

R H O D E S I A N A F R I C A N A R T

(1857 - 1974)

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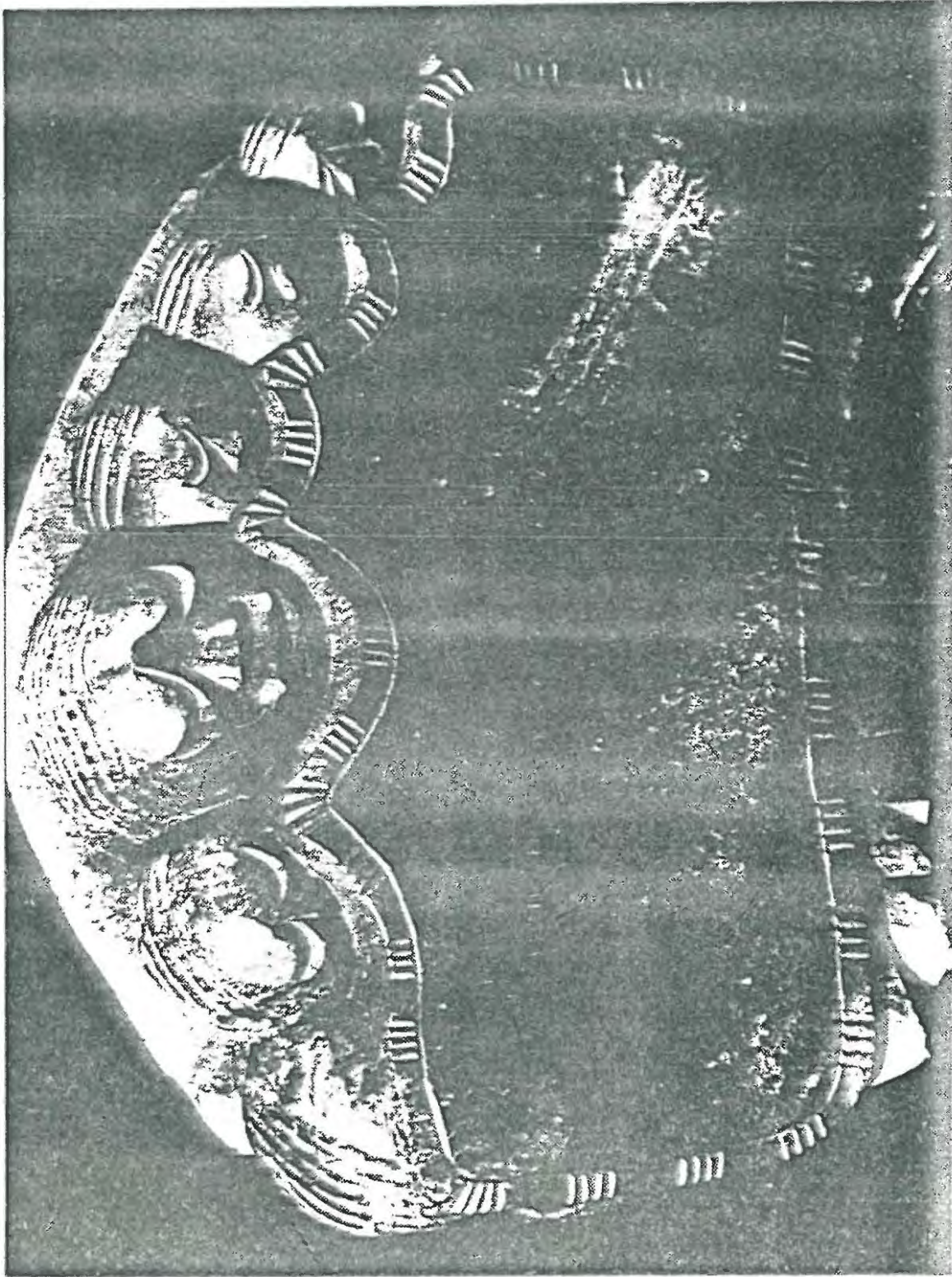
by

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24. Sleeping Family (NICHOLAS MUKONBERAN WA)
(Green serpentine)

SECTION I

I N T R O D U C T I O N

ART is life, and life is for living. This is the essential function of Mankind. Everything interrelates. African life and thought are inseparable. Art is an implement of power; it bridges the gap between Man and his Gods, and Man and Nature. The ability to understand art, does not depend on the ability to see and appreciate but to understand the culture of the people, (to know the past).

When considering AFRICAN ART, one can be sure that the ART OF RHODESIA is certainly the last to come to one's mind; that is, if one excludes the Prehistoric Artist of Rhodesia and the ART of the Zimbabwean culture, and concentrates on ART executed after the PIONEER PERIOD (circa 1857) to the turn of the century.

Comparatively little has been written on the aspect of local art, and when it has, it is primarily concerned with SHONA SCULPTURE. Rhodesian art is primarily functional, and the range of materials as well as the range of techniques are equally vast.

The art of sculpture and carving particularly in wood, is a well-known characteristic of Africa. Rhodesia, however, does not offer such a vast selection of traditional art today, whether in wood, stone or metal. The carvers in Rhodesia, unlike those of some African States have long since downed their tools as there are no longer the rituals that at one time inspired the artist. These rituals have almost died out and the Kings that were his patrons have been out of power for centuries.

The destruction of traditional African values is inevitable

INTRODUCTION/.....

because of cultural change, white civilization, and more recently, exploitation has forced the traditional carver to become a carpenter or to join a co-operative in order to provide Tourist Art.

SECTION II

Rhodesian African Art can be divided into two basic types:-
FUNCTIONAL ART and SYMBOLIC ART.

It should be remembered that the ART of the Rhodesian African peoples is also expressed in objects which have no religious character, for example, architecture, the decoration of houses, mats, objects made from bark, cooking utensils, decorated pots, drums, axes, head-rests and so on.

In a study of African Art, it would be incorrect to omit these domestic articles, as this might give the impression, erroneously held by many, that all African Art has religious significance. On the SYMBOLICAL side, however, the Zimbabwe birds, decorated staffs used by spirit mediums, and the modern stone carvings, may be included.

The African in traditional society believed that there were personalities in things, in the world around him, which could behave in surprising and unpredictable ways. In order to make their behaviour predictable, the AFRICAN produced ART.

It is sometimes suggested that the African artist of today has not carried on the traditions of his great predecessors, which I feel applies to the Rhodesian African Artist; he has been the victim of Colonialism, Christianity or Tourism. (Tourist Art or AIRPORT ART, as it has more recently been called).

Tourist art has no function within traditional African cultures and is not art in essence, but is mechanically produced

KITSCH or trash manifested in souvenirs for unsophisticated sightseers. It has been increasingly mass produced in advance, for sale by curio dealers at hotels, airports and for export abroad. Furthermore, TOURIST ART emphasizes a realism out of keeping with traditional African Art.

Probably few Europeans in Rhodesia realise what a wealth of Ancient Art exists in their country, and the majority of those that do, take only a fleeting glance at its details, either because they are disinterested in its history or are unable to accept the reason for its existence.

Rhodesia contains some of the most priceless rock paintings in Southern Africa, but unless steps are taken to preserve and protect them, they will soon be lost to posterity. Deterioration has resulted from both intentional and unintentional vandalism. Picnic parties light fires in shelters, so that paintings are blackened by smoke or flake off in the heat. People try to 'improve' on the paintings or cut their initials in the ancient paint. Paintings have even been used for targets in rifle practice. Africans chip off paint for use in obscure medicines, and cattle are herded into the shelters and rub their greasy backs on the walls, destroying the lower paintings. Paintings which we allow to be treated in these ways are doomed, yet they are an ancient art that deserves to be handed on to posterity and protected.

The great traditional arts of Africa are centred on the tribal cultures of the CONGO and NIGER basins and on those of

WESTERN SUDAN. It is not true that the SHONA never had an artist nor any craft except the "weaving by the women of grass mats in very simple pattern".

Only a few specimens of traditional art have so far been found in the environment of Zimbabwe. These are the so-called STEATITE or soapstone carvings and are often damaged due to the extreme frailty of the stone. Best known is the Zimbabwe bird sculpture, executed in a forceful simplified 'pole-style'. Other finds include stone bowls in relief with plaited band and tendril motifs, wooden vessels with signs of the Zodiac, and simple vases.

What has been described for the whole area inhabited by South-Eastern Bantu, as a rather stiff and rigid pole-sculpture, is overtaken in quality by many of the utensils decorated by the Shona.

Simple but attractive geometric surface designs appear on a wide variety of objects, seldom found today on the outer or inner walls of the Shona rondavel huts. The traditional patterns are chevrons, triangles, rectangles and diamonds filled in with a range of ochres or with a series of parallel coloured lines. These patterns appear to have been known as MUVALI, i.e. eggs.

MUVALI recur on the pottery and on the stone walls of the KHAMI RUINS and also, of course, Zimbabwe. MUVALI must be regarded as traditional designs which can be traced in various forms throughout Africa, south of the Sahara.

In Rhodesia, MUVALI were probably introduced by the first of

the SHONA people to arrive south of the Zambezi, circa A.D. 800, based on pottery decoration at sites dated by radio-carbon tests.

Animals are often depicted on the inside walls. Until recently, all the colours used were taken from the earth: light and dark grey, reddish-brown and ochre, or black and yellow are the most common combinations.

In addition, a number of stylized representations of the crocodile have been found. These are executed in relief and then coloured. The reptile creatures depicted on Rhodesian rocks are thought to be connected with the traditional cult of the dead and the belief in the continuity of life after death, (which must have reached back far into the past). In many ancient cultures the place of the departed was beyond or under the water. The amphibious nature of these mythological figures, therefore, indicate this belief. The ABENANZWA tribe of the WANKIE DISTRICT worship the crocodile as a rain-bringer.

The decoration of hut walls by painting and the moulding of the 'daga' is still practiced by some Rhodesian African tribes, but traditional examples are rare. There are two reasons which explain the recent lack of mural decoration. In Matabeleland, the Matabele originally made a beehive shape hut entirely out of wood and grass. Most of the tribes which can be included under the terms 'SHONA' or 'TONGA' once formed part of the Rozwi Confederation and their traditional life was largely disrupted by the NGUNI invaders during the nineteenth century.

It has been said that art thrives on adversity; this may be true of the art of genius, but it is certainly not true of folk art. The ordinary man or woman was far too preoccupied with the problem of survival during periods of disturbance to have time or inclination to engage in artistic work. The fact is clearly demonstrated in the art of pot making, which deteriorated during the nineteenth century, never again to attain the standard reached by the earlier potters.

Another factor which may have had considerable influence on hut decoration, was the existence of the powerful chiefs such as the ROZWI MAMBOS. In the same way that royalty controlled the fashions in beads, the use of traditional decorative motifs may also have been controlled by the chiefs, and when their rule came to an abrupt end, some of the traditional arts may have been lost.

Thus the geometric surface designs that appear on a wide variety of objects also occur in personal ornamentations, for example, tattooing or cicatrization (NYORA) or in ornamentation of mats and pottery.

With NYORA, the personal ornamentations are not always performed for purely medicinal reasons, for it is also a tribal custom which is disappearing rapidly as civilization encroaches upon their culture.

LIVINGSTONE notes in his 'MISSIONARY TRAVELS AND RESEARCH 1854', that "Many tatoo their bodies by inserting some black substance beneath

the skin which leaves an elevated cicatrix about half an inch long; these are made in the form of stars and other figures of no particular beauty".

Today, these cicatrices are generally cut only on the skin of the abdomen, if at all. The girls, however, still think they will please their future husbands by using this practice.

The public Nyoras adorn the forehead, the temple, etching the hair line, in the cheeks and decorating the root of the nose, but rarely extend onto the lower half of the face. The private Nyoras adorn areas between the collar-bones and breast, but not the breasts themselves. Between the breasts there is a concentration of marks and a linear pattern follows the lower breastfold.

