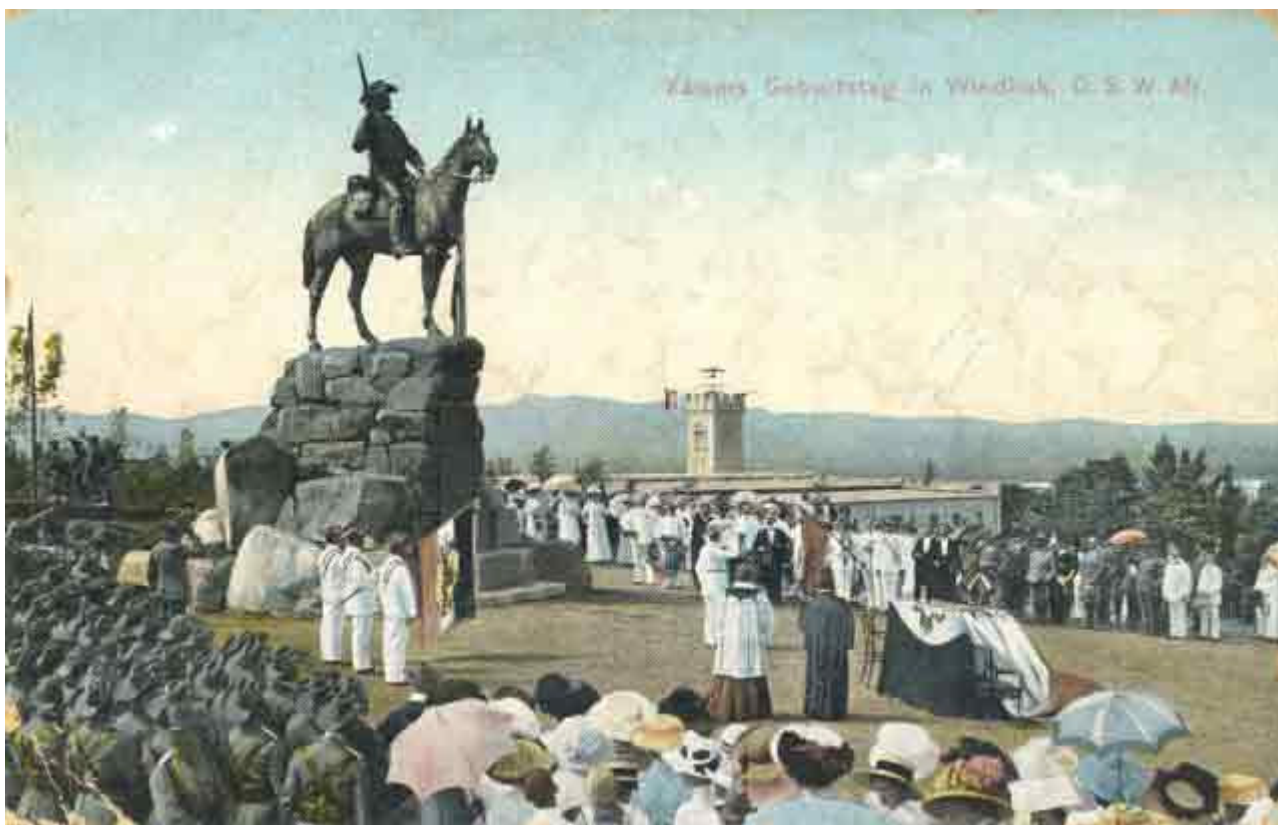
indicated vaguely, "in front of the Alte Feste"), as is the design of the new "Independence Museum". Whether the Equestrian Monument finds a suitable place there, exactly where it is to be located, and exactly why it should be moved, however, remains unclear. There is the acute danger that serious damage to the valuable monument can be expected. This could result from the inappropriate treatment of the Equestrian Monument which cannot be rectified later. This precarious resolution is apparently motivated by the fact that a "museum dedicated to the Namibian liberation struggle is to be built at the current site of the Equestrian Monument". The design of the new "Independence Museum" is likewise unknown.

It is questionable, whether this decision was supported by a proper analysis regarding the will of the people in this matter, as well as a number of conservation issues, which take into consideration the following aspects concerning such a relocation of the monument:

### *1. Historical monument*

The Equestrian Monument is a historical monument. It stands at its current place since its inauguration in the year 1912. It survived various changes of government in the past. The Equestrian Monument is one of the most prominent landmarks of Windhoek, and the best-known historical war memorial in Namibia. Together with the Christuskirche, the Alte Feste, Parliament and the Head-Office of the National Museum it forms, with the other buildings, a historical ensemble, the historical core or centre of town of Windhoek.

The envisaged relocation constitutes a substantial disturbance of an invaluable ensemble of historical buildings and monuments, which should not be made without most careful and thorough professional impact assessments.



*After the completion of the building works in 1912, the Equestrian Monument was inaugurated on January 27 1912 (Birthday of the German Emperor William II) as a war and soldiers' monument, under active participation of high-ranking officials, officers, members of the Schutztruppe and clergymen of both Protestant and Catholic Christian denominations.*



*The Equestrian Monument is one of the most prominent landmarks of Windhoek, and the best-known historical war memorial in Namibia. Together with the Christuskirche, the Alte Feste, Parliament Buildings and the Head-Office of the National Museum, it forms, as a historical ensemble, the historical core of Windhoek.*

## *2. Art and cultural-historical uniqueness*

From an art- and culture-historical point of view, the Equestrian Monument is insofar unique, in that it represents a mounted trooper of the German colonial forces (Schutztruppe) in the form of an equestrian sculpture. Since antiquity, the representation of persons in the form of an equestrian monument was a privilege reserved for highest nobility like emperors, kings and princes only. The commemoration of a mounted soldier (holding the rank of a non-commissioned officer) in the form of an equestrian monument is not only in the European tradition, but world-wide. By this criterion alone, the Equestrian Monument in Windhoek corresponds with all requirements of singularity, uniqueness and authenticity, which let it stand far above all other similar war memorials.

