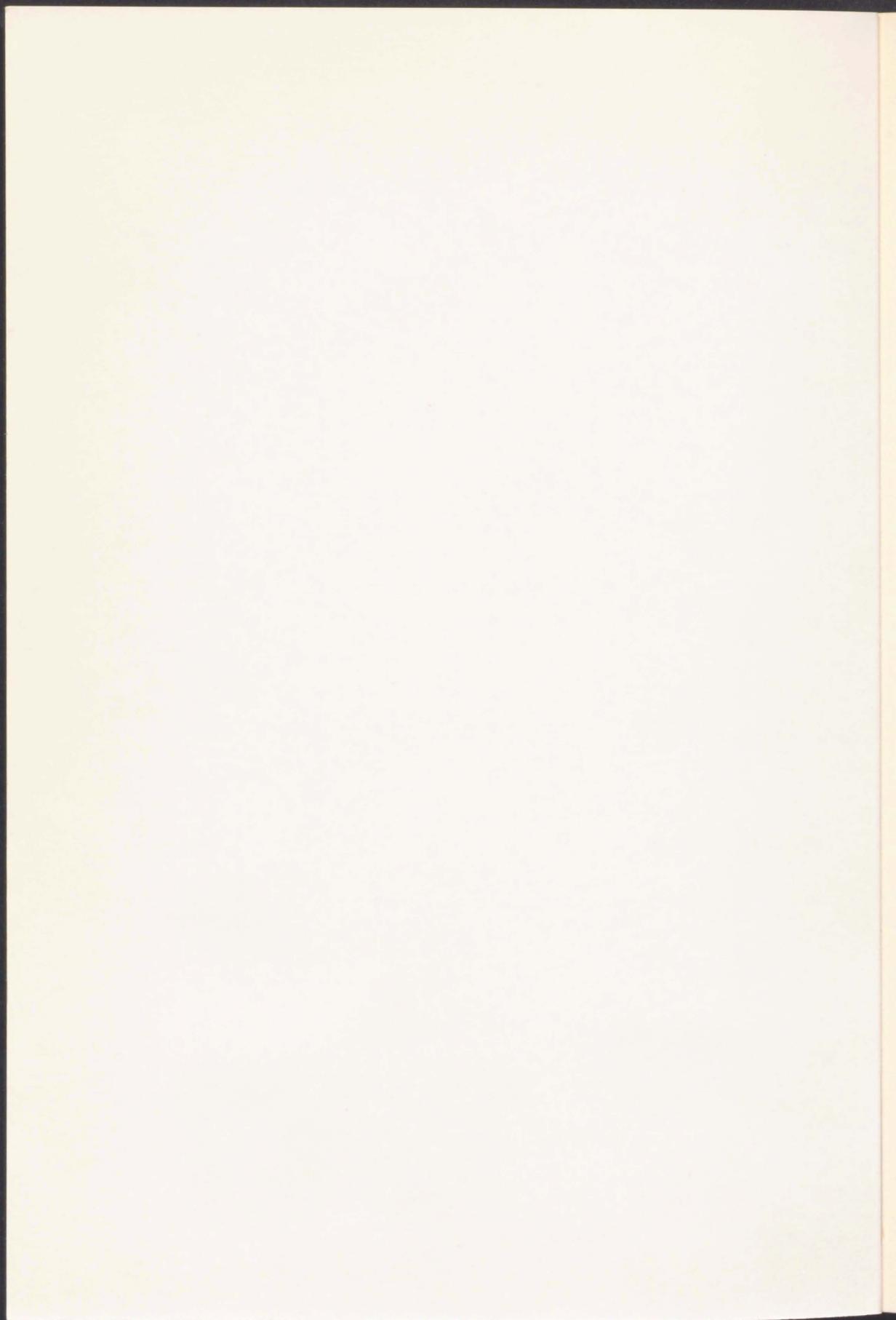


ROCK PAINTINGS FROM ZIMBABWE





FONDRSCHRIJFEN DES ROBEINUS-INSTITUTS

ROCK PAINTINGS
FROM ZIMBABWE



FRANZ STEINER VERLAG GMBH WÜRZBURG

1983

SONDERSCHRIFTEN DES FROBENIUS-INSTITUTS

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ROCK PAINTINGS
FROM ZIMBABWE



FRANZ STEINER VERLAG GMBH WIESBADEN
1983

ROCK PAINTINGS FROM ZIMBABWE

COLLECTIONS OF THE FROBENIUS-INSTITUT



FRANZ STEINER VERLAG GMBH WIESBADEN

1983

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INTRODUCTION

By Eike Haberland

This catalogue, which doubles as the guide to an exhibition, presents one of Africa's priceless treasures. While these were admittedly discovered long ago and probably still exist in all their ancient splendour, they have been practically forgotten. They form an eloquent testimonial to the creativity and artistry of unknown African painters who lived and worked many hundreds of years ago. Their works still delight and inspire us, exerting a fascination which is enhanced rather than lessened by their age.

The rock paintings of southern Africa are still very much overshadowed by those of north Africa and the Sahara, the largest and best-known areas for rock paintings. This is unjust, for they are fully the equal of the northern paintings as historical documents and in their vigour of expression. One of the many debts we owe to Leo Frobenius is that, although he did not discover them in the sense of being the first to report their existence, he ensured that the paintings were systematically recorded and scientifically studied for the first time. He did this on his long expedition of 1928–30 which took him to southern Africa accompanied by a number of scientific colleagues and painters specialising in the reproduction of rock paintings.

The climax of this enterprise was the research done in Zimbabwe ("Southern Rhodesia" as it was then), where the team was able not only to record a large number of paintings previously unknown in Europe but also to carry out a highly successful programme of historical, ethnological and archaeological research. One of the results of this was the work which Frobenius – unfortunately – gave the misleading title "Erythräa".¹ This is written in almost poetical language and is a description of and tribute to the kingdom of Zimbabwe and its culture – and in particular its priest-kings. The work describes not so much what is shown by the archaeological remains, the immense ruins and excavations, but rather how oral tradition portrays this period. The second part of this catalogue contains an extract from "Erythräa" devoted to the Wahungwe culture, as an impressive example of the later Zimbabwe culture and its sacral kingship. Many of the significant myths and historical traditions collected by Frobenius were first published many years later by a friend of our Institute, Harald de Sicard, who himself lived in Zimbabwe for many years.²

In this connection the many rock paintings that Frobenius and his companions recorded were of particular significance.³ He had hoped – a hope which was unfortunately not completely fulfilled – to find here what he had long dreamed of, namely rock paintings representing an "illustrated history of the

world", pictures illustrating the oral tradition of the African peoples. Frobenius tried to match up the dramatic and exciting events depicted by many of the rock paintings with the myths related by the elders and wise men of the Karanga culture, then slowly vanishing. He linked them – wrongly, according to some modern authorities – with the "Monomotapa", the rulers of the great kingdom of Zimbabwe, whose mighty stone constructions are to modern Africans a symbol of the cultural greatness of their forefathers.

This link is, as stated, often disputed today: Rudolf Gerharz, who wrote the introductory section to this catalogue, also adheres to the view that most of the cave paintings can be ascribed to the hunters who lived in Zimbabwe before the arrival of the farmers and founders of states. It is still too early to come to a firm conclusion, and we can only hope that further research into African culture and history will someday provide an answer. In any event there are many points of agreement between the mythical and historical traditions recorded by Frobenius and the subjects of the rock paintings, enough to permit us to say that they do in effect illustrate oral tradition. There is, for example, the burial of a king(?) in a cowhide; nearby we see the immense granite formations in whose caves the rulers were laid to rest. And there are marvellous scenes filled with people and animals, emphasising the spiritual and religious aspects of rain as a life-giving force.