The body patterns do not differ as much between tribes as do the face markings. There are several reasons for the public Nyoras. Firstly, before the advent of the white man, when the various tribes were continually at war with one another, it was customary for the victors to carry off the women of the vanquished tribe. The Nyoras, therefore, served to identify women in strange kraals and so aid in their liberation.

Nyora, is now regarded as a relic of olden times. The reasons for making the marks have now ceased, although the medicinal Nyora still prevails. Basically this involves making an incision where the pain occurs and a powder is then rubbed in the incision.

When one questions Africans now as to whether they would

mark their children they generally answer in the negative. When questioned as to whether the cuts are made to denote bravery as was customary among the Zulu warriors, who amputated the first phalanx of the fifth finger (or the American Indians and Grecian Stoics who burnt this digit), they invariably illicit a negative answer.

Pottery as an individual expression of tribal traditions, reflected by craftsmen employed in the daily life of every tribe, has been regarded as a means by which to judge the cultural level of a people and their inter-relationship with other people. In the wandering movements of African tribes, traditions moved with them, were transplanted to new abodes and preserved through many generations.

The introduction of better tools has enabled people to make wooden vessels and discard the use of pottery, as happened amongst the Hottentots. The ubiquitous petrol-tin has now a world-wide distribution greatly to the detriment of the older handicrafts, but, however, we must not presume that because a people do not use pottery they are necessarily ignorant of it.

Pottery is perhaps the most important work of art within a primitive African society. It is exclusively relegated to women and not all women are experts at it. It is not known when the African started to mould clay pots, but they must have done so soon after adopting a settled mode of habitation. The art of pot making is sometimes learnt by observation but often it is either the mother, or the grandmother, who pass it on to the younger generation.

The better type of clay is that found near swampy ground and at a depth of between one to three feet under the surface. Pots made immediately after the clay is extracted from the ground are not as strong and durable as those made of the clay that is permitted to dry first before it is used. When the clay is dry it is ground into a powderlike state and this helps to eliminate any foreign bodies which otherwise might tend to crack the pots. The 'powder' is moistened, mixed and when thick it is thoroughly kneaded and then the moulding begins.

The serenity which a Mashona woman adopts when engaged in moulding her pots is as gracious as it is impressive. She needs nothing other than a shell of a river snail as her main tool, which is known as RGWAMBA and this is used for smoothing.

Examination of various categories of prehistoric pottery is still in progress, but no serious attempt has yet been made in Rhodesia to make a comparative study of the various types of pottery found at the present time.

Amidst the prehistoric vessels and those produced today, the moulded decorations show a high tendency of being derived from human characteristics and that, in their earlier development, the anthropomorphic and sexual aspect was a motivating factor in the

making and various uses of certain pots. In Central Africa some pots are bluntly called 'female-pots'; in Nigeria, pots have been described as being in the shape of a hollow female torso.

It is questionable whether there are other vessels with anthropomorphic connotations, and whether the male significance will be found only. One example is known of a 'male' pot. It was found in 1900 in a cave South-East of Fort Victoria. It is animal-shaped, painted with black and red stripes, and has male signa modelled on it. This pot was said, at times, to become invested with life and could change its dwelling place.

The existence of such zoomorphic pots, representing the lion, zebra, tortoise and birds etc. is well known. They were originally used as funerary urns. An important industrial centre for the manufacture of this type of vessel still exists in the WEDZA HILLS, south of Marandellas. Such a pot was found in ENKELDOO RN in a grave and the Native tradition was that it became animated at night by the soul of the deceased so that it walked and danced; hence, such pots are always made with legs.

The conical and elongated lugs are most numerous among the traditional motifs. The persistent recurrence of the breast pattern on pottery throughout a great part of Rhodesia is remarkable.

The motif seems to have had a distribution across the greater part of Africa and Europe as well. In Rhodesia, it can be assumed that these pots were closely connected with the significance of married life.

The young wife is regarded as the container of tribal continuance. The pot given by her to the man she marries is symbolical of her own body and, therefore, bears female signs. The bride had to make such a pot for her husband and present it to him on their wedding day. If she was unable to make the pot herself, a potteress was employed to make the vessel.

The pot CHIGATE is a large one for storing food. Round the shoulder are five pairs of lugs (MAZAMU) indicating female breasts. These Mazamu actually appear on furnaces also and are occasionally moulded on the plaster walls of huts. The Mazamu symbolizes that married life would prevent a scarcity of food. In each of the interspaces is a pair of round finger indents. These are called MAZISO (eyes). They are synonymous with a warning; as the pot is for the sole use of the married couple it is greatly treasured and should not be touched by others, least of all by children.

Still more important is the bath CHIKATI, which is similar in size to the CHIGATE. Its features are similar except that it has

a wider neck. This bowl must also be given by the bride to the husband and be kept as a sacred object, again to be touched by no-one except the married couple. The wife had to wash the husband from this bowl, as well as anoint him with oil.

CHIKATI translated means "a big pot" but there are other containers of varying shapes for specific uses similarly named, in a complete household. If, however, the bowl is not used as a bath it can then be employed as a storing vessel for dry food, but then the wife must provide it with a lid.

There are two smaller pots similar to the CHIKATI, but here the meaning of the decoration is of no significance. One is GATE (a pot for thick milk) and the other is KAKATI (a small pot for washing hands and face).

Some present day MAKARANGA still make pots, with typical circular depressions in the base, but this feature does not occur on all pots. It is those vessels which are normally carried on the head that are given a hollow in the base. The fact that certain tribes make use of this aid to balance a pot on the head and that others do not, may perhaps originally have had something to do with the style of hairdressing favoured. Obviously a shaven or close-cropped head is desirable if the hollow in the pot base is to be effective, otherwise a ring of bark fibre or other material would be far better. What does seem probable is that in Rhodesia, both in ancient times and today, the use of the hollow base was, and is, common among certain of the people who are now known as the MAKARANGA.

It is evident that, the motifs that have survived to the present day have lost their significance and are now treated as ornamental accessories. A potteress describing the small conical knobs on a pot as "buttons", had applied them simply because they looked nice.

The KOREKORE, who are a part of the MASHONA tribe, live near the districts of LOMAGUNDI, DARWIN, MREWA and MAZOE. Their work has much in common with the pottery made in the Zambezi valley; the comb impression is used and typical of this pottery is the use of a flattened base on smaller vessels.

The BUDJA, incorporated within the MASHONA, occupy widely separated areas in FORT VICTORIA, GWELO, MARANDELLAS, MREWA and the MTOKO districts. They have a large bowl called GAHA, which is used for washing the body. The neck is divided into panels, a black polish alternating with the reddish colour of the pot; there are four pairs of breast-like projections below the carination. The twin-projections may have some hidden meaning, as it was intended to be used as a wash basin. A narrow band of burnish is carried round this zone and over the projections.

The TONGA, found in the North-eastern corner of Rhodesia at MTOKO, make use of two distinct kinds of pottery. One is a black and brown ware, comprising cooking pots, deep bowls and little bowls with flattened bases, used for serving relishes. These pots have a poor black finish and are decorated with slightly raised bands with herring-bone or cross hatched incisions; discs representing the tribal facial

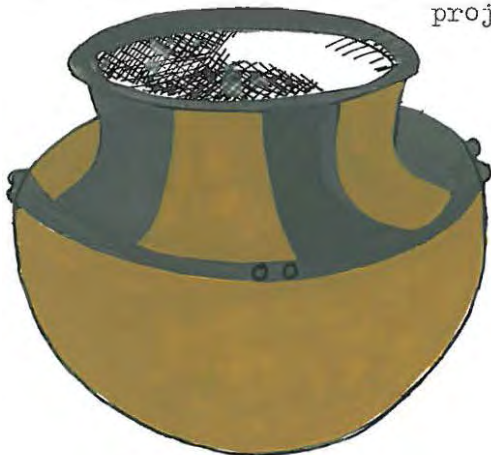
1. A small drinking vessel - KOREKORE



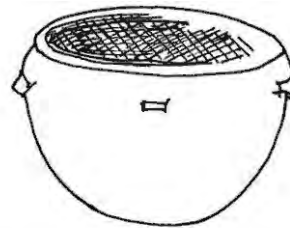
2. A cup - KOREKORE



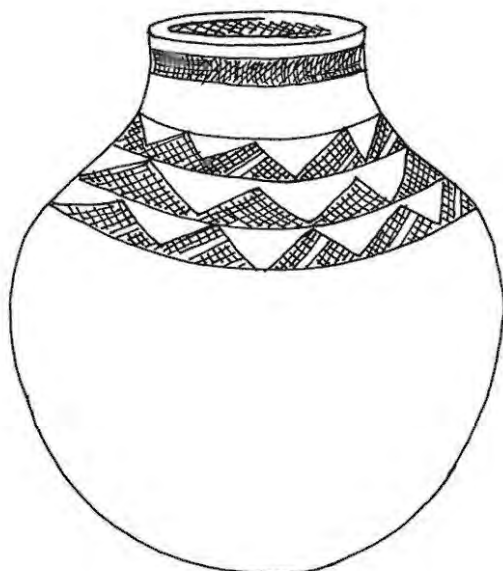
3. Large bowl - BUDJA, MTOKO DISTRICT used for washing the body. The neck is divided into panels of graphite burnish and spaces left reddish or buff self-colour. There are four pairs of projections below the carination. A narrow band of burnish is carried round this zone and over the projections.



4. Sub-spherical bowl - BUDJA MTOKO used by the women only for cooked food. Four elongated projections are placed below the rim at equal intervals.



5. A beer pot - Tonga pottery from MTOKO RESERVE



6. Pot with a short concave neck. The rim, the neck and the upper part of the body burnished with graphite. On the body, below the neck are dimpled impressions - single and pairs alternating - ZEZURU.



cicatrisation; breast-like projections and simple geometrical motifs; all placed a little below the rim. The larger types of these pots are sometimes provided with fibre carrying-slings. All are used exclusively by women and are never touched by men, who know very little about them.

The second type of pottery consists of carinated pots about 10 - 18 inches in diameter. These pots are used for brewing and serving beer and also for storing water. This ware is particularly well made and is so thoroughly burnt that it gives out a clear ring when struck. Apart from the porridge bowls, most of the pots are decorated: directly above the carination with three continuous bands of cross-hatched triangles, covering the whole surface of the neck to a little below the rim. The hatching is done when the clay is fairly dry with the result that the lines of the first incision are not blurred when cross lines are drawn over them.

When the pottery is to be burnt, it is placed on the open ground and completely covered with a particular kind of bark forming a conical pile. As a slow and even firing is essential in the process, the burning is only done on a still evening; the fire is started at the apex of the pile with a bunch of grass the size of a bird's nest and burns slowly downwards. When completely cooled, the pots are washed inside and outside with a red decoction of the bark of the MSOTOTO tree, which is said to prevent them from cracking when first used. With the exception of this stain, no other colour is used.

The pottery of the tribe occupying Central Mashonaland,

the VEZEZURU, is influential over a much wider territory than they occupy themselves.

The clay varies a good deal with the locality, but generally it is a reddish brown and in all, except the finest pottery, has a gritty texture and is burnt to a reddish buff. Very often amongst the simplest painted pots there is a black or graphite burnish around the inside of the lip, the neck and the upper part of the body; the remainder being left the self-colour of the clay. The more elaborate vessels are coloured red, brown, black, graphite and buff. The coloured areas usually triangular in shape and are separated by broad lines made with a chisel-edged stick or alternating point-impressions, which may also be on the rims. Occasionally small bosses are placed at the intersection of the lines, or pairs of dimpled impressions are made with the fingers in the wet clay of the shoulder; these are called 'eyes'.