## *3. The Equestrian Monument as sculptural piece of art*

As a bronze sculpture with high accuracy of detail, the Equestrian Monument is a high-ranking piece of art, the artist Adolf Kürle created a masterpiece, which documents the 19th century sculpture art of Imperial Germany. Unscathed, it outlasted a full century of historical tensions and fundamental political changes both in Germany and Namibia. That makes the monument a special cultural monument, particularly in the light of the fact that it is found not in Europe, but stands on African soil.



*During the German colonial period, the Equestrian Monument was also known as 'Country War Memorial' ("Landeskriegerdenkmal"). This points to its outstanding status among other war memorials of that period in the country.*

#### *4. The Equestrian Monument as a special historical monument*

Without prejudice to its location or integrity, the Equestrian Monument survived incisive political changes as from the German colonial period to the South African Mandate period, from the Mandate period to the African colonial period, into the Namibian Independence. This is considerable, if one considers the ideological differences between the ethnic groupings of Namibia in those years. Irrespective of its ideological burden in the context of the shared colonial history of Africans and Europeans, it should not be overlooked that the Equestrian Monument is both part of German history as well as African history. It is inseparably connected to African-European history.

#### *5. Preservation in everybody's interest*

The relocation of the monument under exclusion of the opinion of various groups or members of the public would boil down to an infringement on the cultural rights and unnecessary stirring of sentiments. If Dr. Schneider glibly states that "the Equestrian Monument cannot be doubted to be a good symbol of reconciliation", this is highly doubtful in the light of the fact that the resolution to shift the monument was neither investigated by local or international syndicates, nor was the Namibian population asked about its opinion in this serious matter.

The decision for the relocation of the Equestrian Monument was made in 2001 unilaterally by Cabinet, with

Parliamentary debate, without proper investigation by a team of conservation professionals convened by National Heritage Council of Namibia, and without public debate or testing the sentiments of the public in an important matter. In other words, the decision to have it relocated was undemocratic. True reconciliation between the different groupings within Namibia could be visibly demonstrated by plain conservation and preservation of this historical monument, by accepting it as an unalienable part of our shared Namibian heritage. Its unblemished preservation would be both in the Namibian/African, as well as in the German/European interest.

#### *6. The Equestrian Monument as a war and soldier's monument*

The Equestrian Monument is a monument dedicated to the memory of military and civilian casualties, it is a soldier's and war memorial. It is dedicated to the memory of German soldiers and civilians, who fought and died in the colonial wars against Herero and Nama in Namibia. Other monuments (e.g. those of the Heroes' Acre in Windhoek, Heroes' Acre) also remind of war heroes; the Equestrian Monument is therefore an integral component of the bulk of soldier's and war memorials in Namibia.

Numerous of these, and from the most diverse epochs, are to be found all over the country. They all reflect Namibia's conflict-rich past. In the mean time, new soldier's graves were added from the casualties from the DRC and from the liberation war in Angola, and also new monuments are put up like, for instance the Heroes' Acre in Windhoek or commemorative memorials at Ongulombashe or elsewhere in northern Namibia. Although they are seen as part of Namibia's violent past, their de facto existence does not stir sentiments and they are considered to be appropriate war memorials. By that, Namibia's conflict-rich past therefore also points into the present, and in all probability also into the future, as is the gradual militarization of the Namibian nation, the increasing number of armed soldiers in the cities, and holding of military parades such as for the heroes' welcome for returnees from the DRC, and at the inauguration of the new State House recently, and the establishment of new military infrastructure like the military airport at Karibib suggest.



*After the German colonial period, the Equestrian Monument remained untouched at its original site. Even British and South African forces, who used the site around the monument as a bivouac camping site respected the statue.*

### *7. State's duty to preserve and protect soldier's graves and war monuments*

Since during war the state calls on its citizens to participate in the war, it carries the burden of Obligation put up, to maintain, preserve, to protect and care for each war memorial. Likewise, a soldier has the right of acknowledgment of his war performance and achievement, and losses suffered in it. This obligation and this right are derived from the principle of a social contract between state and citizen, and may not be violated without a very good reason. Regarding the preservation or relocation of the Equestrian Monument therefore not only the Namibian, but also the German government that should formulate a clear attitude opinion in this important matter.

At all times and in all cultures, monuments were set up regarding the commemoration of the most diverse causes, and the most different persons. To respect and to maintain any monument should be a matter of principle. It is, however, understandable, if statues of the despots such as Louis XIV of France or dictators as Stalin, Hitler or Mussolini were later demolished. These leaders despised the peoples whom they supported at the same time. The demolition of such monuments is therefore understandable. In the soldier's monument however, it is the performance, the achievement and the loss of life and health of the soldier which is appreciated. The soldier puts his own life at risk, involuntarily, driven by a sense of obligation and in the society's and public interest, and may even go down, get killed, wounded or missing in action. This is the fundamental difference between a monument, which serves a political personal cult, and a soldier's monument that acknowledges the personal performance and sacrifice of the individual soldier in a symbolical form, in an appropriate way.



It is in this respect that it would be inappropriate to attach a purely political meaning to a soldier's monument or use it exclusively in the context of a narrow ideological function. This would do utter harm to the multiple layers of symbolical meaning embodied in any monument. Nobody would question the popularity and the incredible powerful meaning of our Equestrian Monument, which is recognized and acknowledged among broad masses of the population. There is no doubt that people have strong emotions about it, for whatever reasons, and there is debate, controversy and sentiment around it, and has been ever since it was put up.