It is, however, not just the dramatic force or historical value that make these paintings so remarkable – it is also their unique aesthetic quality. When the reproductions were published, they created a sensation. Of course we are familiar with superb rock paintings from the rest of Africa, particularly from the Sahara area, depicting all kinds of animals and landscape and plant motifs. But these delicate yet vigorous renderings of trees and of other plants and landscapes are exceptional – and not just in African terms. They represent an absolute pinnacle of artistic and stylistic greatness attained by these unknown masters.

This exhibition of rock paintings and this accompanying catalogue together represent a gift from the German nation to the nation of Zimbabwe, and indeed to all the peoples of Africa. The aim is to bring these seriously underrated treasures and the great cultural heritage of the African continent to the widest possible public. A further aim is to pay tribute to the memory of Leo Frobenius, a man who, at a time when colonialism was at its height, sought to make Europe aware of the greatness of African culture, and thus created the spiritual basis for decolonisation.

1 Erythräa. Berlin-Zürich 1931.

2 ngano dze Cikaranga – Karangamärchen. *Studia Ethnographica Upsaliensia* 23. Lund 1965.

3 Madsimu Dsangara. *Südafrikanische Felsbilderchronik*. Berlin-Zürich 1931. Graz 1962.

ROCK PAINTINGS AND RUINS: PICTURES FROM THE HISTORY OF ZIMBABWE

By Rudolf Gerharz

Introduction

The name of the state Zimbabwe is a grand legacy from the past. The Mashona originally used the name to designate the large stone edifices of which today only ruins are still visible. In their language *dzimba woye* means "venerated house" or "king's compound". *Dzimba dza mabwe*, an alternative derivation, means "houses of stone".

The most impressive of these edifices, an extensive complex of ruins near Fort Victoria, first became generally known under the name "Zimbabwe". But since the term actually applies to all ruins (*zimbabwe* is a generic term) the complex is nowadays called "Great Zimbabwe", to distinguish it from the other ruins, most of which bear local names, such as Khami, Nhunguza, Nalatele etc.

We wish to use this exhibition of rock paintings from Zimbabwe as an opportunity to recount the country's early history with the assistance of its prehistoric monuments. Taking the present as our starting-point, we shall move backwards into the past. We shall therefore deal first with the ruins and later with the rock paintings, which are the subject of this exhibition.

The Ruins

The history of the stone edifices reached its conclusion in the last century. In about 1830 the Matabele crossed the Limpopo and conquered the southwestern part of Zimbabwe, now called Matabeleland. They destroyed the power of the then ruler of the Rozvi, the *mambo*, and drove him from his place of residence, Thabazika-mambo, northeast of Bulawayo. The events of this period left behind a deep impression, and many stories relating to it continued to be narrated until recent times. The inhabitants of the destroyed settlements fled before the Matabele to inaccessible parts of the country. There they established provisional habitations, with simple stone walls as a makeshift fortification. These refuge sites of the nineteenth century represent only a pale reflection of a much older and more significant architectural tradition.

The Matabele state founded at this time was the last in an unbroken tradition of independent African states between the Zambezi and the Limpopo. It was to survive little more than half a century. The colonial era was on its way.

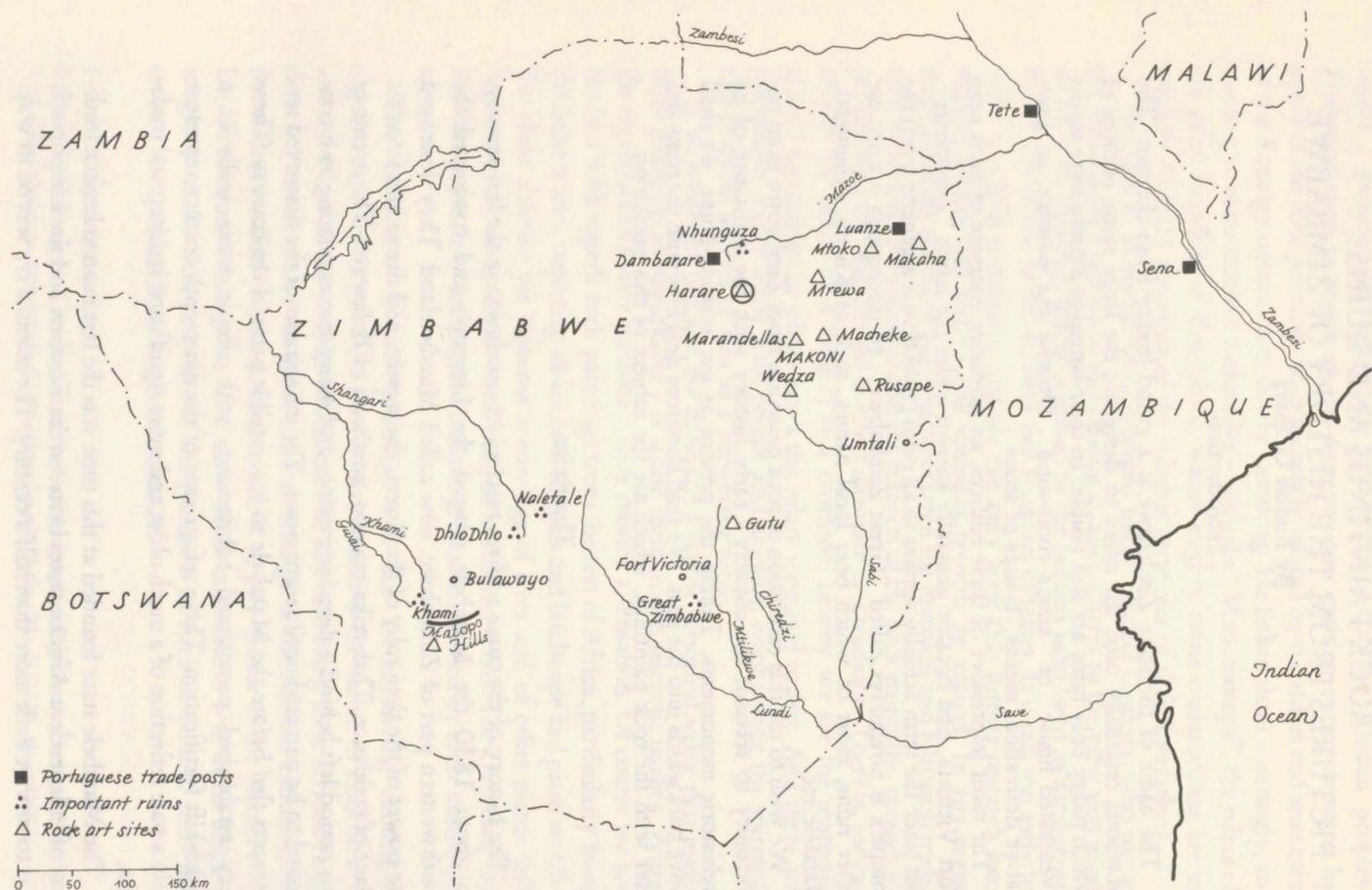


Fig. 1: Map of Zimbabwe showing archaeological sites and other places mentioned in the catalogue

White Missionaries and adventurers were beginning to penetrate the country. The conquest by the Matabele brought with it an end to the tradition of stone architecture. Their residences were built only of wood and mud. Already the *zimbabwes* belonged to the past.