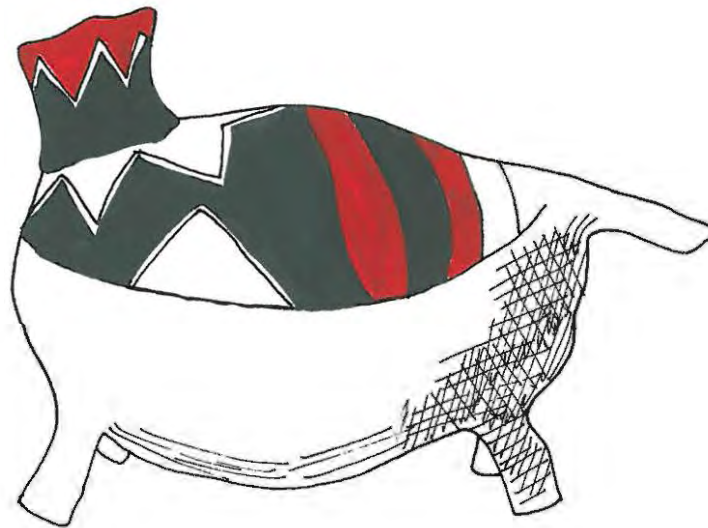
Besides these domestic wares, a wide range of ceremonial pottery is made, the MONDORO vases being the most important. They are intended to represent lions, and to contain the "viscera of deceased chiefs from which the maggots (that later develop into lions) are said to arise". Today, they are made in many forms: birds, zebra and tortoises.

The zebra-shaped pots are still a sacred totem associated with the worship of MWARI by the Mashona and MLIMO by the SINDEBELE. Only a few now conform to the Mwari or Mlimo cult. Among old natives capable of some abstract thought, the concept of eternity was attached to Mwari.

7. Festive Bird ("HARI YE JONGWE")
The surface finish is in graphite and red
contrasted colouring.



8. Vase of the MONDORO CULT, in the form of a lion -
ZEZURU. The surface finish is in graphite and
red contrasted colouring.



In the beginning he was here, that is, somewhere above the world of which he is the unseen owner. He provides the feast of Nature, giving men the fruits of the earth, and yet is not of it, nor bound to it. Yet, Mwari is not a fetish God, bound to some stick or stone. The worship of Mwari may have come from the worship of the SUN; the word Mwari is thought to be a derivation of 'KUMWARIKA' ('to have watery eyes' as one would get from staring into the sun). There are, however, no indications of sun worship in the Mwari cult of today. Mwari is petitioned for the fertility of crops and of barren women.

Included in this group of ceremonial pottery is a vessel which is bird-shaped (HARI-YE-JONGWE); it is brought out at the commencement of a feast as a sign of joyful celebration. This pot, also called the 'pot of honour', is the shape of a male bird and represents a cock, the comb and wattles emphasizing its masculine qualities. The head is coloured red and the neck polished with graphite. The remainder of the body is covered with bands of lozenges, chevrons and triangles in a contrasted red and graphite style. The pot is stored, not with the domestic utensils, but in a separate hut and is only brought out at the commencement of the feast to commemorate a new ascension to the chieftainship.

Among the NJANJA, a branch of the ZEZURU tribe of the Charter district, carry out many animal-shaped vessels. Some are made with two necks, one at either end of the body and are provided with stoppers. These pots have fantastic shapes representing animals and human beings and seem to have lost their original significance as they are used frequently for ordinary domestic purposes.

The ROZWI reside in the Plumtree district of Matabeleland. The pottery is representative of the greater part of Matabeleland at the present time. It is polychrome ware, red, black, graphite and the various self-colours of the clay all being used in the usual bold chevrons and other simple designs to decorate the surfaces of the pots. The coloured areas are usually separated by incised lines. The use of the comb, is not known amongst the VENDA group. There are amongst this group though, large gourd-shaped pots decorated with longitudinal stripes alternating in red and graphite. These pots are used for storage or for carrying water. Bowls with a pedestal are often used both as platters and as covers for storage pots.

Despite the energy put into the making of the pots, the three-legged pot bought at the nearby store serves amply and now enamel plates, spoons and knives are bought too. Calabashes very often replace pottery vessels for carrying water. The petrol tin has already become an integral part of the furniture of every Rhodesian African hut. The younger natives are often found to be totally unfamiliar with the different names of the pots referring to them all as HARI.

Apart from the pottery vessels made in every village today, there are parts of Rhodesia where figurines are occasionally made. There is an instance of recent figurines found among the SUBIA of the Caprivi strip, about 50 miles west of the Victoria Falls. Here the children make clay figurines and mark them with patterns. These figures are dressed up in rags of material to represent Subia women. They are said to have no ritual or magical significance but are merely play-things. These toys are thrown away when they are broken

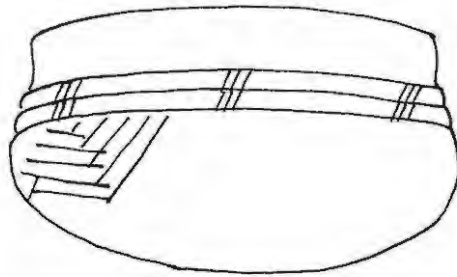
or when the children have no further interest in them.

In the Mtoko district, (and in most areas), the boys make little figurines while herding cattle, usually of pregnant women and cattle. The girls also make figures out of clay and these are shown to their parents. If the work shows promise the child might be taught more about modelling, or in the case of girls, potting. Amongst the BUDJA there are no initiation rites for either sex and so their figurines have no esoteric significance and are merely playthings. This is also applicable to other Rhodesian tribes which do not practise the ritual of initiation.

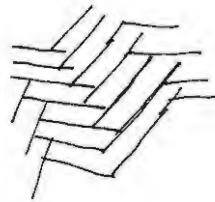
A girl very often dresses her figure like a doll, and sometimes carries it on her back like a baby. These clay figurines, however, are usually too fragile for such treatment and a less realistic but more sturdy doll is made of 'wild orange fruit'. Amongst the BATONKA of the Zambezi Valley, a similar doll is made out of the 'wild orange fruit'. It is covered in 'dung' and is usually decorated with beads. The Batonka doll is supposed to have a fertility significance.

Amongst some modellers, the head and arms, if any, are fixed to the trunk with small sticks, but the legs are integrated with the body. Very often the fathers will make a grotesque caricature of a doll for their young daughters. A TEBELE girl will have her own doll and she must be careful not to play with another girl's; if she breaks it she may then be blamed, if in later life, the other girl's child should die.

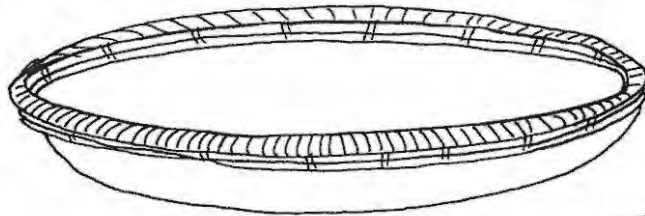
9. CHISEME



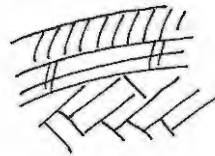
10. Detail of plaiting



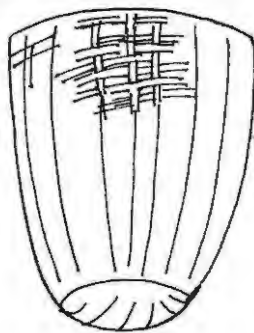
11. CHIGA



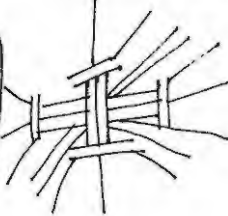
12. Detail of basket



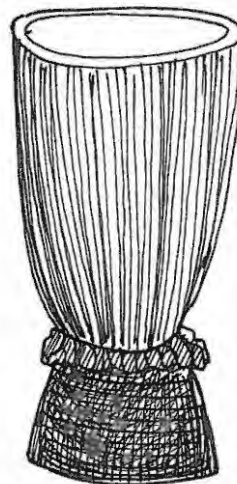
13. TSWANDA



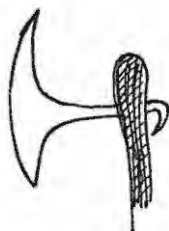
14. Bottom of basket



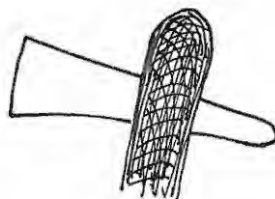
15. DURI



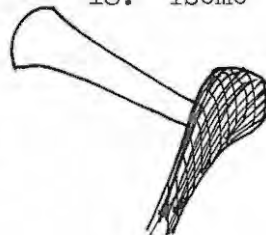
16. GANO



17. DEMO



18. TSOMO



There is a frequent appearance of figurines and female figurines of various types are commonly found in the Neolithic cultures of the FERTILE CRESCENT and in other early Asiatic and European cultures. On the evidence of early legends and of folklore, these have been interpreted as relating to the continuance of fertility in mankind of domestic animals and of crops. They seem to have been very closely connected with early agricultural practices, but today in Rhodesia, they play the sole part of a toy.

Baskets were, until recently, only seen in the African hut, but now they have found their way into any shop selling African wares. The CHIGA, however, is the basket that appears to be used most often and is used for winnowing mealies and other grain during the process of grinding. Reed baskets are made for the netting of fish or the fish are caught in the shallows by the simple process of driving them to the banks and then flicking them out by hand or with the aid of branches or very occasionally by spearing them. Poisoning of fish occurs and actually acts more like a drug. The poison is obtained from indigenous bushes. In the Zambezi region, tight spiral wicker-work baskets are made in a spherical shape.

A common sight in the African village is the wooden grain mortar, (DURI). This is made from three varieties of tree in Mashonaland: the MUKUYU, which is the ordinary fig-tree; the MUTSAMVI, a large variety bearing very small figs; and the MUKUTE. The Mukute grows in vleis and wet places and bears a small black fruit. These mortars are all made of soft woods, whereas the pestle (MUTSI) is cut from the MUKONONO tree which is one of the hardest and toughest

of the Mashonaland timbers. It is the wood of the MNQNDO or MSASA tree, again a strong and hard wood, that is used for the handles of axes. There are a variety of axes in use: a battle axe (GANO), the woodcutting axe, (DEMO) and the dancing axe (TSOMO). This dancing axe is much smaller and lighter than the others and is used in dancing to flourish from side to side and so to ward off evil spirits.

Traditional weapon making, however, was left to the despised Mashona (the smith's of Africa). They did not confine themselves to the making of assegais for their overlords, but made excellent hoes, adzes, hatchets and the curious fetish-axes used in the dances to bring out the 'MASHAWE SPIRITS'. There were, however, skilled craftsmen whose work was highly valued for military efficiency: the shield-makers, skilled in the cutting and preparation of the ox-hide and the colour of the pettries signifying the different regiments, being but one example. The shields were used not only in war but at national dances as a means of enforcing loyalty. The makers of the NDHLUGULA, a black ostrich-feather head-dress, were as skilled as the shield makers. The head-dress was a prized ornament.

The pervasive sexual thought introduced in their furnaces is fashioned after the principle of a female torso. The principle was handed down through the generations complete with the sign of productiveness, i.e. a woman's breasts. The furnace is decorated with various tribal markings (cicatrices).

The bellows are fashioned from goatskins. A cruel

practice was observed formerly in obtaining these. The animal was skinned alive the length of time it lived after the operation indicated whether the bellows would be good or not.

Apart from the making of weapons, there were also specialists in the making and tuning of drums, xylophones and the small 'kaffir-piano' (MBIRA).

These untutored forms of expression give us some idea of the potentialities which are imminent, if not manifest among the Rhodesian natives. That the average 'MUNTHU' is less likely to be a painter or a sculptor than is the average European is hardly to be doubted. Manual skill even in their own crafts is far from being a general inheritance.