That proves, however, that it is indeed an important monument, because otherwise it would have been forgotten long ago. It calls, however, again and again for deliberation about its history and/or to analyse reasons for its existence – as a powerful commemorative icon not only of war triumph, but also of the sombreness of losses suffered. As such it is also a commemorative memorial, which reminds of the simple fact that the loss of a human life in war can never be replaced by the establishment of any monument – how grand its design or arrangement may be.

### *8. Relocation of the Equestrian Monument likely to backfire on Government and Heritage Council*

If thus the Namibian government should make use of the Equestrian Monument thoughtlessly for a political demonstration or a cheap gesture of political power, this may easily cause an effect to the contrary. Year after year the "Reiter-Initiative" had already shown, what became later of an intrinsically inconsiderate impulse concerning the Equestrian Monument – it was a flop.

After the relocation of the Equestrian Monument, after a quick and fleeting moment of triumph ("Hooray we moved the Rider"!) there would follow, very fast, the disillusionment of a basically senseless and inconspicuous ill-advised step. It would be impossible to reverse this action, and quite meaningless to move the Equestrian Monument "for all times from its traditional place to a new location" – and probably inflict irreparable damage to it. Who will then be responsible for it? Shortly thereafter the realisation will kick in, that the relocation will have the exact opposite effect on the population or at least on parts thereof. Without doubt, sections of our population will be offended by the senseless meddling of a symbol which they hold in high esteem. What new place is not suitable at all? What if the monument suffers damage? What if the current situation is better than the one we can expect soon? Is the monument to be relocated again? And again?

It is, namely, the duty of the population, to advise government and public on matters related to possible damage to our national heritage and the possible tarnishing of the image of the government. This should be done professionally, soberly and appropriately, exactly by means of a body like the National Heritage Council of Namibia, which by virtue of its own name and mandate counsels government and public on national heritage matters. This is its real function, not the building of monuments, and it is quite strange that it would neither muster the guts nor quote its professional duty to warn government against the dangers immanent in something that has not been properly thought through at all!

The relocation of the Equestrian Monument will in all probability backfire severely and, apart from the possible senseless damage to the sculpture itself, only cause harm to the reputation of the Namibian Government to speak of the spineless National Heritage Council of Namibia that has, apparently, not the guts to tell government that with the relocation of the Rider it is entering a political minefield.

### *9. Ethics*

From an ethical point of view, the preservation and care of a monument are, just as the preservation of a grave, tombstone, sepulchre, cenotaph, or a cemetery, a matter of piety or reverence. Preservation and care of burial-places and historical monuments are common in the most diverse cultures and are an integral part of human values. For this reason the relocation of the Equestrian Monument would be not only devoid of sense of piety, but an inconsiderate and uncivilized action.

A relocation of the Equestrian Monument can take place only if really compelling reasons are present. The establishment of a museum does not constitute a compelling reason, since there are sufficient free areas

places in Windhoek, where any new museum can be built and furnished. For instance, the area between current State Museum and the Namibian Reserve Bank could easily be used for a liberation museum and even match up with the museum's head quarters, while leaving the current situation intact at the same time. Appropriate sites for the Heroes' Acre in the Auas Mountains and the State House in Auasblick were easily found without any problem; the Equestrian Monument is in this regard no exception.

The utilisation of the site of the Equestrian Monument for a liberation museum is insensitive, ill-advised and uncalled for. A cultural landscape that has been handed down by previous generations lives by its diverse historical growth, a brutal intrusion is a barbaric act notwithstanding the motives behind such a move. It mocks conservation ethics and can be compared to the burning of books, the demolition of sacred buildings, the vandalising and desecration of cemeteries and graves and the rape of humans.

Members of Parliament and the Heritage Council, who thought it appropriate to advocate the removal of the Equestrian Monument would just have to ask themselves how they would react to the unasked-for removal of the headstones of their ancestral graves by insensitive bystanders, who think that they have all the right of the world (or the power) to do so. They would quickly be identified as insensitive barbarians or cultural hooligans who do not know how to pay their respects towards sites and objects that are sacred to others.



*During the South African colonial period the Equestrian Monument continued to be looked after, protected, utilised and kept in shape.*

#### *10. The role of the churches: The Equestrian Monument as sacred monument*

After the completion of the building works in 1912, the Equestrian Monument was inaugurated as a war



soldier's monument under active participation of clergyman of both Protestant and Catholic Christian denominations. Over the years, and for many years, annual meetings of different veteran federations, w members of different congregations and different language groups have taken place at this site, while up this day wreath-laying ceremonies and commemorative services are being conducted here. These cerem are similar to the annual Herero-Festival in August each year in Okahandja, the Witbooi-Festival at Gibec Tsamkhubis-Festival in Rehoboth and other similar activities. They are performed by Namibians within th traditions and traditional rites and customs, within their constitutionally enshrined cultural rights. These customs have been performed undisturbed and to the annoyance of nobody, and would be crucially distu by the relocation of the Equestrian Monument. In this regard the Equestrian monument is a sacred mem place with sacral status, and therefore sacrosanct (holy).