Before going deeper into history, let us examine the distribution, structure and significance of the stone edifices. There are about 150 *zimbabwes*. Most lie between the Zambezi and the Limpopo; a few are found further south or in Mozambique. Their distribution is closely related to the presence of granite, the principal building material. Other kinds of stone, such as schist, were used only seldom.

Granite gives the hilly landscape of Zimbabwe its peculiar character. Domes of bare granite dominate the skyline. These rounded shapes are the result of a particular kind of weathering. Rainwater and differences in temperature both affect the whole upper surface of the rock. In the course of time, slabs break away from the ground below, layer by layer, and slide down to the foot of each dome. Thus a natural process of quarrying takes place. Without very much further working, the material can be used for building. The history of stone building in Zimbabwe begins with walls made from such stones, generally unhewn. Some examples can be found in Great Zimbabwe. There these early walls are only a few metres high, because irregularly shaped stones fit together only loosely and there is a danger of them collapsing (Fig. 2a).

Later the style of building was improved. People used uniformly hewn stones to build far more stable walls. They were laid evenly, layer upon layer, after the ground underneath had been properly levelled (Fig. 2b). Care was taken that the exterior of the walls should rise not absolutely perpendicularly but at a slight angle of inclination, so that as they rose they became gradually thinner. These structural improvements were a precondition for the monumental building methods later used in Great Zimbabwe. The best example is the large external wall of the main building. It reaches a height of 10 metres, although the stones are not held together by mortar or any other binding material (Plate 1a).

Each *zimbabwe* has its own architectural plan (Fig. 3). A comparison of the different ground-plans reveals only a few common factors. The African architects were guided by the contour of the site and other local factors. Dome-shaped rocks were incorporated into the structural plan. If the ground was uneven, earth and stones were piled up, producing a system of platforms.

The walls, which were erected either in between rocks or on land free from rocks, enclose many adjacent enclosures. These were not the actual living quarters and never had roofs. Inside them, as excavations have repeatedly

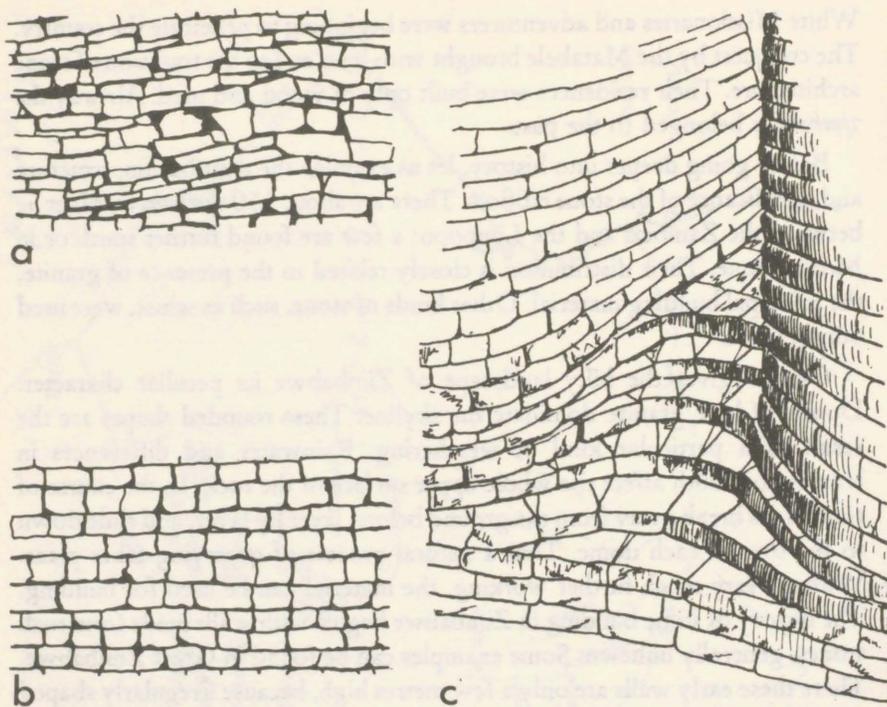


Fig. 2: Great Zimbabwe: early style of building (a), developed style of building (b), developed style of building, entrance (c)

shown, there stood round huts, of which one today finds only the floors, made of pounded mud, and occasionally a few remains of wooden posts. Everything else has decomposed. It was in these huts that the inhabitants lived. They left traces behind: weapons and tools, food waste and above all pieces of pottery or occasionally whole pots. These finds give us an insight into the everyday life of the former inhabitants.

Spears, knives, bangles and many other daily requisites which have been found during the excavation of ruins correspond exactly to the articles still produced and used by the Mashona in the twentieth century. Were they not disfigured by the ravages of time, they could just as easily stand in ethnographic collections. They convey a sense of familiarity, and the forms have changed very little in the course of time. The pottery too, despite differences in ornamentation, can be compared with modern pottery (Fig. 4). From what has been said, we can draw two conclusions. Firstly, the people who built and inhabited these edifices had a close cultural connection with the present inhabitants of the country; they share a common tradition. Secondly, in view of this shared tradition, the stone edifices cannot have been built in the