It would seem right that there should be an industrial future for them when one views articles like their rugs. They collect the fibres to make these rugs from the wild Hibiscus and Baobab trees. To dye the rugs, local vegetable dyes are used. The majority of sisal mats are produced in the CHIPINGA area of the Eastern Highlands. The material used depends considerably upon where they are made. In the Midlands fibre is obtained from a plant growing under the MOPANI tree which is very spikey and hard being only about twenty-two inches tall. These are hammered until the outer covering or bark is removed. The inside fibre mass is beaten to release the strands and it is then placed in water, washed very well to get rid of all the juices and then put out to dry. The fibres are white. It is then plaited into enormous lengths after which the work begins.

The plaits are stitched together by using a strong string.

Judging from these mats, baskets or neatly sewn skins, one can hardly doubt their dexterity. Some of the women show artistic perception in ornamental bead work and embroidery, but it is nevertheless, a great shame that the traditional significance has been virtually lost to the tourist market and even civilization.

The wearing of a charm around the neck, the waist or arm, may be merely suspended on a string or thread. It may be included on a string of beads, where it may be overlooked unless carefully inspected. The purpose of the beads, whatever the meaning, is said to be quite different to that of the charm.

The Mashona (MZEZURU) tribe place a medicinal charm round a neck of a baby which is meant to hasten the closure of the 'fontanelle'. Charms are used more for the prevention of disease rather than for their cure. A remedial charm is used by Mashona mothers to cure their children of the 'sickness known as NAUSEA'. It takes the form of two or three monkey-nut seeds, threaded on to a fine string, which is then put round the child's neck. When the string breaks, the nausea is supposed to disappear.

Strings of beads are worn by women for reasons not altogether obvious. The beads consist of the 'SHUMA' (a small round bead), the MATOMBO (a larger one) and the KURARI (a rod-like bead). The Kurari is usually strung with four to six large beads. Many women maintain that they are purely decorative. There are a great number of strings

worn round the waist but some African women 'have admitted that the beads help render them more attractive to men".

The wearing of beads is also a sign of engagement or pledge of marriage. The girl is given beads by the elders of the family of the husband. A woman with many strings of beads may denote the husband's fondness to his wife.

Today the practice is not necessarily performed with the same rigid detail as formerly. The girl is often given money to buy beads instead of actually being presented with the actual ornament. Apart from the decorative aspect, these beads are worn by children of both sexes as Africans believe that the children will grow up to be strong and healthy if they wear them.

Beads that have survived since the time of traders are found being worn by elders and only at 'SHAWE' celebrations. When the elder dies, the beads are put in a pot so that they may not be offended.

Rhodesian African beadwork is nowhere near the complex Zulu work, which is recognised as an important social regulator and indication of status within the social organisation. The symbolism, however, of Zulu beadwork communicated, both publically and privately, the state of one's love life. Common to all of them are the richness and intricacy of their patterns.

Before the advent of the white man and the Portuguese, the elders used to weave, using stringmade from the MUTOWA tree as well as

making cloth. The women made a garment for wearing round the loins, but, since the white man's stores came, these have disappeared. The art of spinning and weaving was not necessarily the work of men. It is believed to have been learned by the Rhodesian African people from the Portuguese natives.

There are very few natives who now know the art of spinning cotton. A bow made from the wood of MUNGNADO or any other tree which will provide a thin piece of wood, which will bend is used; it is roughly oval in cross section, the string being about a foot long is made from the MFUTI tree, the width of the arc being about five inches.

"The cotton, with seeds removed, is pulled out by hand and then it is placed on the string of the bow which is plucked continuously until the cotton becomes opened up and spread out. The cotton is then formed, by hand, into a rough rope. All lumps are removed, leaving soft separated cotton".

At one end of a wooden spindle one foot long and a quarter of an inch in diameter, is a circular piece of wood, two and a half inches wide which is fitted about half an inch from the end. It is very heavy, to facilitate rapid rotation of the spindle. On the bottom side, it is flat with nine notches on its circumference and at the top of the spindle is fitted a small metal hook. The spindle is made to rotate between the thumb and palm of the right hand, and the rope which is attached to the hook is drawn out by the rotation, lengthened and made of a more compact thickness.

"The string of cotton is held by the left hand about six

inches from the spindle hook and the spindle is rotated very rapidly by passing it along the outside thigh of the right leg with the palm of the right hand. When about a foot of thread has been spun, it is wound round the spindle just below the disc and it passes through the hook, over the notch in the disc and the spinner continues spinning the rest of the rope in section, until a thread of strength and fineness is obtained throughout".

In the past, the cloth was white but the present coloured design is a recent innovation, bought from a store. The various industries especially the weaving of cotton, and the working of iron, are disappearing as they find it easier to buy the things they require than to make them now.

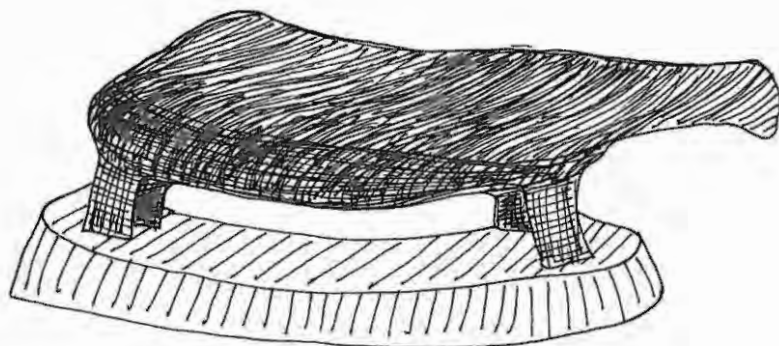
While the art of spinning and weaving is disappearing, the BAROTZWI people who live along the Zambezi River, make decorated bowls still, which are utilitarian objects of prestige value. Occasionally some are more than two feet long. The preferred and usual shape is ovoid with the top and bottom flattened. They are made in two parts. The body of the bowl proper and a shallow lid. The body is deep with thick sides and a heavy lip into which the lid fits. The decoration is usually only found on the lid consisting of animals carved in the round and they are basically functional and serve as a handle for the lid.

The same kind of geometric form and rhythmic line appears in the Barotzwi head-rests. This also applies to those found in Mashonaland. The neck rests tend not to be more than five inches

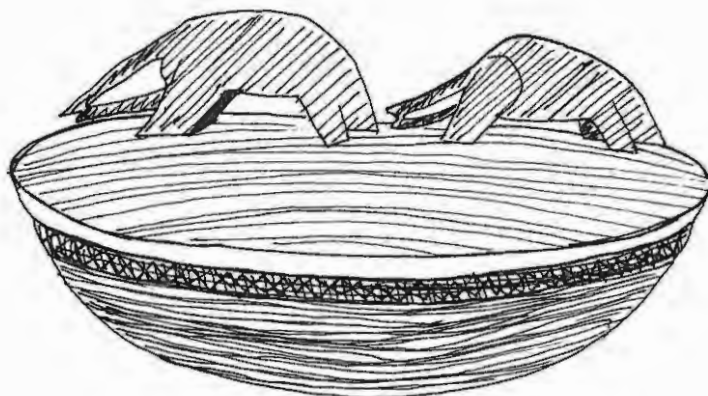
19. Head rest (MAKALONGA)



20. Head rest (MASHONA)



21. BAROTSWI carved bowl



in height and are usually carved out of hard wood. Many of the Barotzwi neck-rests have "water buffalo or other naturalistic forms carved as a stem between the bottom and the top".

In style this art is unrelated to that of other parts of NEGRO AFRICA. This art is almost exclusively a decorative art and lacks the religious and political significance common to African sculpture in other areas.

Black magic in the fullest sense of the word, forms a very considerable chapter of native life. The words 'UKOQONELA', 'UKOPOSA' and 'INYATELO' denote a kind of occult lore with which the more knowledgeable ones are for ever "filling the ears of their simple fellows, who always constitute the great majority".

The immediate effect of European Education and religion has not lessened, but rather increased, the gullibility of the native in this respect. Indeed, the list of magic 'philtres' to be used as love charms and as protection from all kinds of evil influences has been very largely extended by the inclusion of a great number of materials and medicines provided by European commerce.

The weirder, the better would seem to be the rule of these magic prescriptions. One kind of aphrodisiac, which is said to be exceedingly powerful, has ingredients consisting of common washing soda mixed with fat, together with the heart of a cock-dove, dried and pulverized. These superstitions which, in spite of their absurdity, exercise a great deal of influence over the bulk of natives are

not dispelled in a day, nor yet in a century.

Before the advent of the white man, the 'KAFFIR' lived a hard, hazardous life, full of danger and excitement. The males during boyhood and youth were put under discipline which was crude and spartan, but effective in training a man for what was then his duty, which was in the form of hunting and war. The women tilled the soil and bore the children. Now the old order has given place to the new and the horizon of the 'kaffir's' mental vision is bounded on all sides by dull work and idleness.

If he leaves his kraal to seek employment, he very often finds himself hedged in by a thousand irksome restrictions; if he remains at home he is no better off. He is no longer allowed to vary the monotony of his drab surroundings by hunting either big or small game, as did his fathers before him, for the law says he must not carry arms. Even at the beer drinks, the last relic of the old life, "he must not as of old, drink full and deep, lest in the excitement of the hour, and while emphasizing a point in debate, he should chance to break a plate or two, a matter which the white man takes most seriously".

The ABENANZWA, who live in the Wankie district, have very few superstitions, nor have they any omens connected with birds or animals. The crocodile is regarded by them as a RAIN-BRINGER, but only when it leaves the water and walks about the banks of the river or pool which it inhabits. Should the Africans be compelled to kill the crocodile, they throw the carcass back into the water.

"Each clan swears by the animal which is the totem of the

clan and the whole tribe by MOTO - (fire). . They do not hesitate to kill the animal representing their totem if necessary, but do not eat its flesh, although they have no hesitation in killing and eating the flesh of the totems of the other clans".

Among the ABENANZWA the women and the girls have their heads ornamented with beads which they wear strung on to their hair. Bead-work also adorns their short petticoat of limbo, in the shape of circles divided into four parts.

Nyora is found amongst these people, but it is the chest that is tatoed. It is amongst the older men too, that you see necklaces of beads being worn, with charms hung from them.

When they bury their dead they are placed in a recumbent position, the man with his head towards the east, because when he was sent into the world, the MLI MO said his work was to get up in the early morning to hunt and do his other work; the woman with her head to the west, as she had to look to the setting sun for the return of her husband and to prepare the evening meal.

Apparently the relations of the deceased will go on mourning for a month and both the men and women shave their heads. The women are left to keep up a wailing for a week after the death.

Formerly the ABENANZWA were a rich tribe of a high type, but were badly robbed and harmed by more warlike tribes that they are now poor and live in small communities. They hide away in the hills, growing sufficient crops for their needs.

This habit is, however, on the wane and the inclination of the people is to attach themselves, where possible, to communities already established. They have names for some of the stars and constellations, the majority being called by fancy names - the milky way is known to them as the "BROAD ROAD". The HYDRA which appears at about harvest time they name "THE FAT MAN" or the "FULL MAN". To the PLEIADES they have given the name of "SMALL BIRDS" 'fancying a resemblance to the flocks of wax-bills or the small birds, which frequent the reeds on the banks of the rivers.'

The Rainbow goes by the name of the "ROPE of MLIMO" - they say Mlimo puts out his rope so that the rain shall come no further. Apparently, they have not given much thought to what becomes of the sun at night, taking it for granted that it goes under the earth and comes up at the other side in the morning.

The ABENANZWA have no religious ceremonies connected with the seasons, nor with the crops. There were three great dances held by the King, one when the people were called in to weed his lands, one when the grain flowered, and another when the grain was ripe. These dances were, however, of a social and not a religious character. At the present time they dance whatever they have the inclination.

