



South Africa's Coat of Arms

The design and symbolism of the new Coat of Arms

The Coat of Arms is a series of elements organised in distinct symmetric egg-like or oval shapes placed on top of one another.

The motto – !ke e: /xarra //ke, written in the Khoisan language of the /Xam people, literally meaning: diverse people unite. It addresses each individual effort to harness the unity between thought and action. On a collective scale, it calls for the nation to unite in a common sense of belonging and national pride – Unity, in Diversity.

Elephant tusks – symbolise wisdom, strength, moderation and eternity.

The ears of wheat – in the oval shape formed by the tusks – symbolise fertility, growth and the development of potential, the nourishment of people and the agricultural aspects of the Earth.

The shield – the shape of the gold shield is drum-like. It has a dual function: the display of identity and of spiritual defence.

The human figures – are derived from images on the Linton Stone, a world-famous example of South African rock art, now housed and displayed in the South African Museum in Cape Town. The Khoisan, the oldest known inhabitants of our land, testify to our common humanity and heritage as South Africans. The figures are depicted in an attitude of greeting, symbolising unity. This also represents the beginning of the individual's transformation into the greater sense of belonging to the nation and by extension, collective humanity.

The spear and knobkierie – dual symbols of defence and authority – also represent the powerful legs of the secretary bird. The spear and knobkierie are lying down, symbolising peace.

The protea – an emblem of the beauty of our land and the flowering of our potential as a nation in pursuit of the African Renaissance – symbolises the holistic integration of forces that grow from the Earth, nurtured from above.

The secretary bird – characterised in flight – the natural consequence of growth and speed. It is a powerful bird

whose legs – depicted as the spear and knobkierie – serve it well in its hunt for snakes, symbolising protection of the nation against its enemies. It is a messenger of the heavens and conducts its grace upon the Earth. In this sense, it is a symbol of divine majesty. Its uplifted wings are an emblem of the ascendance of our nation, while simultaneously offering us its protection.

The rising sun – an emblem of brightness and splendour. It symbolises the promise of rebirth; the active faculties of reflection, knowledge, good judgement and willpower. It is the symbol of the source of life, of light and the ultimate wholeness of humanity.

The completed structure of the Coat of Arms combines the lower and higher oval shape in a symbol of infinity. The path that connects the lower edge of the scroll, through the lines of the tusks, with the horizon above from which the sun rises, forms the shape of the cosmic egg within which the secretary bird rises. In the symbolic sense this is the implied rebirth of the spirit of our great and heroic nation.