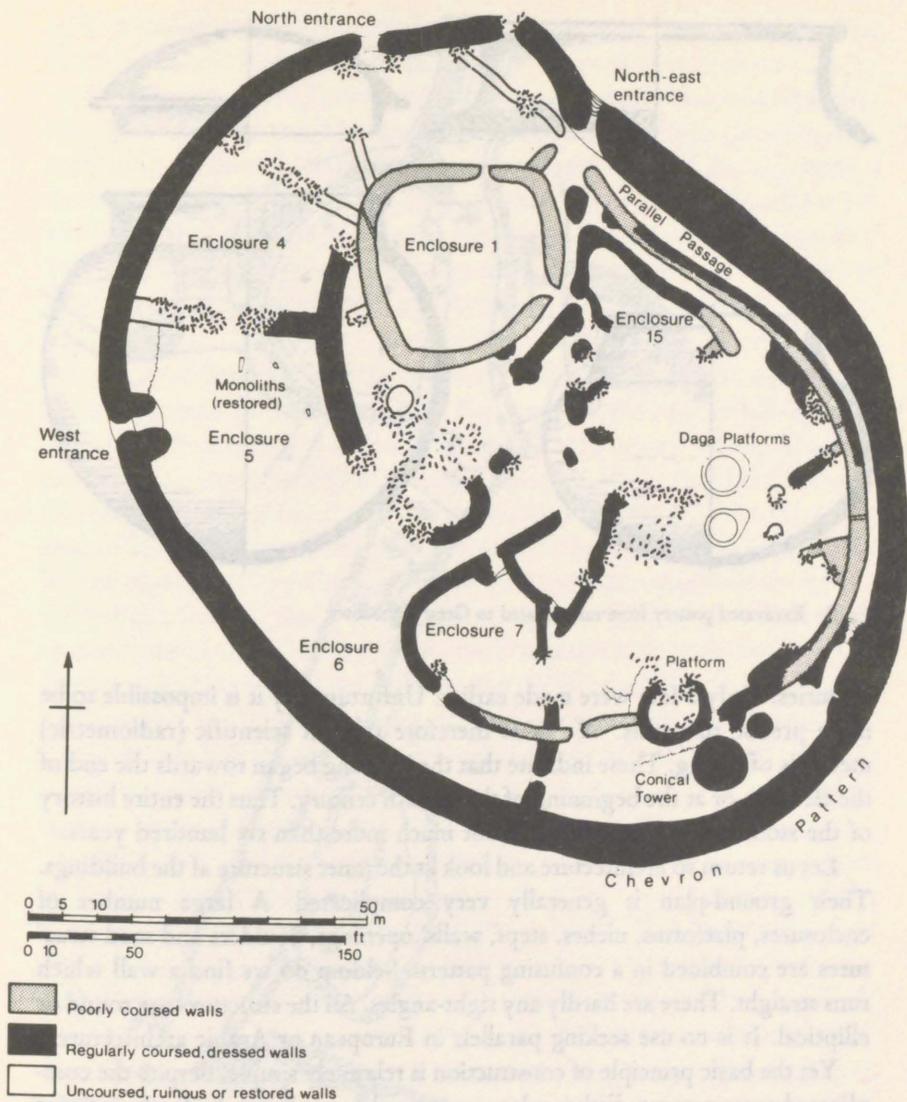


Fig. 3: Great Zimbabwe: plan of the elliptical building

dim and distant past: their history must be counted in terms of centuries and not of millennia. But we can ascertain their date more precisely. In Great Zimbabwe and many other ruins, in addition to pieces of local pottery, several fragments have been found of pots which were definitely of oriental manufacture. The approximate date of manufacture can be determined to within a few centuries. Most fragments date from between the thirteenth and seventeenth

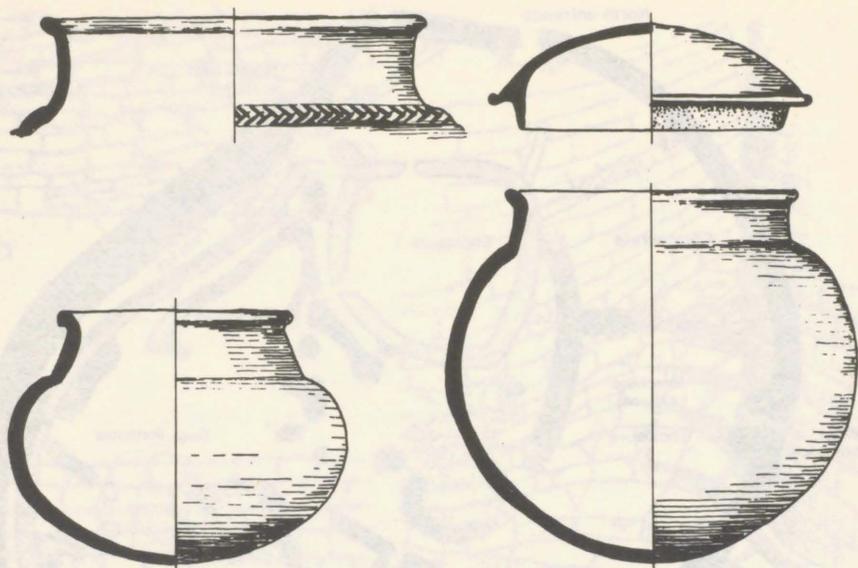


Fig. 4: Excavated pottery from ruins related to Great Zimbabwe

centuries. Only a few were made earlier. Unfortunately it is impossible to be more precise than this. We must therefore rely on scientific (radiometric) methods of dating. These indicate that the building began towards the end of the eleventh or at the beginning of the twelfth century. Thus the entire history of the stone edifices encompasses not much more than six hundred years.

Let us return to architecture and look at the inner structure of the buildings. Their ground-plan is generally very complicated. A large number of enclosures, platforms, niches, steps, walls, openings, boulders and mud structures are combined in a confusing pattern. Seldom do we find a wall which runs straight. There are hardly any right-angles. All the structures are round or elliptical. It is no use seeking parallels in European or Arabic architecture.

Yet the basic principle of construction is relatively simple, despite the complicated arrangement. Either a large surrounding wall was built, the interior being then divided up into enclosures; or (as was often the case in hilly country) enclosures were built alongside one another in the manner of a honeycomb. In each wall separating two neighbouring enclosures there was an opening, very carefully lined with masonry, lest it should cave in. Each enclosure had a number of such openings, depending on its situation and importance. Differences in height were compensated for by stone steps (Fig. 2c).

The shape of the enclosures varies considerably. Some of the minor ones were designed merely as passageways or niches; others are large enough to

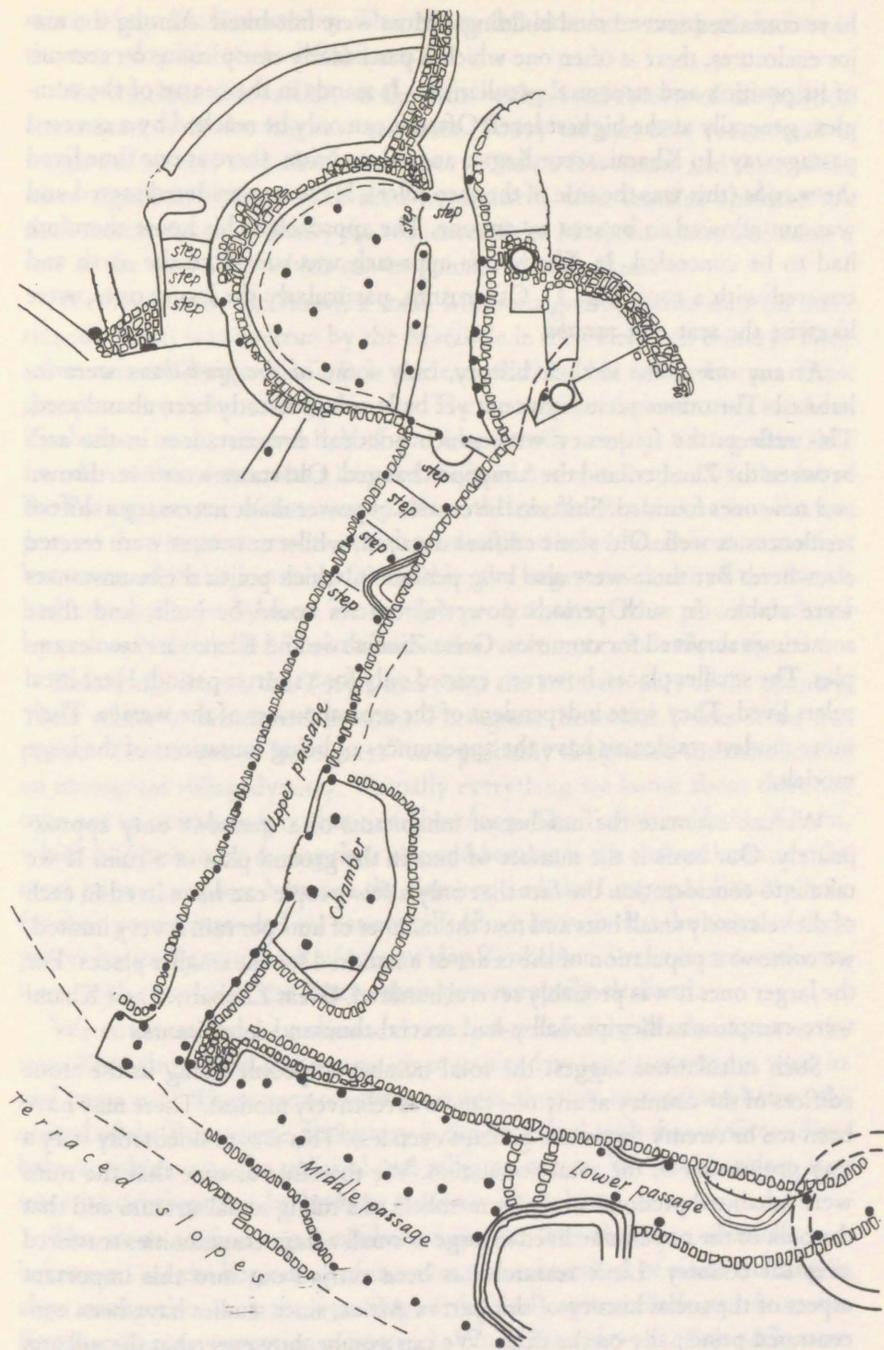


Fig. 5: Khami ruin: House of the Mambo with passage

have contained several mud buildings. Most were inhabited. Among the major enclosures, there is often one which is particularly conspicuous on account of its position and structural peculiarities. It stands in the centre of the complex, generally at the highest level. Often it can only be reached by a covered passageway. In Khami, according to an oral tradition, there at one time lived the *mambo* (this was the title of the then ruler). He was considered sacred and was not allowed to be seen by anyone. The approach to his house therefore had to be concealed. In Khami this approach was sunk into the earth and covered with a roof (Fig. 5). Other ruins, particularly the larger ones, were likewise the seat of a *mambo*.