"The religion of the Abenanzwa is a monotheism of a simple and rational kind, unmixed with anything in the nature of superstition, and far removed from myths and nature worship. There is a sense of devotion and of dependence upon a supreme being". The Abenanzwa believe that the spirit of a woman exists after death equally with that of a man but, in their story of creation, the woman was made first.

Until 1927, little had been written about the natives who called themselves AMANDABELE, which is more commonly known as MATABELE. It has been said that their customs are those of the ZULUS. It has also been pointed out that the large number of natives other than the Matabele who inhabit Matabeleland follow their own tribal customs (that is those of the Mashona tribes) although they speak SINDEBELE.

The so called slave people are the Mashona tribes, the indigenous inhabitants of the colony whom the Matabele found settled here. A few of them, when they had been captured in raids, were actually held by the Matabele in a mild form of slavery.

"Animism, a tendency common among primitive people which leads to the defying or spiritualising of inanimate objects". No evidence can be shown, but the AMAKALANGA have a notion towards animism when they see big trees cut down. They place little garlands of grass upon the stump that remains standing, mumbling some appropriate words.

The Amakalanga believe in, and in a sense worship, one God. It is usually for one common object, and is done by numbers of people together, usually for rain for the good of the crops. Prayer to God by one man by himself and for himself, for either rain or any other favour, blessing or help, is seldom heard of.

Rain-making is considered by every African of every age to be the most essential and foremost of the native customs. It appears that in order to petition for rain, when the rain is slow in coming,

the giving of ROPOKO is made. The Rain-Goddess (MURERI), as she is known to the natives of the district between MACHEKE and Headlands, visits three graves every year in the district. The ceremony entails a large feast; each family gives a little ropoko for the making of the bee. The area around the graves is cleared and then the dancing ensues and once done they return home. No prayers are offered as they have merely satisfied the wishes of the princess who died for them. When MURERI died, she sent her MUDZIMU (spirit) to tell the people of her village that when they were short of rain they were to go to her grave and ask her for help.

In Mashonaland, amongst the VAZUZURU, a religious feast, known as 'CHIPWA' for rain-making is held annually. This is held at a chosen place and time in every part of each district. The 'chipwa' beer is brewed by old women, past child-bearing, because the rain gods strongly resent food which has been prepared by those capable of bearing children.

Before the beer is tested the leader of the 'CHIPWA' ceremony, often an elderly man, addresses the rain Gods, "if the beer offered is acceptable, let us see the rain fall today before we return home, so that we may be assured that the beer and dance have pleased you".

Drinking and dancing commence. Whenever rain falls every person who has attended the rain-making ceremony may not leave until it has stopped falling. Should they leave, the rain-gods will be annoyed to see the people running away from the wetness for which they

have long been mourning, and will stop the rain falling, thinking the people are no longer in need of it.

The 'Lightning Bird', or bird of the heavens, is believed to cause thunder and lightning. There is a possibility that the birds carved in wood, and mounted on poles, and the carved soapstone birds unknown outside Zimbabwe, were there to deceive the lightning bird. The bird-figures on posts, in such cases served as a protection against lightning, and invariably used to surround the 'lelapa' of a witch-doctor or headman. The bird revered as the lightning bird varies from tribe to tribe, and the natives in the vicinity of Zimbabwe still regard the CHAPUNGWE (Bateleur Eagle) as a sacred bird and greet it with hand clapping whenever they see it.

The soapstone birds from Zimbabwe represent two distinct species, the one being a "bird of prey of the eagle or hawk type".

However, amongst Rhodesian Natives, the little dun-bird is not credited with supernatural powers, but is said to herald the coming of rain by the peculiar noise it makes.

In the BELINGWE District a stick is cut from a tree and is scorched by fire in order to dry it. The stick is marked with a notch to represent each new month. It has no proper name but it is referred to as the "stick of the month". The stick told them the time for tilling the ground, for harvesting, for threshing and for the first good rains.

Formerly, this stick was marked and kept when a child was born.

The birth date was registered on the stick, but normal practice now is to throw the stick away. Apart from these purposes it also served as a calendar, which was given to a member in the tribe whose daily duty was to record each day. It also served as a reminder of court cases and the 'tally' was also used in connection with child betrothal. When a 'head of cattle' had been paid this was written on the stick, to show when a father released the wife and how many times the cows had calved.

The institution of NGANGA or witch-doctor, is a custom of Hebrew origin. 'Cursing the enemy', 'casting lots', 'driving away the witches', wearing of charms and averting of omens are all, and always have been the field of activity of the SHONA 'NGANGA' or Witch-doctor.

The casting of lots, locally known as HAKATA, has prevailed among the SHONA NGANGA to this day. Among the more advanced practitioners it has undergone a certain transition. The profession of NGANGA among the SHONA people remains in most cases in the same family, being passed on from the father to the favourite son, who was always trained on two levels: firstly in the use of lot casting, which the throwing of bones and secondly in the use of herbal medicine.

The casting of HAKATA, (small wooden pieces), in some areas they are small snake bones, or hard fruit kernels, with a variety of signs on them, chiefly of chevron pattern. Four kinds of divination are given, namely the origin of the illness, the nature of the illness, the correct herbal medicine to be administered on the cause of a death, and lastly on the smelling out of a witch, from which the

practitioner derived the name of witch-doctor.

The SHONA people, have always believed in the power of ancestral spirits inflicting illness and sometimes death upon their descendents for various reasons. A father of an afflicted family would go to the nearest NGANGA for advice. He would tell the witch-doctor that his child was ill and would ask him to find the cause of it by throwing the HAKATA. The initial question asked by the witch-doctor when once he has thrown the HAKATA to satisfy his client was, if he had made beer for the family spirit. The witch-doctor would then explain to his client that the Hakata had prescribed to him the right medicine upon the wishes of the family spirit. Some times, however, the patient might die and an explanation then follows that the family spirit had called the child to himself and nothing could be done about it.

"The 'smelling out of a witch' - Witchcraft was one of the earliest of human crimes, chiefly of psychological origin and the discovery of the culprit was the main task of a SHONA NGANGA. The art or craft involved a variety of human activities, chiefly performed at night, when the women witches, either singly or in bands, were whirling in the light of the moon, kidnapping, plotting or killing anyone in the way. Many are poisoned in daylight by eating food infected with snake venom or dangerous roots. When a death occurred in the family and there was a strong suspicion of a witch being responsible, the family would go to the Nganga to ascertain the cause".

The witch-doctor would then put on his full attire: the impressive ostrich-feather cap on his head; a skin dress around his waist with

a long tail hanging at the side; some strings of dry bones around his neck in two or three rows like pearls, and his face painted. A sharp axe on a long handle, (HJMBWA), was constantly manipulated menacingly while dancing before his callers.

If anything this attire would most certainly cause spine shivers in any feeble person let alone the guilty one. The Nganga would inspect the onlookers after throwing the Hakata. The guilty person would be spotted at once, her body would be trembling, her eyes downcast and her face frightened.

The Nganga would then dance in front of each person proclaiming some message. He would then come before each person and in a menacing manner shout abruptly to each "have you done it?". The performance would continue; he would return to his bag of Hakata, untie the bag and would chew the roots of a tree therein, and would pretend to believe that the Hakata would tell him the truth.

A weak person would accept the Nganga's verdict and submit to the prescribed consequences, that is death.

It can be seen that the NGANGA, because of his knowledge of psychology, became a sane and accurate diviner. Also, with his knowledge of botany, he disposed of evil persons altogether, or very often managed to transform them into good social beings.

Thus, the witchdoctor, who had a considerable amount of power, apart from his ability to divine the wishes of the spiritual world and to cure the ills of the living, has kept a position in the

Shona society next to the chief himself.

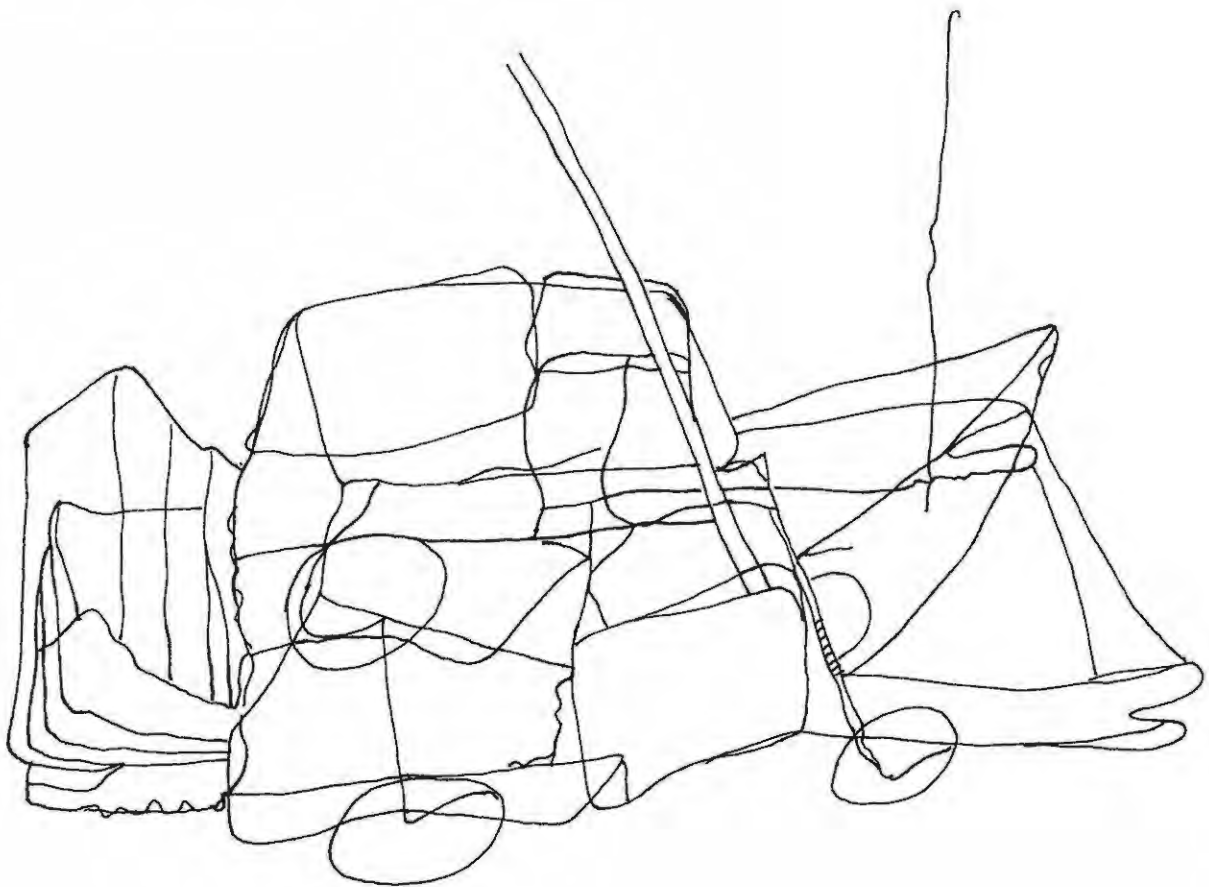
The trees made Hakata bones differ according to the tribe and its situation. The trees are selected because their wood does not crack. Not all witchdoctors make their own bones, some buy their bones from any wood-carver.

Amongst bone throwers in the CHIBI DISTRICT, Makarangas are supposed to keep their bones in a bag with the bill of a vulture. This is said to assist them in seeing better when they are used. There is probably an association of ideas here from the 'keen sight of the vulture'.