A relocation of the Equestrian Monument would be similar to the reckless relocation of a church building is still being used by its denomination. Such a step would be equally injurious to the rights of such a denomination, and should therefore be omitted. The Windhoek residents still remember the reckless destruction of the historical mission church in Ludwigsdorf in 1994, which severely hurt the public feeling those of adjacent residents, conservation-minded people and those who were offended by the wanton destruction of a sacred building. In its place, luxurious villas devoid of any remarkable style or quality ha sprung up instead; the precinct is cynically named "Bishop's Hill". The area has lost its historical nexus, v would have been retained has the old church building been saved. A repetition of such an incident is to b avoided under all circumstances. The churches of both denominations should express themselves also ck to the intended relocation of the Equestrian Monument, since they once consecrated it publicly and withi framework of sacred rites. As is the case for a relocation of the human remains of deceased humans, a monument should also be treated appropriately and with respect and dignity.

#### *11. The role of cultural organisations: The Equestrian Monument as a cultural and historical monument*

Namibian cultural agencies like, for example the German Cultural Council (Deutscher Kulturrat) should lil involve itself on the relocation of the Equestrian Monument and demand the unconditional retention of th Equestrian Monument on site. Should the Equestrian Monument be relocated nevertheless, the site shoul agreeable (perhaps a suitable area should purchased), and it should be cleared who is an expert in the fi monument removals, so that eventually an appropriate sacred site can be established ultimately, before touching the monument. The removal of the huge memorial tablets of catholic members of the German c force (Schutztruppe) from the entrance of the St. Mary's Cathedral in Windhoek, where two enormous br tablets were recklessly dismounted with the crowbar, severely damaged and kicked into the dirt, saved afterwards by some stout-hearted individuals who salvaged, restored and mounted them again publicly, in fresh memory.

The relocation of the Equestrian Monument could not be only discussed in connection with something sim like the preservation, treatment and proper care of the colonial monuments concerned, but once and for tackled in all earnest and to everybody's satisfaction. Here the Heritage Council could play an active coordinating role, of which it is apparently completely unaware.

But it need not only be German cultural institutions alone that may involve themselves on the issue of th relocation of the Equestrian Monument. Discussions in the national chat shows, comments and SMS'es in newspapers, letters to editors etc. are indictive that the population is uneasy about the relocation of the Equestrian Monument. Questions abound such as, for instance:

Why is the new Independence Museum not built in Katutura – there, where the people are, and where it be accessible to the public for whom it is destined?

If the Independence Museum was built in Katutura, tourists would be drawn there – it would be a tourist card for Katutura. Tourists visit the Alte Feste, Christuskirche and the Equestrian Monument in any case. Why was Heroes' Acre built at the opposite side to Katutura – it is too far out of town and nobody goes th Why is another Museum built for tourists only, and not for the people?

Is it wise to spend 8 Million on another museum, while nothing goes on at the other museums, like the C

Location Museum, the Military Museum in Okahandja etc.?

Why are 8 Million N\$ spent on something silly like an Independence Museum and not where it would be meaningful, like for education, old age pensions or something similar?

A jobless Katutura Resident's remark: "Leave the man on the horse and erect you useless memorial at the State House or ask the City Council of Windhoek to donate you one Ramatex complex for that purpose. Remember the hungry man on the street and how I wish our Government would bail us out with our outstanding municipality bills." (Namibian, July 8, 2008, p. 8.)



*Among tourists, the Equestrian Monument enjoys huge popularity – no tour bus visits Windhoek without stopping at the monument.*

## 12. The Equestrian Monument as a living monument

### (A) Sacral actions

The Equestrian Monument is a living monument. It is still used for sacral actions like (e. g. wreath-laying ceremonies, prayer services) and maintained and preserved in terms of national conservation measures, from public taxes. The case would be different if the same or a similar monument in another former German colony (e.g. in Togo, Cameroon or Tanzania) somewhere in the jungle, where no German-speaking population is living there any longer, where the living tradition has petered out and where under such circumstances the monument would have lost its sense and meaning. Under such circumstances, where the context of the monument would have changed for the area and population living there in such a way that it would have its sense or meaning completely, the relocation would have been understandable.

The opposite, however, is in Namibia case, where an active population of Namibian-born German-language speakers, who identify themselves with the Republic of Namibia, to which they are connected by birth,

citizenship and in solidarity, who pay their taxes and respect the laws of the country, and who have been present even before the German colonial period, have been living uninterrupted for at least one hundred fifty years in Namibia. The German language group has been actively involved in building up the country have been economically active and supported society by paying taxes and have been active in every thin sector in the country, be it art, culture, commerce, education, administration of the state, the churches, number of other fields. Without question they have acquired the right to demand the preservation of the cultural heritage in the context of their constitutionally enshrined cultural and minority rights. The German language group regards the Equestrian Monument as a monument with a high symbolic value, to which is connected with their traditional cultural and historical roots. Their relevant rights are protected under the stipulations of the Namibian constitution. The German language group has the right to reject the relocation of the Equestrian Monument if it wishes it. Under no circumstance should the Equestrian Monument be relocated before the will of the German-speaking sector of the Namibian population has been established in this regard and before it has been established that their constitutional and cultural rights have not been jeopardised. This has nothing to do with German nationalistic sentiments, but with the appropriate treatment of a cultural monument with immense historical and symbolic value.

*(B) Relevance within the Namibian context*

The Equestrian Monument's status as a living monument in the historical context is proven further by the fact that in the past the monument had already been the focus of politics, for instance by residents of the Old Location who covered the head of the horse in order to point to the intolerable circumstances of the old German settlement in Windhoek. Thus the Equestrian Monument already played its own role in the recent Namibian history of the liberation movement - straight because of its high symbolic value - and was historically also instrumental also in the Namibian context. The monument is well-known, and also popular amongst the Namibian population, even with a different angle on history. Recently, wooden crosses were planted around it by an anonymous group. As such, its preservation also in the name of the Black population would be a legitimate demand. They too view the monument - for whatever differing reasons from, say, the German population - also as an integral part of the Namibian cultural heritage, and therefore demand its unblemished preservation.