At any one point in their history, only some of the *zimbabwes* were inhabited. The others were either not yet built or had already been abandoned. This reflects the frequency with which political circumstances in the area between the Zambezi and the Limpopo changed. Old states were overthrown and new ones founded. Shifts in the centres of power made necessary a shift of residences as well. Old stone edifices decayed, whilst new ones were erected elsewhere. But there were also long periods in which political circumstances were stable. In such periods powerful centres could be built, and these sometimes survived for centuries. Great Zimbabwe and Khami are two examples. The smaller places, however, existed only for a shorter period. Here local rulers lived. They were independent of the central power of the *mambo*. Their more modest residences have the appearances of being imitations of the large models.

We can estimate the number of inhabitants of a *zimbabwe* only approximately. Our basis is the number of huts in the ground plan of a ruin. If we take into consideration the fact that only a few people can have lived in each of the relatively small huts and that the number of huts per ruin is very limited, we come to a population of the order of a hundred for the smaller places. For the larger ones it was probably several hundred. Great Zimbabwe and Khami were exceptions: they probably had several thousand inhabitants.

Such calculations suggest the total number of people living in the stone edifices of the country at any one time was relatively modest. There may have been ten or twenty thousand, perhaps even less. This was undoubtedly only a tiny proportion of the total population. We therefore assume that the ruins were inhabited predominantly by members of a ruling social stratum and that the bulk of the population lived in large or small village communities scattered over the country. Little research has been carried out into this important aspect of the social history of this part of Africa, since studies have been concentrated principally on the ruins. We can assume, however, that the villages built of wood and mud did not differ essentially from the traditional settle-

ments of the Mashona today. There must also have been many similarities in the everyday life of the inhabitants.

We conclude this section on the ruins with a brief review of the political circumstances of the last few centuries. Today we can only reconstruct in rough outline this very checkered history. Only a few names and some of the more significant events have been transmitted; most remains obscure. We shall merely describe briefly the sequence of the Mashona states and name a few of the *zimbabwes* which can be connected with them.

We begin with the Rozvi, a small Mashona group, whose state (as mentioned above) was overrun by the Matabele in the nineteenth century. Their name means "conquerors". It is unclear whether this referred to an ethnic group or merely to a ruling dynasty. The Rozvi gained power over southern Zimbabwe in the second half of the seventeenth century. Changamire, the founder of their state, was a dreaded military commander. In 1693 he drove the Portuguese out of the country. Nevertheless, the Rozvi state was less important than its predecessors, which are discussed below. Architecture too had lost some of its importance. Dhlo-Dhlo, the largest residence of the Rozvi, had been built not by them but by their predecessors. Other places inhabited by such as Nalatele and Thabazika-mambo, were more modestly designed.

Before the Rozvi, the Torwa had ruled the southern part of the country. Their name is mentioned in some Portuguese historical works from this period. Torwa means "foreigners" and probably designated the members of an immigrant ruling dynasty. Virtually everything we know about them we owe not to written sources but to archaeology. The Torwa resided in Khami, which had been built during their rule and became in the sixteenth century the most important place between the Zambezi and the Limpopo. Exactly how far their power extended we cannot tell: all we know is that the centre of their power lay in the southwest of present-day Zimbabwe. In the seventeenth century, with the rise of the Rozvi, their power rapidly declined.

We now come to the earliest and most powerful of the Mashona states, the state Zimbabwe. This is the name given to it today: we do not know what its real name was. There are no written sources about it, as it existed before the arrival of the Portuguese. Its history is closely linked with that of Great Zimbabwe, which was the political and religious centre. We can therefore best trace its development by looking at Great Zimbabwe.

The stone edifices are a symbol of power. It is therefore necessary, we believe, to see the beginning of the monumental method of stone building in close connection with the founding of this early state, which represents the first manifest concentration of power. In Great Zimbabwe the first walls were erected towards the end of the eleventh or at the beginning of the twelfth cen-

ture. The foundation of the state Zimbabwe therefore probably also took place in this period. Within a relatively short time it firmly established itself; for in the centuries which followed, the inhabitants of Great Zimbabwe maintained extensive commercial relations with towns on the East African coast. Islamic and Chinese ceramics, glass beads and oriental luxury goods were exchanged for gold and other products of the country. In these centuries Great Zimbabwe grew enormously and many new buildings came into existence. In the fourteenth century, the state reached the peak of its power. It controlled large parts of the territory between the Limpopo and the Zambezi, and throughout the country many smaller *zimbabwes* were built. But by the fifteenth century the state had passed its peak. Great Zimbabwe lost its importance. The site was abandoned and was only visited occasionally as a place of worship. Other states had grown up and assumed power.

Finally we must mention a state which, though less important, was the only one which penetrated European consciousness before the nineteenth century, as a result of the one-sided historiography of the Portuguese. This was the state Monomotapa, named after its ruler Mwene Mutapa (meaning "master pillager"). The term Monomotapa appears on almost all maps drawn between the sixteenth and the nineteenth century.

This state lay in the northwest of the country, towards the Zambezi. It was under Portuguese influence for almost the whole duration of its existence. It is therefore not surprising that it was described in detail, whilst other large states further inland remained largely unknown. Even the large stone edifices of the latter were known to most of the Portuguese only from hearsay. The residences of Mwene Mutapa, which they could see with their own eyes, were built only of wood and mud.

Today we are attempting to reconstruct the history of the old states of Zimbabwe. Since this history was never written down, we must allow its visible remains – the ruins – to speak.

The Origin of Today's Ethnic Groups

The ruins of Zimbabwe represent the last chapter in the prehistory of this region. The period in which they were built is called by archaeologists the "Late Iron Age" (we shall return to this term). At the beginning of this period, 800 to 1000 years ago, the present-day ethnic groupings in large parts of Africa south and east of the central forest took shape. At the same time population density increased; and in consequence, forms of political organisation became more extensive and complex. State formation and organised long-distance trade characterised large parts of this period. The

archaeological evidence for these developments has been discussed in the previous section.

But with the help of archaeology we can go further and trace back the formation of ethnic groups, in some cases right back to their beginning. A suitable aid in this task is pottery.