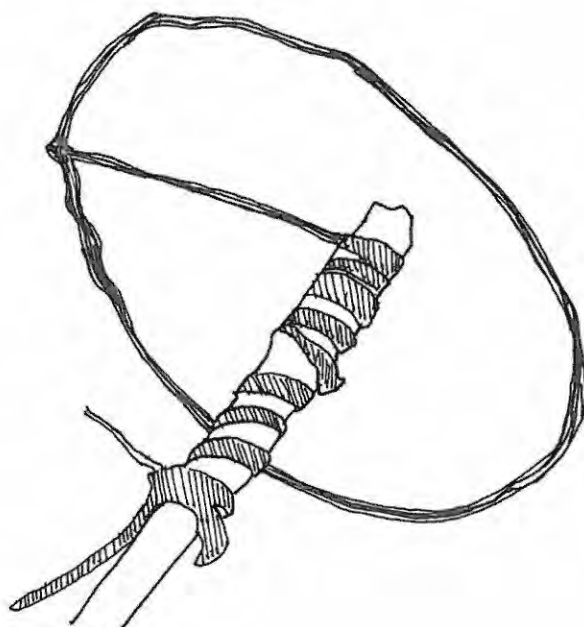
Intricate dice are carved in areas of Mashonaland, although they are now unlike those found during excavations at the KHAMI ruins. Occasionally when obtainable, the modern divining dice are made of ivory, but these are rare. Seldom is the intricate carving or finish of the earlier dice seen. It was usual for dice to have chevron carving on one face.

There is a pebble game played in Rhodesia which is known as TSORO. In traditional African society it was a game for men of leisure played at court. It is a common sight now to see young African men engaged in this game. Its name is of East African origin and is likened to two armies engaged in battle. Each player strives to guard his key men and to capture his opponent's. The capture of certain key men heralds the defeat of the whole army and the end of the game. The game is played with two stones or tsoro-men in a hole. The standard size is four rows with twenty-four holes in

22. Toy Motor Car



23. Attachment of the Steering Wheel



each row. Each man has forty-eight tsoro-men and double rows (one full and one empty) before the game begins. Ancient boards were laboriously carved from soapstone. CHAMINUKA, the great Mashona prophet is reported through legend to have made his holes in hard stone.

Children involve themselves in constructing toys from scrap wire. This may not seem an ART form, but it is a stroke of African ingenuity. Today ownership of wheeled toys constructed from lengths of scrap wire is commonplace amongst the children, both in the towns and in the rural areas in Rhodesia, and elsewhere in Africa.

These playthings range in complexity from simply a pair of wheels or even a single wheel at the end of a steering column, to massive articulated lorries and replicas of modern cars complete with 'drag-like' steering devices. There are a range of models available for examination in Harari township in Salisbury. These models are crudely made; the body work, including the steering column, is carried on two pairs of wheels, occasionally tin lids serve for wheels, which have fixed axles capable of revolving. The front axle can also be made to swivel by manipulating a steering wheel at the end of a disproportionately long column of wood.

The actual construction is difficult to describe and it would be far more worthwhile to watch the African children making them. But, usually the wire steering wheel is lashed to a wooden steering column with a rubber strip, in the same way that the wire at the lower end of the column is attached to the stick. Both the steering column and the wheel are disproportionately large relative to the size of

the rest of the toy. Often the doors are provided with hinges of thin malleable wire attached to the front door stays. A boot may be included which can be made to close and open. Occasionally the boot may be lined with a thin cardboard box torn reasonably accurately to fit inside the frame of the boot.

The cars rarely exhibit anything that might be construed as representing registration plates, lights, trafficators, brakes, roof-rack or exhaust pipe. Generally the car can be steered at will, if care is taken in the manipulation of the steering wheel.

In Africa, Rhodesia included, it must be remembered that the African arts are not compartmentalized or reserved for different occasions. One does not go to one place to hear music, another to hear poetry or to see dancing or to another to see sculpture. These art forms often occur simultaneously.

The origin of all string instruments probably developed from the hunter's bow. In the past the hunter may have been struck by the musical sound produced when the bow-string was released. As a result some early unconscious musician developed the use of the bow as a musical instrument. Hence stringed instrumental music made its humble beginnings.

It has been suggested by many writers on the subject of African music, that what appears to us as an innocent looking drum is in fact a phallic symbol. The drum is said to represent a naked woman and the hammers used in playing it are two men making love to her. There is a wide belief that the percussion drum was used by

all African native tribes. It does seem conclusive that certain tribes did not make use of this instrument. The Matabele have nothing but disdain for people who use drums. Such drumming noises as were associated with military, religious or festive occasions of the Matabele, were caused, not by the use of drums, but by the beating of sticks or assegais upon shields.

Contrary to opinion, not all African music is tied to ceremonial occasions. There are many aspects of African music totally unrelated to any traditional ceremony. It is not unusual to find Africans gathered together making music for the sheer enjoyment of it.

When a drummer or flute player in an African instrumental ensemble suddenly lets out a piercing scream, it is generally because at that point he has fully exploited the limitations of his two tone flute. His inventive mind craves additional ways of enriching the music. Accordingly he resorts to his voice.

The MBIRA is predominantly an African musical instrument that has also been reported in non-African countries to which slaves were exported. It is sometimes referred to as the "thumb piano" and is also known as the SANSA. In Rhodesia, Mbira is the common name. Sound is produced by the bending and releasing of one or more of the wooden or metal lamellae (keys). These keys are fixed to a sound board consisting of a flat piece of wood to which a wooden sound box is often added. The player holds the front portion of the Mbira in both hands, plucking the keys with his thumbs. Soft music is produced and usually serves as an accompaniment to songs and sometimes

dances.

The Mbira is a personal instrument of the performer, through which he expresses his experiences. The mbira is said to be especially important to men who have difficulty in running their families and it is always there to comfort him. In Rhodesia the Mbira lacks the ornamentation of those of Nigeria and the Congo, which are known as a 'SANSAS'. The ornamentation is not made to give a special musical sound but rather for religious and social reasons.

The Rhodesian Government is supposed to be responsible to the whole world and to posterity for the preservation of traditional art, crafts and music. There is a considerable amount of bad feeling that steps, toward the establishment of a research station, have not been taken. If this was effected, Africans could be encouraged to visit the studio and record their music.

While some people are concerned about the future of African music, there are others like FRANK MCEWEN, former Director of the National Gallery in Salisbury, who established a workshop school and implemented a policy of promoting African and Neo-African Art.

Prior to the establishment of the workshop school under the umbrella of the National Gallery of Art, a Catholic priest, CANON PATERSON, initiated and stimulated local art and craft at CYRENE mission station. Here there was no financial endowment initially and materials had to be found in the immediate vicinity. It was not Gallery attendants but primary school boys that were introduced into elementary art work, and, perhaps only half a dozen valid artists have

emerged from this training over nearly twenty years.

SERIMA, is a small tribal trust-land area in the central region of Mashonaland, near CHATSWORTH. Father GROEBER encouraged the carving of masks for some time, which is not a traditional art form amongst the SHONA, but he felt that some of the best work that came out of SERIMA were the masks.

Some of the students were selected for a more specialized training, but he continually denied that SERIMA was an Art School. The continued work and training of some of his students coincided with the building of the CHURCH OF SERIMA.

Father Groeber was, above all, a missionary and from the start at SERIMA, religious doctrine was an integral part of his instruction in ART. The African artist attempts more to express than to picture, which is genuine in as much as the artist has attempted to be true to his conception of what is holy. Ideally Father Groeber wanted to foster an art that was Christian in subject matter but still traditional in the treatment of the material, and in the mental background from which it originated. He also attempted to adhere by the SHONA peoples' cultural background, but it has been claimed that his knowledge of these people was limited.

The reaction of African people to the Christian Art at SERIMA is that they can not believe that they have been depicted as such 'an ugly people'. Also, some feel that it is a 'step back into tribalism' and I imagine that these are understandable reactions of

people who need to 'rediscover their own cultural heritage and to free themselves from an inferiority complex which has developed from a depressing racial situation'. Yet it is thought that Father Groeber 'has proved that African Christian Art is both a challenge and a possibility'.

Angels with instruments cast in cement adorn the top portion of the cylindrical belfry, while deeper set sections running along the ribs of the tower show geometric patterns similar to those found on the inner and outside walls of rondavel Shona huts.

The porch of the church has an ornate double entrance. "Relief panels and individual sculptures carved in teak wood invite recollection and herald the splendour of the inner sanctuary". Shepherds and wise men adorn a frieze-like upper shelf executed in asbestos cement. They are hurrying to a nativity scene in the centre.

In the main nave of the church are three wall paintings, which are all related to the EUCHARIST. Behind the altar is a painting of the Last Supper. The altar top rests on three big, and three smaller pots used by the local Shona people for storing grain, water or beer. Engraved scenes of the life of the UGANDA MARTYRS occur on these pots. The big pots, however, show the work and play of children, the life in the village and the arrival of missionaries. The smaller pots are illustrated with the various forms of martyrdom, death by stabbing, burning or beheading.

The CYRENE MISSION is situated near Bulawayo. The ART produced here is said not to be "African Art, neither Child Art, or

School Art, but Simple Art". Had CYRENE been founded in a part of Africa where artistic expression had been practiced for centuries, the results achieved would have been far less interesting, controlled as they would inevitably have been by the traditional language and style of tribal art. Cyrene was fortunate in having had as pupils, the adolescents of tribes which had no language or tradition of art beyond that of patient craftsmanship in making utilitarian necessities.

CYRENE ART is in its infancy, and its chief patronage comes from exhibitions, occasional orders from the Church, municipalities and commercial houses. To many observers, the paintings are monotonously similar, both in subject matter and execution. The subjects are taken in endless variety from everyday life, from the old and new Testaments, folklore, and present day events as well as the History of Africa. Although there is a similarity every student conveys something of his own individual experience, mind and feelings.

The Rev. CANON PATERSON has disclosed that there is an interesting divergence in ART expression between the SHONA and TEBELE peoples. Although it is not an infallible rule, long experience shows that there is some truth in it. The Mashona people were agricultural nomads, settling down in one spot for perhaps 10 - 20 years to till the soil. Consequently, they had possessions such as tools, agricultural implements, musical instruments, decorated pottery among other things. They too had a wide selection of folklore and their work in accordance with early agriculturalists elsewhere, was purely decorative. When drawing, they are not interested in a particular tree but they prefer to draw a symbolical version of a tree.

The Matabele, however, were pastoral nomads, having few possessions and being able to move their village at a moments notice. They spent their time herding cattle and hunting.

From work seen at CYRENE, the TEBELE see things more photographically: he delights in recording the subtle differences which distinguish one rock from another and to draw an actual tree from a memory stored up in his mind.

It is interesting to consider the number of European painters who have collected African Art, and who have been influenced so much by it. Some have lived in Africa and have run Art Schools and Academies.

ULRI BEIER, writing on 'CONTEMPORARY ART IN AFRICA' devotes a section to the establishment of the largest and he says "most successful workshop in Africa" under the Directorship of FRANK McEWEN. He goes further to say that McEwen's real interest lay in discovering and encouraging local talent. Art work had been encouraged in Rhodesia by a number of mission schools and colleges, but not always with exciting results, and generally artists were working in isolation usually without encouragement and without customers. McEwen's Gallery became a focal point of all these activities. Artists included farm workers, agricultural officials, some of whom had had a mission training while others were simply self-taught. The first artists to make contact with Frank McEwen were several agricultural officers in the INYANGA Reserve who were carving soapstone as a kind of pastime amongst these were , JORAM MARIGA, BERNARD MANYANDURE, DENSON DUBE and ZIND JA. The first painter of importance was THOMAS MUKAROBGWA, who

was, in fact, an attendant in the NATIONAL GALLERY.

Another Missionary who encouraged artists was CANON PATERSON, who collaborated for many years with Frank McEwen and from whose mission emerged JOSEPH NDANDARIKA and BOIRA MTEKI.

During the first years, all the artists worked at home, and they came when they wanted to present their work. Later Frank McEwen opened a studio for five painters to work in the National Gallery. These were THOMAS MUKAROBGWA, CHARLES FERNANDO, JOSEPH and LUCAS NDANDARIKA and KINGSLEY SAMBO.