*(C) Tourism*

The status of the Equestrian Monument as a living monument is likewise sufficiently proven by its use for tourism. It has a high tourist value, and even visitors from all parts of Namibia can be observed who visit the monument, take pictures up there or have pictures taken of them with the monument in the background. The tourism industry has therefore likewise a direct interest to work against the relocation of the monument as it is one of the main attractions of the not exactly sumptuous heritage landscape in Windhoek. Their representatives should express themselves unequivocally against the intended relocation of the Equestrian Monument.

*(D) Controversial meaning*

The status of the Equestrian Monument as a living monument becomes evident by its controversial content, location, meaning etc. The debate and the sentiments around the monument are part of its living status. It is only logical and understandable, that in one part of the society the Equestrian Monument will evoke different political and cultural sentiments, emotions, reactions and viewpoints than in another part of our multi-cultural society and its different histories. These are all part of the living monument. To want, however, to deduce this (one-sidedly) the right that, because it "hurts" the feelings of some members of the nation, that it is legitimate to remove or relocate the monument, and thereupon to decide rashly via decree/cabinet decision that relocation is at the same time a decision which is at the expense of the constitutional rights of others and of minorities. This contradicts the democratic spirit of the Namibian constitution and the doctrine of national reconciliation. The relocation of the Equestrian Monument boils down to an injury of constitutionally embodied cultural rights of Namibian citizens and is also for this simple fact and reason to be rejected.

*(E) New symbols of autocratic rule*

For the critical observer of the politics of symbols and of monuments in Namibia it obviously does not remain hidden, what is really intended with the relocation of the Equestrian Monument. The action is to be understood from the program of our government to produce new "national monuments". The first in the program of

new "national monuments" is, of course the Heroes' Acre in the Aucas Mountains (at the expense of approx 80 million), followed in its cosy centre the new State House and Residence of the President (approx. N\$1 billion). The final chapter in these "representative" "national monuments" would finally be the "Independence Museum" on the exact location of the Equestrian Monument, for which an overpowering shape, probably than even the Christuskirche will, in all probability, be selected. This landmark must namely be visible from veranda of the presidential residence in Aucasblick. The situation of the president residence makes thus a view of nearly 180 degrees possible - from the north from the "Independence Museum" up to the Heroes' Acre in the south. In this way, the country will finally not only have been taken possession of symbolically also the history of Namibia, because reference can be made physically to beginning and end of Namibian referring to the visual beacons representing "Namibian history".

The government, however, seems to overlook that the forerunners of this type of architecture are to be found in totalitarian states such as, for instance, communist Russia and Nazi Germany. Heroes' statues depicting worker and peasants in Moscow (hammer and sickle), in the Eastern Bloc and in Eastern Asia are the model for the Heroes' Acre, whilst the star architect of Adolf Hitler, Albert Speer, can be regarded as the forerunner of the architecture of the new State House. It is not surprising that the Koreans, whose system of government up to this day considered as one of the most totalitarian dictatorships in the world, are implementing the construction work.

The same imposing, but hollow, gestures now demand the relocation of the Equestrian Monument. The government, however, overlooks that this once-off gesture will do eternal damage to its own reputation, because it will not be possible to retract on it again. Apart from this, it documents that without doubt the government is exactly not intending or doing what it always professes, namely to be tolerant, reconciliatory, democratic, to take the wishes of the population into account, etc. etc..

If the monstrosity called "Independence Museum" is one day finished, it will suffer exactly the same fate as the war museum in Okahandja (transformed former German fort, also built by the Koreans, until today neither inaugurated nor made accessible to the public), the Old Location Museum, the Supreme Court, the Alte Feste and the old Kaiserliche Realschule, presently head office of the National Museum: It will start to decay as a result of neglect, camouflaged under the reason of "shortage of funds". By then the government will have demonstrated its power, the Equestrian Monument will not have vanished but "only be relocated" (how tolerant!), but the most important historical heritage ensemble in Windhoek will have been ruined once and for all.

It should also not be lost out of sight that the Namibian population was excluded from participating in designing and pooling their ideas in establishing their new "national monuments". Neither did Namibian architects or Namibian architects help to design these monstrosities, or were even invited to submit suggestions or designs. The Namibian nation was excluded from giving shape to its own national icons and monuments?! This state of affairs constitutes a scandal of the first order, which dumbfounds one in its stupendous enormity: Namibian national monuments "Made in Korea"! And this, while brutally displacing traditional historical landmarks like e.g. the Old Fort in Okahandja (replaced by the Military Museum) and now the Equestrian Monument? Are the Namibian Heritage Council does not seem to have any doubts? And our Government thinks it will go unnoticed?

The National Heritage Council shows itself off as the rubber stamp of the Namibian government: Rather than dedicating itself to the reliable care, protection and preservation of Namibian cultural property and heritage, it allows itself to be instrumentalised by our government for a doubtful political purpose regarding "national monuments". It is already strange that the National Heritage Council did not warn against the relocation of the Equestrian Monument in its own interest. It thus raises doubts about its real function and its rather dubitable existence.



*As a bronze sculptural work of art, the Equestrian Monument displays remarkable detail and craftsmanship. The commemoration of a mounted foot soldier (holding the rank of a non-commissioned officer) in the form of an equestrian monument is unique not only in the European tradition, but worldwide.*

### *13. The Equestrian Monument as a proclaimed national monument*

The Equestrian Monument is a proclaimed national monument. As such it may only be changed, altered, removed etc. if the National Heritage Council advises on this. In the case of the Equestrian Monument, it be considered whether there is representation from the ranks of the native German language group of Namibia on the National Heritage Council, and whether their legitimate demands, ideas and recommendations have been submitted and heard in this important affair.