The present-day pottery of each ethnic group has its own characteristic shapes and ornaments. This means that in producing pottery, each group prefers different shapes and ornaments and thus diverges from its neighbours. We can therefore often identify the manufactures of a pot without knowing its exact origin. This fact helps archaeologists to assess cultural connections. They usually find an enormous quantity of pottery in excavated settlements. They evaluate the pottery of each site separately and then compare the correspondences and differences between one site and another. If they find enough correspondences between different groups of sites, they speak of a "common tradition". We have already come across this term in an earlier context, where we learnt that a cultural tradition often also indicates an ethnic relationship. In many cases, comparisons with present-day potters make it possible to trace traditions back hundreds of years into the past. This applies in broad outline to the period we have referred to as the "Late Iron Age". The pottery of the Late Iron Age has so much in common with that of the present day that in many cases we can assume that the people who produced this pottery were culturally and ethnically related to the present-day inhabitants of the country. For this reason archaeologists believe that many of the present-day ethnic groups in southern and also in eastern Africa took shape at the beginning of this period. We have thus discovered an important turning-point in African history.

Farmers and Herdsmen

Many centuries earlier, roughly between the second and fifth centuries A. D., a radical change took place in southern Africa: farmers and herdsmen entered the country. Previously people there had lived exclusively on the plants they gathered and the animals they hunted. But as the opportunities for hunting and gathering vary according to the season, they were obliged to move from place to place and had no permanent abodes.

As a result of the new form of economy, people became sedentary. They built villages in the neighbourhood of their fields and grazed their livestock on the surrounding pasture. This new way of life took hold everywhere remarkably quickly, and within two to three hundred years it was widespread

throughout large regions of eastern and southern Africa. This enormous expansion is difficult to explain.

We do not know exactly who these people were; for we cannot link them with any of the present-day ethnic groups. Their pottery differs from all known traditions. Furthermore, we do not even know for certain whether all these people were immigrants, or whether the original population gradually adopted the new way of life. We must keep both possibilities in mind.

An important role in the task of identifying these people is played by the Bantu languages. These are closely related to one another and are today spoken almost everywhere in eastern and southern Africa. The close relationship between them suggests that they spread out relatively quickly in the not-too-distant past. For this reason, and because the region covered by these languages was the region in which the economic change described above took place, many scholars believe that the first farmers and herdsmen in this region were ancestors of the Bantu. Hand in hand with the new knowledge, it is suggested, they spread their language. But this supposition is difficult to prove. Archaeology, which is again and again summoned as the principal witness, can tell us much about the forms of economy of the past, but it cannot show which languages were spoken. Thus we cannot expect archaeology to answer this question.

In the previous section we introduced the term "Iron Age", saying that we would later explain it. We will now do so; but for this purpose it is necessary to say something about archaeological terminology. Archaeologists have established that almost all implements in the early history of mankind were made of stone. Since stone implements are characteristic of the earliest epoch in man's history, this epoch is called the "Stone Age". About six to seven thousand years ago, people in the Near East learned how to smelt and work first copper and later iron too. This knowledge did not spread uniformly through the world: it reached different continents at different times. Thereafter implements were made out of metal, stone implements having become, so to speak, out of date. Archaeologists call these new epochs the "Copper (Bronze) Age" and the "Iron Age", depending on which metals were used.

Knowledge of iron reached southern Africa later, together with the introduction of livestock rearing and cultivation, which has been mentioned above. Here the Iron Age lasted less than 2000 years and followed the Stone Age directly. But it would be wrong to imagine the transition as an abrupt break with the past. Even afterwards, during the Iron Age, there were still many small groups of hunters and gatherers who continued to produce stone implements. South of the Sahara there was no Copper or Bronze Age.

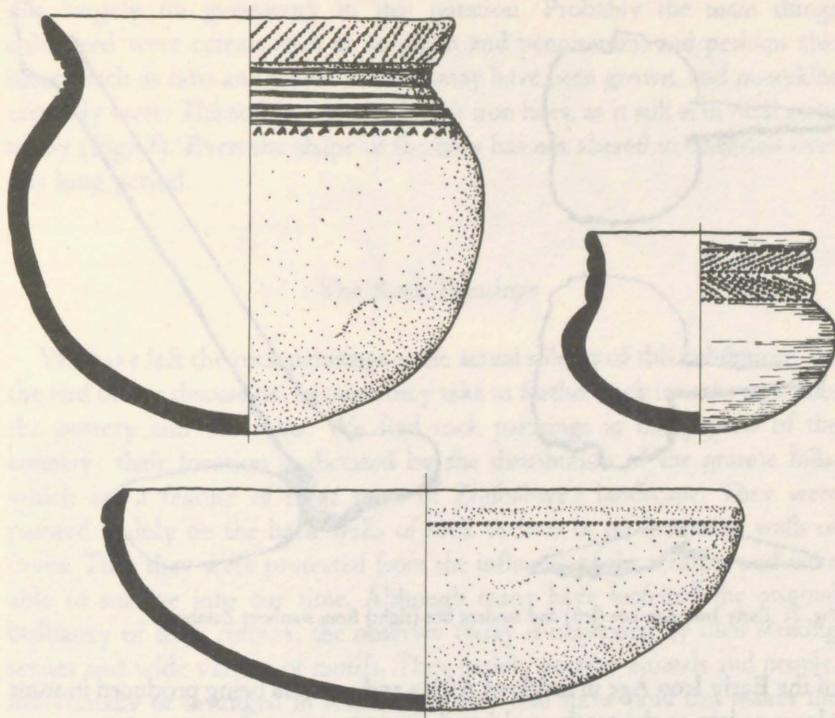


Fig. 6: Early Iron Age pottery

The farmers and herdsmen of the Early Iron Age not only knew how to smelt iron and make implements out of it: they were also able to bake pots out of clay.

In southern Africa there has been pottery in large quantities since the Iron Age. The hunters and gatherers of the Stone Age had made their containers mainly out of animal skins and vegetable materials. The new form of economy created a very heavy demand for containers. Once harvested, edible plants and fruits had to be carefully stored, in order that they should not spoil and to protect them from small animals and insects. In addition, people needed a large number of vessels for cooking with and eating or drinking from. These were often damaged; and when they were no longer of use, the fragments were thrown on the rubbish heap. This was of great benefit to today's archaeologists, for whom pottery is an important aid.

During the first centuries of the Iron Age, pots had relatively thick sides and rims; the latter were often ornamented and had a distinctive profile (Fig. 6). This style of pottery differed markedly from that of later periods, which we have discussed in the previous section. It was characteristic for the whole

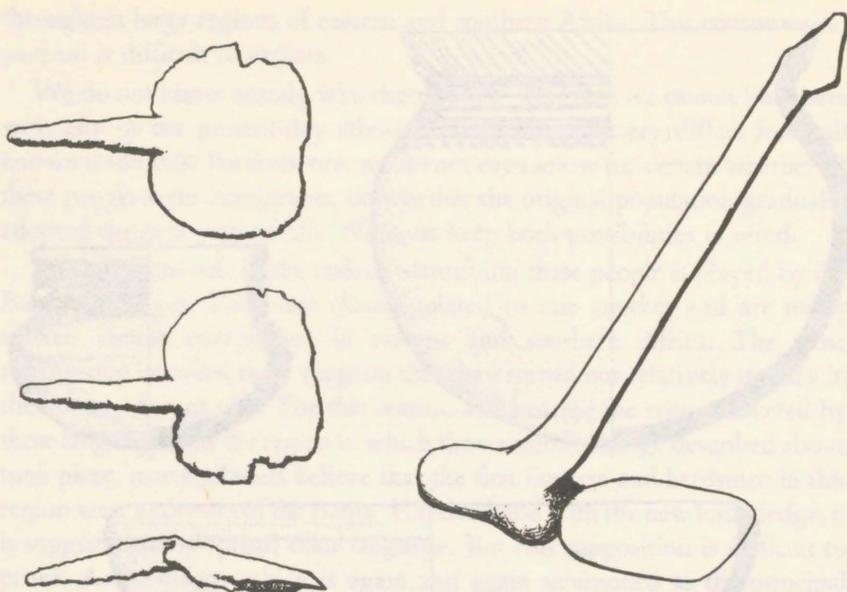


Fig. 7: Early Iron Age hoe (left) and modern hoe (right) from southern Zambia

of the Early Iron Age in southern Africa and was still being produced in some places as late as the tenth or eleventh century.