As this "WORKSHOP SCHOOL" was established by Frank McEwen to serve the African community it will, therefore, be best explained in his own words:

"Today, Africa lacking traditions is seething with desire for expression, demanding an outlet. There is a vast potential of creativity to be tapped and canalized and, like all art movements in history, it requires an umbrella of protection. Without intelligent encouragement and understanding, this vital urge may by circumstances, be forced into negative uncertain paths. Already an infinite potential of natural creativity is being debased and adulterated beyond repair by the mechanical, mass production of objects for the Tourist trash trade. This has been termed AIRPORT ART.

To observe the progress of a potential artist snared by 'Airport' work is a saddening experience. Before developing the skill and indifference required to perform his task rapidly, he is

subjected to a conditioning period, during which he must of necessity destroy his creative urge and become "mechanical". During his initial period, an artist can sometimes be 'reclaimed', but once beyond his mechanical tricks and mental attitudes towards production are such that he becomes incurably addicted.

'AIRPORT' factories operate on a large scale, but their taskmasters, perhaps subconsciously guilty, are reluctant to allow observers to study their installations. Factory owners have been known to purchase successful individual works of art from the WORKSHOP SCHOOL, with the naive intention of 'reproducing them in mass' and imagining thus to capture quality. Often though, 'Airport' art retains some fascination, more in fact than its Western equivalent of 'pavement' and 'chocolate box' art."

For this reason, it would seem partly right that an institution had to be formed like the Workshop School to achieve the whole cycle of effective Art production and protection that would not stop halfway. This cycle depended on certain phases. Firstly talent had to be found, developed and the right talent selected. Artist's materials had to be provided. Above all, confidence had to be built up; encouragement and inspiration along individual lines; the minimum technical assistance given for entirely individual development. The right works had to then be selected for exhibiting and an exhibition hall found and an international market for sale at home promoted in order to escape that Airport Art which diverts a whole world of talent.

The MASHONA sculptures have been termed a 'NEW ART' apart

from the stone carvings of Zimbabwe (circa 1500 A.D.). There seems to have been almost no carving in this region of Africa. But in the last fifteen years sculptors have arisen. Strangely, though, in the Workshop School, wood-carving, so dear to Ancient Africa, never thrived. Wood is the medium of the mechanised Airpost tourist art manufacturers, and it was the soapstone that became a medium, embodying much research into the beauty of stone itself. This may be because of some distant link with tradition because of the great birds and other objects found at Zimbabwe are of the same material.

Up until the establishment of this Workshop school, the native Mashona expressed himself mainly through his music and dancing. Praise is given that, once again in the history of Art, protection such as a workshop to work in has allowed for dormant genius to be revived which is thought to have lain dormant since the vast temples and innumerable rock-paintings were executed.

It is strange, nevertheless, yet conceivable, that the populace should stand spell-bound by these sculptures, but they are not, in fact, the only traditional African art produced and are not always worth viewing. The utilitarian objects remain concealed from the public eye, apart from the district commissioners who travel the areas frequently, which are very often of greater artistic merit.

The SHONA are a tribe of between four and five million living between the natural frontiers created by the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers. Zimbabwe was the Mashona's religious centre. Some time during the

sixteenth century, the greatest spiritual figure, CHAMINUKA, prophesied that the tribe would be preyed upon by warriors from the South and subsequently be invaded by white man (the prophesy is made the more remarkable by the fact that CHAMINUKA could never have seen a white man).

Some African tribes believe that spirits, when visible, have a whitish skin; because of this, some of the first Europeans in Africa were mistaken for ancestors.

The ZULU invaded Shona territory, conquered it piece by piece, but a number of invaders remained behind and although they intermarried, they are still counted apart as the Matabele. True to his exclusively warrior origins, no Matabele has shown himself capable of participating in this Renaissance of the visual arts in Rhodesia.

At all events, given the total absence of a sculptural tradition among the Shona since their colonization, the renaissance that sprang so rapidly from the Workshop School seems quite unheralded. The key to its extraordinary spontaneity lies behind in the great range and freshness of tribal memory ("they have minds like computers" Frank McEwen).

Like all Africa's pagan communities, the Shona believe implicitly in the ever-presence and importance of the spirits of their ancestors. By means of the elders, the spirits' mediums and to a lesser extent the artists, the people are kept in constant and, whenever possible, beneficent contact with their forebears. Their

whole well-being depends, in fact, on successful communication with the Shona's one God, MWARI. Mwari is considered too distant to be directly accessible. Only the ancestors, when properly obeyed and honoured by the people, can enter into this highest form of communication. To this end, the observance of everyday morality, a respect for the natural harmony of things, is complemented and reinforced by ceremony and ritual.

The most important of the Mashona ancestors are accorded special ceremonies for which sacrificial black bulls have been set aside and consecrated (all this takes place some two years before the ceremony). On sacrifice the living blood of the bulls is caught in bowls and drunk by the person the elders have already recognised and accepted as the medium through whom the ancestor spirit has chosen to communicate.

The SHONA peoples greatest ancestor is CHAMINUKA (this person is the spiritual head of the whole tribe), CHAMINUKA himself like other spirits takes up his abode in local trees. For this reason the SHONA feel themselves constantly observed; their smallest act, their most simple thought is automatically apparent to the spirits; and this explains, too, the omnipresence of the eye in their sculpture.

Where the Westerner fails, or finds most difficult, to bear in mind is the undividedness of Pagan life and thought. One cannot remove one aspect of it, whether cooking, agriculture or art and consider it meaningfully apart. Everything interrelates: MWARI with the spirits, the spirits with Man, man with nature.

The tribal attitude towards all the major events of life are predominantly spiritual. Birth (as well as the time preceding actual birth) and death are attended to with concentrated religious care. Failure to pay respect to the death of an important person would be to risk incurring trouble or illness, as well as to lose a potentially powerful ally for the general good.

The sculptures range in height from figurines of ten and less centimetres to pieces well over a metre tall; but, whatever the height, each gives out an impression of monumentality. In all but a few cases, the works express a myth or a religious or strongly social sentiment. The Shona artists not only draw on the same sources for expression; they share their actual creative process as well. Their initial inspiration tends to begin in "a dream or in a moment of meditation or musing. Not until the image is complete in their minds down to the last detail do they execute the work." The long business of polishing is often left to the artists wife or friends.

The sculptures the Mashona people produce are never used for their ceremonies. Working in factories and living in towns, many of the Shona are bound to become increasingly cut off from their tribal life. Although a fair amount of good original and sincere sculpture has been forthcoming they have been exploited. Certainly many of them live off the money their works earn and depend most definitely on what they sell - in a way a similar kind of tourist art trade.

Of the "workshop school" sculpture I have seen, the work

executed when the school began holds little excitement for me. Though some of the sculpture I have seen recently especially of birds, the (CHAPUNGA) or Battler Eagle, which acts as the messenger for the spiritual world shows a different quality.

MAKIRA CHIMOYA, has portrayed this bird completely, it is not always portrayed singly and may be depicted as twin birds.

MAKO GURI too, has portrayed the CHUPUNGA but it is decorated with chevron type designs, which, even in its simplicity, gives the feeling of a bird capable of great wonders.

Yet while PAUL GWICHIRI, JAMES BECHANI and SYLVESTER MUBAYI portray birds they all understand the bird differently.

JOHN TAKAWIRA, who lives in VUKUTU, devotes himself above all to giving two religious visions a lasting presence in stone and whether he portrays CHAPUNGA, his work will radiate enormous power.

NICHOLAS MUKONBERANWA, is most drawn to themes of the unity created by love - mother and child family, friends, lovers.

SYLVESTER MBAYI has a wider but equally personal vision. It extends from the observation of a sleeping child, with its dreamy heaviness, to a TREE SPIRIT, in which is embedded the ever-watchful eye of the ancestors. He has also portrayed a SKELETAL Baboon Head. The belief in a baboon spirit is endowed with special knowledge goes

back to TOOTH, the baboon God of Ancient Egypt. Baboon apart from being featured in Art are frequently featured in song and dance.

The eye-image is merely the eye of his ancestor, or it is really his conscience that is upon him and nothing escapes its attention. Incorporated in a tree are often these eye-images. The MUHACHA or ancestral tree is also important to tribal belief.

Other themes include bats, owls, chameleons, totemic protection figures and JANUS heads. There is legend about the chameleon who, it is said, was sent by God, with a message of peace and goodwill to the people upon earth, declaring "that they should not die and if they died they would rise again". His gait being slow and feeble, delayed him on the way. Meanwhile a cunning lizard was being mischievous and he was entrusted with a second message. He took this with all speed, easily passing the chameleon on the way and delivered his message long before the chameleon arrived. The doom of the people was sealed by the second message. The Amandabele have not preserved this curious legend in its entirety but it is known that the CHAMELEON was sent, but do not know by whom. When African girls find a chameleon, they seize the reptile, throwing snuff into its mouth, and sing "why did you delay, had you not loitered so long we would not have died".

The sculptures are black grey or green serpentine and some times are of a brown red stone. Very often the black stone can be mottled with white, maroon to greens, ranging from the darkest colour to a light shade that is almost translucent.



In these sculptures, there is an emphasis on the head. This is applicable generally throughout African sculpture. The head is larger than normal, for that indicates the significant location where the spirit resides.

Although Shona Sculpture has received International acclaim, and may continue to benefit from constant protection from the National Gallery, will these sculptors in fact escape the "ranks of commercial immitators", which already a large number of the original group have joined?



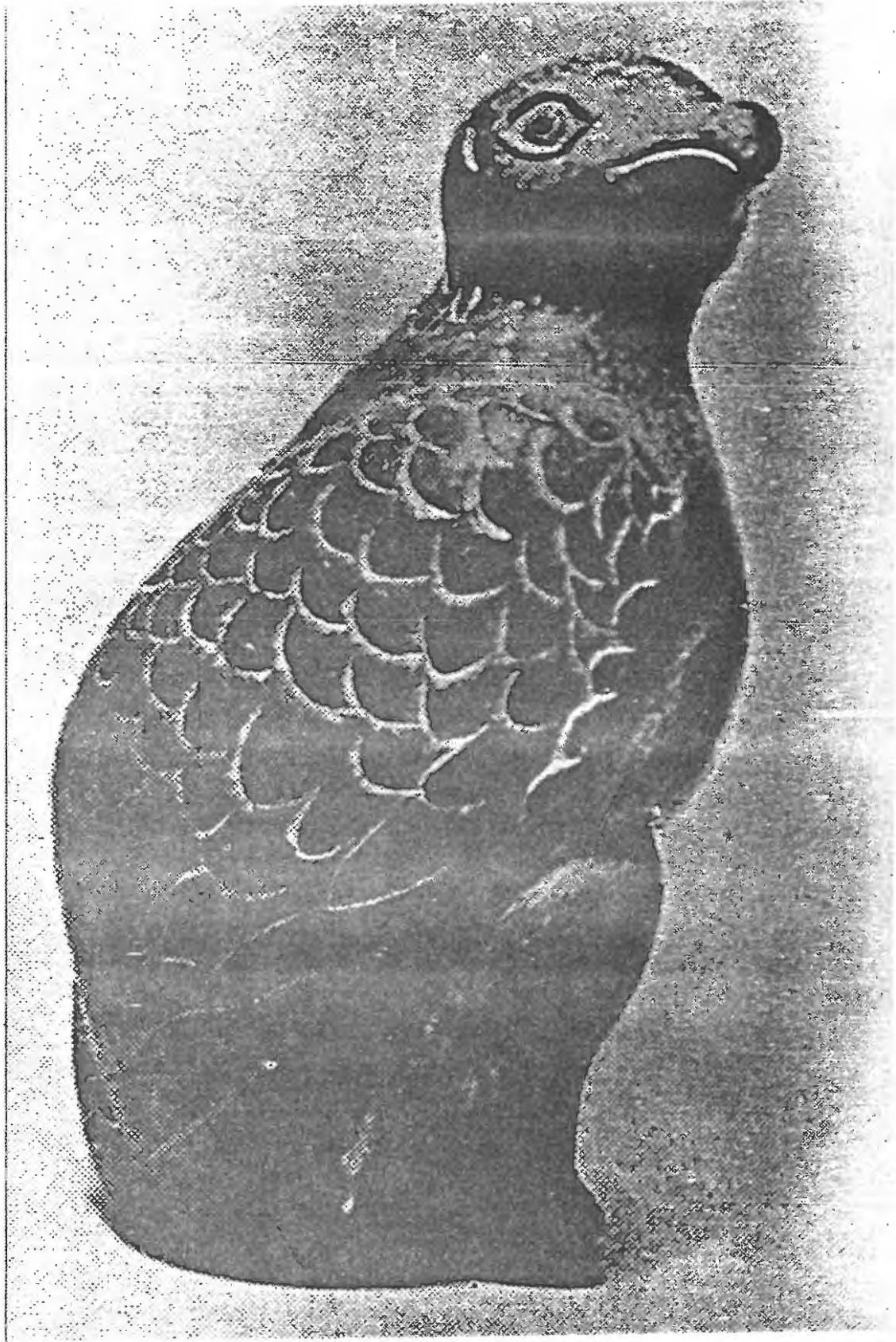
25. Three Children (NICHOLAS MUKONBERANWA)
Round eyes stand for pure people, three eyes
in two heads denote the closeness of love.