Likewise, the exclusion of representatives of this language's group (or any other group, which could have interest in the avoidance of the relocation of the Equestrian Monument - e.g. the citizens and inhabitants of the city of Windhoek, environmental organisations, town planners, members of the opposition of the government, historically and culturally interested groups from other parts of the country, cultural activists, artists etc.) in the issue of the relocation of the Equestrian Monument is questionable.

It must also be made public, on which reasons the National Heritage Council based its consent to the relocation of the Equestrian Monument and why this should be justified. It should be clear whether the necessary investigations, studies, preliminary investigations, analyses and relevant appraisals etc. have been properly conducted.

have to be published or made publicly available. Likewise, the debate about the relocation of the Equestrian Monument is to be conducted publicly. A one-sided, simply politically motivated relocation of the Equestrian Monument, which was merely sanctioned by the National Heritage Council, but which was not examined every detail and under inclusion of all interested parties, and satisfactorily negotiated with all interested parties, is to be rejected.



*As a bronze sculpture with high accuracy of detail, the Equestrian Monument is a high-ranking piece of art. The artist Adolf Kürle created a masterpiece, which documents the 19th century sculptural art of Wilhelmian (Imperial) Germany.*

#### *14. Heritage conservation, town planning and urban design*

From the points of view of the disciplines of heritage conservation, town planning and urban design the Equestrian Monument plays an important role in the context of the City of Windhoek.

The legitimate questions of the heritage conservation refer to the historical, aesthetic and artistic value of the monument as such, to its important role in the ensemble of historical buildings of the Alte Feste, Christuskirche, Parliament (Tintenpalast) and the old Kaiserliche Realschule (Head Office of the State Museum). Three of these, the Alte Feste, Christuskirche and the Equestrian Monument, are proclaimed national monuments. This entire historical, urban and aesthetic ensemble would suffer from a relocation of the Equestrian Monument, the City Windhoek and its incomparable, unique historical cultural heritage would suffer an irreparable loss. (Presently she suffers under the establishment of oversized advertisement-signboards)



which obscure historical buildings like e.g. the Alte Feste or the building of the College of the Arts), with anyone, including the National Heritage Council, being significantly bothered by this state of affairs.

A brutal, inconsiderate interference into this historical ensemble in the form of a grotesque "Independence Museum" (and such, without doubt, it will be), is extremely questionable. Whereas the relocation of the Equestrian Monument seems to be a decided matter, the public was not even informed about the design shape of the mysterious "Independence Museum". It feeds the suspicion that, like with the Heroes' Acre the new State House, another public monstrosity will be rammed down the throats of an astonished public which will have to console itself later with established facts and without having been actively involved (Very democratic!)

The historicity of the Equestrian Monument plays – from a conservation point of view - also an important role. In Rome, ancient monuments have stood for 2000 years on the same spot, and it would not pass anybody's mind to move them one single inch. On the contrary, this kind of monument stood for centuries under monument protection, and they are famous historical icons, attractions, cultural and art monuments. There is no compelling reason to deal with historical monuments any differently in Namibia. The location of the monument is part of the monument. A relocation would endanger the characteristics of the monument and should be avoided at all cost.

Unfortunately there is no possibility to proclaim a historical ensemble as part of a heritage area under the Namibian heritage legislation – things like a cultural mile or a heritage area under protection are unknown to the Namibian cultural and heritage administrators. That should, however, not keep Government, the Heritage Council, the Municipality or the public, from treating a historical ensemble like the entire Robert Mugabe Avenue with special consideration of its heritage value, and to deal with it appropriately, and with care. Otherwise, the entire historical heritage landscape in this city runs the risk to suffer permanent damage. Only four buildings from the German colonial period have survived in the Independence Avenue in Windhoek alone. The only street, which would qualify for the status of a historical cultural mile in Windhoek would be Robert Mugabe Avenue (old Leutwein Street), in which the Equestrian Monument is situated. That should be considered before the monument is to be relocated.



*The Equestrian Monument was officially proclaimed as a national monument on January 2 1969.*

#### 15. Practical problems

The relocation of the Equestrian Monument is also for practical reasons precarious and questionable. The weight of the monument is enormous, and to believe that one only needed a crash-tow bar and/or a crane, to take off its granite stand and put it up again elsewhere, is naive. The relocation of the monument will come with rampant destruction within the granite base range and, in all probability, to the sculpture itself. It is doubtful whether the personnel of the National Heritage Council or the Koreans, who will oversee and execute this envisaged folly, are equipped with the technical know-how to such a delicate operation. Given their nonchalant attitude over this issue, it is questionable whether they have the necessary cultural or professional expertise. The relocation of the Equestrian Monument is to be rejected because of practical difficulties and a possible endangerment of the monument itself. It is presently - after nearly hundred-year preservation - in perfect condition and after its relocation this will no longer be the case.

The fact that the government accepts this possible destruction of probably the most historical iconic monument in Namibia is strange, since it subscribes to the preservation of the cultural property of its citizens within the context of the constitutionally guaranteed rights and the heritage protection law of the country.

#### 16. What if the new location is unsuitable?

What was also left open was the question if the new site of the Equestrian Monument proves itself to be

undesirable, what is to be done next – will the monument be moved again – and again – and again? This simple thought experiment alone proves the trickiness of the issue. The only two things that will suffer a monument itself and those who instigated this silly move – in this case Government and its culturally ignorant, the National Heritage Council of Namibia!