During the Early Iron Age there were not yet any territorially extensive concentrations of power such as existed in later times; or at any rate, we have no evidence that there were. People lived in small village communities. Their huts were small, seldom more than 2 metres in diameter. The walls consisted of wattle supported by thin wooden posts and daubed on the inside and outside with mud. In the village was also the place for smelting. When iron was required, a mud furnace was erected and the iron was smelted. The smith belonged to the village community and probably enjoyed a respected position from the very beginning. Livestock, consisting mainly of goats or sheep (cattle were initially very rare) was kept in the village. This can at least be demonstrated with regard to some old settlements, in which the earth has been found to have accumulated large quantities of phosphate, which must originally have been animal dung. The quantity of livestock was still modest and could not satisfy the total meat requirements. The inhabitants therefore went hunting. This can be seen from the many bones of wild animals which are found alongside the bones of domestic animals and the remains of hunting weapons (iron tips of spears and arrows) by archaeologists. It is harder to ascertain what vegetable nutrition people had, since vegetable matter decays in the earth far more rapidly than animal bones. We are therefore obliged to

rely largely on guesswork in this question. Probably the main things cultivated were cereals such as sorghum and pennisetum, and perhaps also tubers such as taro and yams; bananas may have been grown, and pumpkins certainly were. The soil was worked with iron hoes, as it still is in rural areas today (Fig. 7). Even the shape of the hoes has not altered in essentials over this long period.

The Rock Paintings

We have left the rock paintings – the actual subject of this exhibition – to the end of our discussion, because they take us further back into the past than the pottery and the ruins. We find rock paintings in many parts of the country: their location is dictated by the distribution of the granite hills, which are a feature of large parts of Zimbabwe's landscape. They were painted mainly on the back walls of rock shelters or on the inside walls of caves. Thus they were protected from the influence of the weather and were able to survive into our time. Although many have forfeited the original brilliancy of their colours, the observer today is impressed by their striking scenes and wide variety of motifs. They mainly portray animals and people, individually or arranged in scenes; but they also show (and this makes the rock art of Zimbabwe unique) whole landscapes, with trees, rocks, water-courses and patches of grass. In the next section we shall discuss these motifs in detail.

The pictures are very precise and were conscientiously executed. Painting was not a mere hobby for these artists: they were people with training and experience, who could look back on a long tradition of painting. We know only a little about the methods they used. We know the stone palettes on which they mixed their colours, before painting them on the rock face with stiff-haired brushes. The mineral components of the colours are also known. The reds, yellows and browns were obtained mainly from ferrous materials (such as haematite), while manganese compounds provided dark brown and black. White was obtained from kaolin, a component of clay. These were all the colours used: the palettes of the prehistoric painters lacked only green and blue.

These minerals were crushed into powder and then mixed with a binding agent, in order that the individual grains of colouring stuck together and could be transferred to the ground of the painting. The painters probably used animal fats for this purpose. Since these are very viscous and modern methods of dilution were unknown, they had to heat the colours before painting.

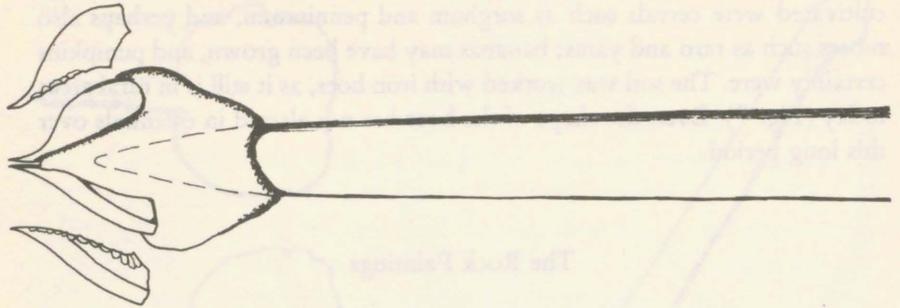


Fig. 8: Hafted microlithic tools: modern San

The location of the rock paintings also gives us information about the way of life of those who produced them. They were hunters and gatherers who lived at the foot of the rock faces long ago. Their traces were gradually covered up by falling rock debris, and in this way they were preserved. The layers of occupation debris are often well over a metre thick, which indicates that the places were visited and inhabited again and again over a long period of time. In these layers lie enormous numbers of stone implements, most of which consist of very small stones and are therefore called microliths. To use them effectively it was necessary to glue them into a wooden shaft (Fig. 8). The implements constructed in this way were used for killing animals and for working wood, bone and other materials.

Microliths are a feature of a late phase of the Stone Age, which we call the Late Stone Age. People of the Late Stone Age, who lived in the rock shelters and produced these stone implements, hunted animals and gathered edible plants and small animals. They existed many thousand years before the arrival of the farmers and herdsmen whom we mentioned in the previous section. Scientific methods enable us to be more precise about how old this way of life was. The earliest dates assigned to the Late Stone Age in Zimbabwe go back about ten or twelve thousand years. In other parts of Africa it is over 20 000 years old.

Of course we do not know exactly when in this period the rock paintings were made; for they are found in rock shelters far above the layers which can be dated by archaeological methods. We must therefore use a different approach. It must be admitted, however, that the methods we employ are vague and uncertain.

Many rock paintings are very complex. They contain a large number of individual figures and scenes. On closer inspection, however, we often notice that they do not represent a homogeneous design, but are made up of various



Fig. 9: Funeral obsequies of a dead king and homage to a new king. Rocks and plants interspersed. Ru-sape

pictures painted on the same rock face at different times. Apparently the artists showed little consideration for the work of their predecessors and often painted over parts of older pictures. In such cases we can distinguish the older picture from the newer one. Plate 4a gives an example. We do not, of course, know what interval lay between the older and the newer picture. It may equally well have been a few years or several centuries.

Knowledge about the relative age of individual pictures can be applied to the chronological sequence of different styles of rock painting. The earliest paintings were large, rough sketches of animals. Later, monochrome animals were painted on a much smaller scale. From then on, the representation of animals was distinctly naturalistic. Polychrome pictures originated even later. A further step was the use of white paint. The final, latest style differed markedly from all those which preceded it. The pictures now showed stylised people, goats, cattle, carts etc. (Fig. 24). They were painted not by hunters and gatherers, but by herdsmen; indeed, most pictures of this kind certainly did not originate before the nineteenth century.

To assign absolute dates to any of the early styles is difficult. A more precise arrangement in sequence is possible only for some pictures of the late, polychrome style. These include pictures of scenes and cultural assets which have nothing to do with the way of life of hunters and gatherers. For example, the pictures show rain ceremonies and domestic animals such as sheep(?), cattle and poultry. The use of spears, which are shown on some pictures, is also unusual for a hunting culture in this part of Africa. All of these attributes came relatively late, together with the new way of life which the Iron Age brought.