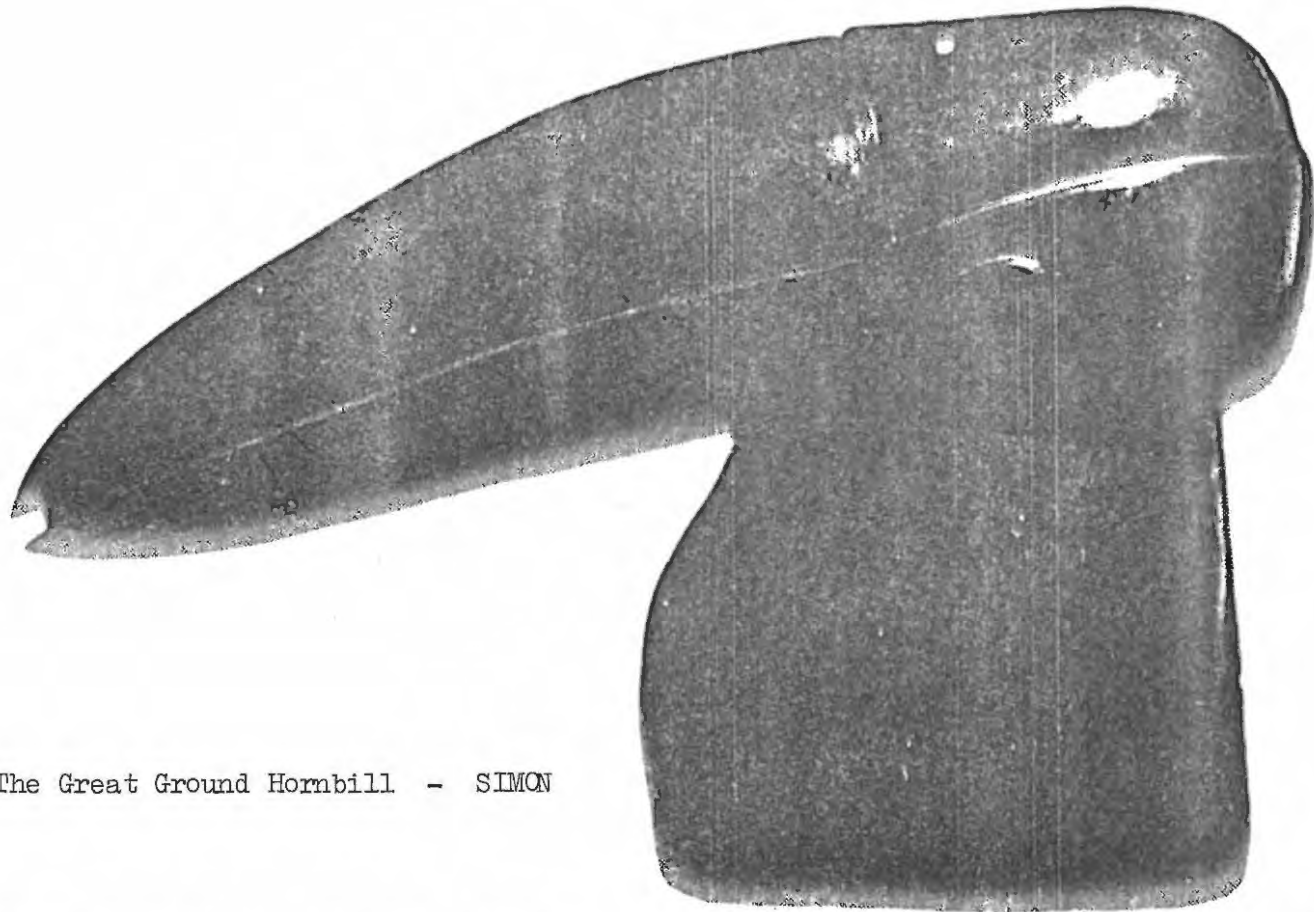
26. Mother and Child (NICHOLAS MUKONBERANWA)
Grey stone carving.



27. Lovers (NICHOLAS MUKOMBERANWA)

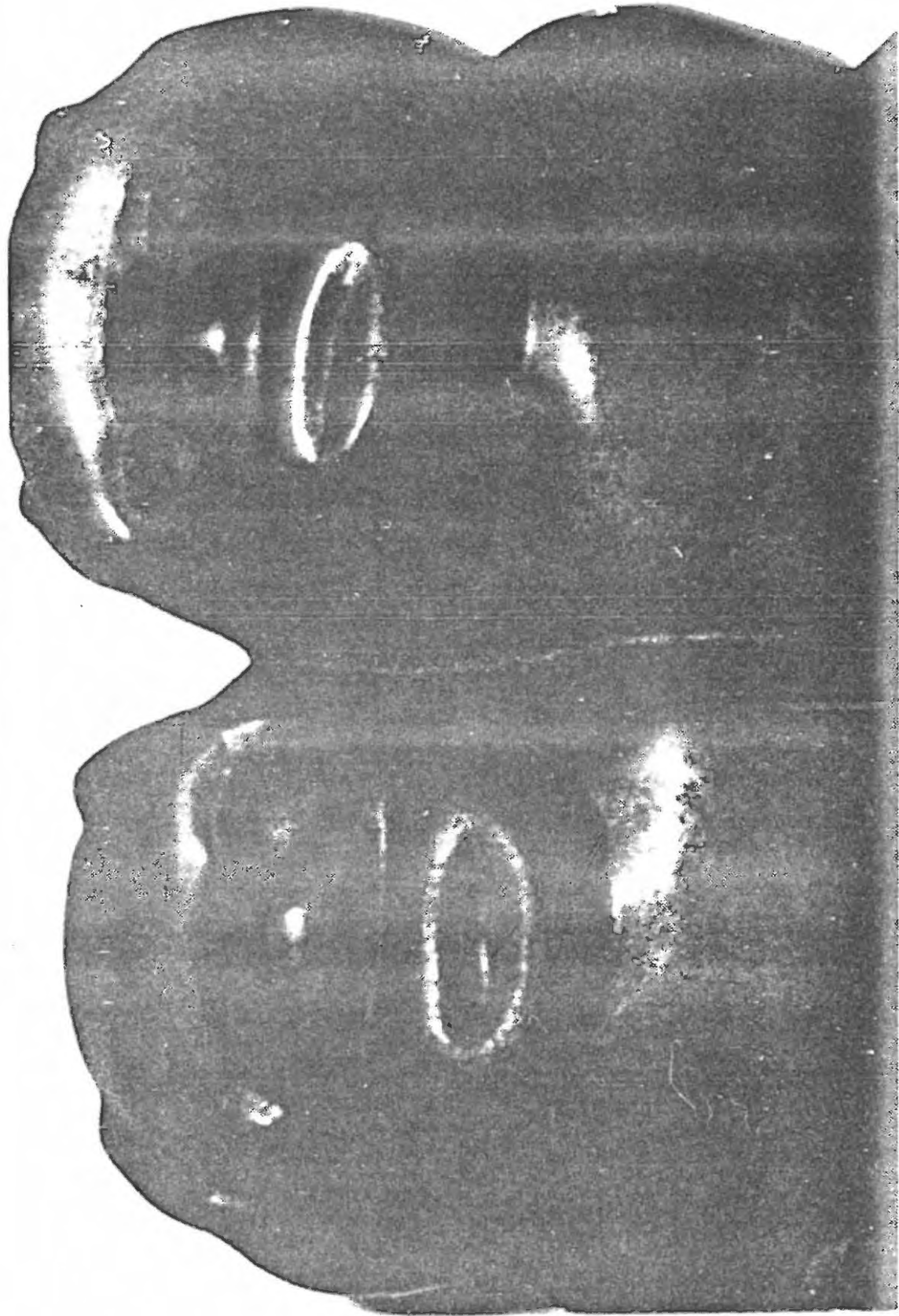


28. Baby Chipungu (Bateleur Eagle) -
BERNARD MANYADURE
(Mottled green soapstone)



29. The Great Ground Hornbill - SIMON

In the bush he is a revered medium of spirits. When mating he stomps around in a love dance uttering an exact, drum-like, monotonous beat, which can be taken for distant throbbing drums.



(Brown-red soapstone)

30. Twins - MAKIWA CHIMOYO

SECTION III

C O N C L U S I O N

Today, Tourism is a powerful factor in Africa, but there is very little danger that African cultures will disintegrate because of this.

A sense of oneness, of participation in the spirit, goes beyond the boundary of MAN KIND. It includes participation in the visible and invisible of the UNIVERSE. The dead remain an intrinsic and powerful part of the living family. In matters of the spirit, the dead are more powerful than the living. Furthermore, not only the living and the dead but also other forms of existence, the very rocks and stones and in fact the whole cosmos, are included in the Africans' conception of unity, in which he participates, comprehends and apprehends.

The visible and invisible world, the human and the divine, the past and the present, form one harmonious whole. Man has been absorbed into this unity by necessity. Rites of passage and other rituals have to be observed and spirits appeased. Above all, the power, or life-giving force of existence must be enticed and placated by the tribe.

MYSTERY is the divine force of ART; ART is the explanation of the unpredictable. A work of ART is a reflection of NATURE - including human nature - and, therefore, a reflection and expression of TOTALITY.

P L A T E S

1. Cup (Korekore)
2. Cup (Korekore)
3. Large Bowl (Budja)
4. Sub-spherical bowl (Budja, Mtoka District.)
5. Beer pot (Tonga)
6. Pot (Zezuru)
7. "Harije Tongwe" ceremonial vase
8. Vase in form of a lion (Zezuru)
9. Chiseme Basket
10. Detail of plaiting
11. Chiga Basket
12. Detail of basket.
13. Tswanda
14. Bottom of basket
15. Duri (grain wooden-mortar)
16. Battle axe
17. Wood cutting axe
18. Dancing axe
19. Makalanga head rest (about 5" high)
20. Mashona head rest (unusual design in shape of a tortoise)
21. Barotswi decorated bowl
22. Scrap-wire toy
23. Steering wheel of scrap-wire toy.
24. Sleeping family (Nicholas Mukonberanwa)
25. Three Children "
26. Mother and Child "
27. Lovers "
28. Bateleur eagle (Bernard Mayyadur)
29. Ground Hornbull (Simon)
30. Twins (Makiwa Chimoyo)

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- Page 51 "Why did you delay, we would not have died"
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