### *17. Application of conservation principles*

One of the principle considerations in the field of historic conservation is the Preservation of the heritage substance, which, what concerns the Equestrian Monument, is in no way endangered (unless it be moved). A special historical attraction of this monument is exactly the fact that it remained a hundred percent substantially intact, and that today's contemporaries stand in front of a monument, which belongs to an era that has passed long ago. It reminds of a period that we did not know any longer personally, but gives us, like a faded picture, a glimpse into our shared past. It is like holding an ancient coin in one's hand, wondering whom it once belonged to. It is unique, precious, and demands our undivided respect. Tampering with it does not only inflict harm on this historical treasure, but heaps shame on the heads of those who are ignorant or carelessly minded about its significance or its proper treatment.

Another demand of historic conservation is the continued Usage of a monument, which considered its continued public use as a cult place (sacral function), as travel destination (tourist function) or as public area (recreational function) is not in question. Also from these weighty practical and conservational considerations, the relocation of the Equestrian Monument is to be strictly rejected.

A third demand of historic conservation is the Reversibility of any conservation measure. This means, that any measure can always be reversed again, if it is found later that the measure was executed unprofessionally, that a mistake had been made by taking the measure, or if later generations feel that it should be restituted. This principle has also not to be considered regarding the envisaged relocation of the Equestrian Monument. Should the "Independence Museum" be situated on the spot where the Equestrian Monument stand currently, the Reversibility of this step will have become impossible. The relocation of the Equestrian Monument is also strictly rejected because of this reason.

### *18. International organisations*

Foreign expert opinions: It is desirable, that international heritage conservation organisations such as ICOMOS (International Committee for Monuments and Sites), the UNESCO and other agencies with an interest in protecting and safeguarding of cultural heritage worldwide were to be informed in this important question. They should be asked for a professional appraisal of this matter. These international organisations are concerned with questions regarding heritage protection and the care of monuments, and a relocation of the Equestrian Monument would be precarious without an appraisal or a proper investigation on the part of these organizations as well.

These organizations have professional expertise at their disposal and are recognized worldwide, they can be called upon where cultural property comes under threat by inappropriate handling, or where it threatens to become a political bone of contention. (For example, some time ago in the Near East, two age-old historical Buddha statues, which are on the list of world cultural heritage, were destroyed by armed personnel). Though the Equestrian Monument has its status as recognized and proclaimed national monument, significantly due to its historical context, its artistic quality and its nearly hundred-year existence, the Equestrian Monument is long beyond the mere status of an unknown and obsolete colonial monument. Any foreign observer or expert would understand this immediately, if context and meaning of this outstanding monument should be explained to him or her properly.

### *19. Inappropriate administration of conservation matters*

It is amazing that, although Namibia has a rich cultural heritage, and apart from some few serious efforts in the past - very little research around it is actually conducted. The drawing up of a proper inventory of the historical and cultural monuments of Namibia still has not been started yet, and little is done from the official side.

change this deplorable state of affairs. One of the painful disadvantages resulting from it is that the Nam cultural property, whatever group of cultures it may associated with, is at risk to suffer irreparable damage since its cultural value is not recognized or appreciated too late. The Equestrian Monument is no exception to this threat.

By this deplorable state of affairs, irreplaceable values have gone lost even before the nation realised, which had once been at its disposal. The National Heritage Council worked from 1993 to 2004 - those are eleven years (!) - on a new heritage protection law, and one asks oneself, what was already lost due to this unfortunate condition in terms of Namibian cultural property during that period alone.

A good example are the meteorites from the area around Gibeon, which since Independence have been illegally exported and are now nearly depleted, but have been lost for Namibia forever. Stolen meteorites: the Meteorite Fountain in that Post Street Mall were not replaced, their empty stands have remained vacant for years. It is reported from Otjimbingwe that the old wind generator has fallen victim to the cutting torch of the scrap metal pilferers. In Outjo, a bronze memorial tablet from a proclaimed monument (Naulila) was stolen, as was another bronze memorial tablet stolen at the old POW-camp at Aus. The historical marble memorial tablet Namutoni disappeared without a trace. The station building in Usakos remains a ruin after a truck smashed through it, the case of the Karibib bakery (old Grüner Kranz Hotel) seems to be forgotten.

The Old German School building in Klein Windhoek, which belongs to the National Heritage Council, stands unused, unoccupied and rots away. It seems that the Heritage Council is administratively totally overburdened by the letting of a building of the size of a tiny single family house. And this body is responsible for the safeguarding of the national heritage!

## *20. The interest of further generations*

The concept of the conservation of our shared heritage becomes meaningless without taking into account the interest of future generations. It should be appreciated that it was not our generation that put up the Equestrian Monument in the first place. It was the generation of our grand-fathers. Future generations have an entirely different interest in its unblemished preservation than we have today. It is therefore our duty to preserve it with all means at our disposal while we can, in order to hand down to future generations what we have inherited from previous generations. This is the ethical and cultural imperative. Our job is not to instrumentalise parts of our heritage for cheap political or ideological gestures, but to ensure its continued existence.

## **Conclusion**

The following conclusion can be drawn from the above line of thoughts: If the government decides one-self to relocate the Equestrian Monument (leaving open intentionally (?) as to exactly how, where to, what the compelling reasons for such a move are), without taking into consideration the will of the cultural groups concerned, without investigating the legitimate questions and doubts of the professional heritage conservationists, art historians, the tourism people, ordinary citizens and town planners etc., it is at danger to ignore the constitutional rights of its inhabitants, and to endanger Namibian cultural property with all accompanying problems.

Probably without knowing it, the government is at risk to inscribe itself as culturally ignorant and foolish by believing that the relocation of significant monument will be without consequence. The Equestrian Monument is not a teapot that can be shifted from one hot plate on the stove to another one. For these reasons and the reasons specified above, the Namibian government is urgently advised against the relocation of the Equestrian Monument.

The Equestrian Monument is to remain like it is, at its traditional place, it is to be further cared for and maintained, utilized, enjoyed and debated, and it is to remain, unscathed, because it is an invaluable piece of Namibian cultural property, a cultural and historical gem that qualifies for all forms of care and protection.

law and statute.

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### *Portrait: The Equestrian Monument in Windhoek*

The "Equestrian Statue" is one of Windhoek's most prominent landmarks, and Namibia's most well-known historical military monument. Together with the Christus Kirche, the Alte Feste and Government Building (Tintenpalast), it forms the core of Windhoek's old buildings and historical emblems.

As a result of an idea expressed by the Commander of the Kaiserliche Schutztruppe, Oberstleutnant ("Colonel" Ludwig von Estorff, a decision was taken to erect a statue in honour of their German compatriots who were killed in action or during the wars with Namibians between 1903-1907 and during the Kalahari expedition of 1908, which were waged in opposition to German colonial rule. The fallen included 1,525 officers and soldiers, 92 marine officers and soldiers, and 124 civilians. The choice fell upon the design submitted by the sculptor Adolf Kürle of Berlin, and the statue was cast in the Gladbeck foundry in Berlin.

The completed bronze statue was brought to Swakopmund by ship in 1911. From there it was transported along the narrow-gauge railway track to Windhoek. Kürle himself supervised the statue's erection in Windhoek. Referred to at the time as the Reiterdenkmal ("Equestrian Statue Monument"), it was placed between the Christus Kirche and the Alte Feste), on a site chosen by Colonel Von Estorff.

The Equestrian Statue was dedicated on January 27, 1912, Emperor Wilhelm II's birthday. Pastor Hamm (Evangelic) and Pater Klaeyle (Catholic) led a short service dedicated to the occasion. Amongst the dignitaries were present the Governor of the Protectorate, Dr Theodor Seitz, First Secretary Dr Oskar Hintrager, Judge Hugo Bach, Colonel Joachim von Heydebreck, the Mayor of Windhoek, His Worship Dr Houtermans, District Commissioner Todt, Police Inspector Major Heinrich Bethe, and Major Victor Franke from the northern detachments. The statue was unveiled after a speech by Governor Seitz. A military parade and festivities in the town followed the ceremony.

The double-life-size statue, reaching a height of 4.5 m, stands on a pedestal of granite found in the Okala area. It depicts a German Schutztruppe cavalryman in full uniform, although Kürle left out certain details such as the rifle scabbard and the saddlebags on artistic grounds. The soldier faces northwards, i.e. the direction of Imperial Germany. As stipulated under the conditions of the tender, the statue represents the idea of an eventual victory after heavy fighting.

The Equestrian Monument is insofar unique, in that, from an art- and culture-historical point of view, it represents a mounted trooper of the German colonial forces (Schutztruppe) in the form of an equestrian sculpture. Since antiquity, the representation of persons in the form of an Equestrian Monument was a privilege reserved for highest nobility like emperors, kings and princes only. The commemoration of a mounted foot soldier (holding the rank of a Non-Commissioned Officer) in the form of an Equestrian Monument is not only in the European tradition, but world-wide. By this criterion alone, the Equestrian Monument in Windhoek corresponds with all requirements of singularity, uniqueness and authenticity, which let it stand far above all other similar war memorials.

The Equestrian Monument, as a bronze sculpture with high accuracy of detail, is a high-ranking piece of art. In 1897, the artist Adolf Kürle created a masterpiece, which documents the 19th century sculptural art of Imperial Germany. Unscathed, it outlasted a full century of historical tensions and fundamental political changes. That makes the monument a special cultural monument, particularly in the light of the fact that it was found not in Europe, but stands on African soil.

Shortly after the Reiterdenkmal's inauguration, Kürle returned to Germany. A few months later, on 6 April 1912, he died of an illness contracted in German South West Africa. The Order of the Red Eagle, Class IV was posthumously conferred on him in May 1912 by Emperor Wilhelm II.

The plaque affixed to the front of the statue's granite base reads as follows:

***"In honourable commemoration of the brave German soldiers who lost their lives for Emperor Wilhelm II's Empire to preserve this country during the 1903-1907 Herero and Hottentot uprisings and during the 1908 Kalahari Expedition.***

***Also in honourable memory of German civilians who fell victim to the indigenous peoples during the uprisings.***

***Killed in action, missing in action, killed in accidents and succumbed to diseases***

From the Imperial Colonial Troops: From the Navy:

Officers 100 Non-officers 7

Non-commissioned Officers 254 Non-commissioned Officers 13

Troopers 1180 Non-troopers 72

Killed during the uprising

Men 119 Women 4 Children 1

On the Index of the Namibian Institute of Architects (NIA), the Equestrian Statue Monument is rated Class 1 with a score of 100.

The Equestrian Statue Monument is situated in **Robert Mugabe Avenue** opposite the **Christus Kirche** at the front of the **Alte Feste** in the capital city, Windhoek, in the Khomas Region. The statue was officially proclaimed a national monument on January 2, 1969.

### **The Author:**

**Andreas Vogt**, born on July 26, 1962 in Windhoek/Namibia, unmarried, attended primary and high school in Windhoek/Namibia. Conscription 1981-2, studied humanities thereafter (law, languages, political science, political philosophy and philosophy) at Stellenbosch University/South Africa during 1983-88, obtaining B.A. and Honours-B.A.-degrees.

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