Fig. 10-11: Mourning for the dead. Chikwanda (Gutu) and Macheke

In the previous section we mentioned that in southern Africa the Late Stone Age and the Iron Age overlap in time. This means that for several hundred years hunters and gatherers lived in the same region as farmers and herdsmen. Without doubt intensive contact took place between the two groups. We can see this, for instance, in the Iron Age pottery which has been found alongside stone implements of the Late Stone Age in some rock shelters.

But cultural penetration cannot have taken place solely in the material sphere. The hunters and gatherers must have been confronted also with the religious and ideological notions of the immigrant population. We see this in the aforementioned rock paintings which contain details not originating from the hunters' world. In execution and style they belong wholly to the tradition of the Late Stone Age; yet they are enriched by motifs from the "thought world" of the Iron Age. The prehistoric artists thus became chroniclers of an early cultural transition. Unfortunately we can understand only partial aspects of the documents they have bequeathed to us – the rock paintings.

We have tried to show that the later paintings originated in the long period of transition from the Late Stone Age to the Iron Age, roughly speaking in the first millennium A. D. It is far more difficult to suggest rough dates for the early phase of rock art. The only clue we have is the stylistic correspondences which we can recognise in the great majority of the pictures. They suggest that the tradition to which the pictures belong encompasses a limited period of time – possibly no more than one or two thousand years. It is therefore arguable that the majority of the rock paintings in Zimbabwe date from the period 1000 B. C.–1000 A. D.

In some parts of southern Africa outside Zimbabwe the old tradition of rock art continued until the last century. There are eye-witness accounts of the last living painters, the San ("bushmen") of South Africa. They were the only people who preserved the old knowledge and skills up to this late date. Nevertheless, there is no justification for classifying all the rock art of



Fig. 12-13: Large seated men. Rusawi Valley (Marandellas) and Rusape

southern Africa as the art of the San, as is often done. Generally we have insufficient knowledge about the ethnic and racial affiliation of earlier inhabitants. It is questionable whether the hunters and gatherers of the Late Stone Age corresponded to the present-day San in physical appearance. The remains of skeletons which we possess from the period in question cannot provide a definite answer. The rock paintings themselves contradict such a view: only a very small proportion of the human representations evince typical San features, such as the steatopygia in pictures of women.

Zimbabwe does not possess examples of this last phase of rock art. Cattle, which gained importance only in the Late Iron Age and are clearly represented on many paintings further south, appear in Zimbabwe only in a few ambiguous examples. There are likewise no pictures of military clashes, for instance in connection with cattle raiding, as we often find in South Africa. There they evidently belong to the recent past.

In summary it may be said that the rock paintings of Zimbabwe were painted mostly by hunters and gatherers. Later pictures show unmistakable Iron Age influences. As a chronological framework we can suggest the period 1000 B. C. to 1000 A. D., but must admit that this estimate is very vague. In Zimbabwe the rock art tradition of the hunters and gatherers seems to end several centuries earlier than in other countries of southern Africa.

Scenes and Motifs in the Rock Paintings

The items in the exhibition are photographic reproductions. They were based not on the originals, but on copies made during a research expedition in the years 1928-30. Leo Frobenius, a German scholar, undertook this journey to southern Africa with several colleagues, in order to collect myths,



Fig. 14: Landscape with pond and people. Matopos

excavate ruins and make a record of rock paintings there. Particular emphasis was laid on this last point. As there was no colour photography in those days, the rock paintings were copied by painters using water-colours and crayons. These copies served as models for our exhibition. The original copies are in Germany, in the Frobenius Institute in Frankfurt am Main.

Frobenius published the results of his expedition a year after his return under the title *Erythräa*. At the end of this introduction we quote a passage from his book relating local myths to the history of the ruins. Many of Frobenius's views have been overtaken by time. But since he was an expert authority on African traditions, his interpretations are still worth reading and are at any rate stimulating.

Many of the copies exhibited show individual scenes. We must bear in mind that they represent only details from larger, sometimes very complex paintings. In some cases they are gigantic friezes, covering many square metres of the walls of the rock shelters (Plate 1b). They generally contain an enormous number of individual scenes and figures, brought together in such a way as to form a confusing overall pattern. For us today it is very hard to distinguish which parts of a picture have a meaningful connection and which merely happen to stand alongside one another.

Spatial relationships between the details of a picture are generally only hinted at and do not follow the laws of perspective. Large figures stand directly next to small ones. People (or perhaps mythical beings) can be much

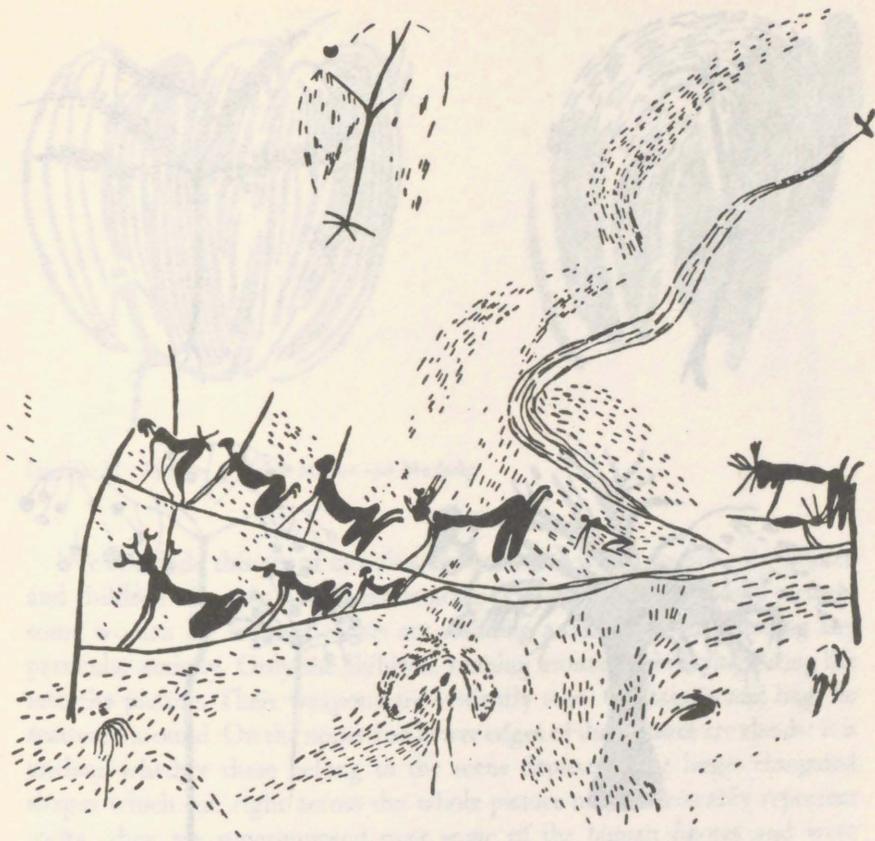


Fig. 15: Creeping men and bee swarms. South of Harare

larger than trees (Fig. 9). The figures are brought into relation with one another through their actions, gestures and groupings. Three men raise their arms towards a shape which may conceivably represent a cloud (Plate 7a). In another scene three men in a similar posture carry a large fish above their heads (Plate 3a). Elsewhere we see groups of people performing uniform movements: perhaps they are dancing, or they may be crouching down together (Plate 10).

Relatively often we encounter "domestic" scenes – men, women and sometimes children, sitting together, either after a successful search for food (indicated by a branch bearing fruit: Plate 6b) or without any visible reason (Plate 8a). Utensils such as baskets and other containers, as well as weapons (bows and arrows) lie next to them on the ground. On another picture only men are assembled (Plate 6a). One of them has a bow and arrow; the rest are

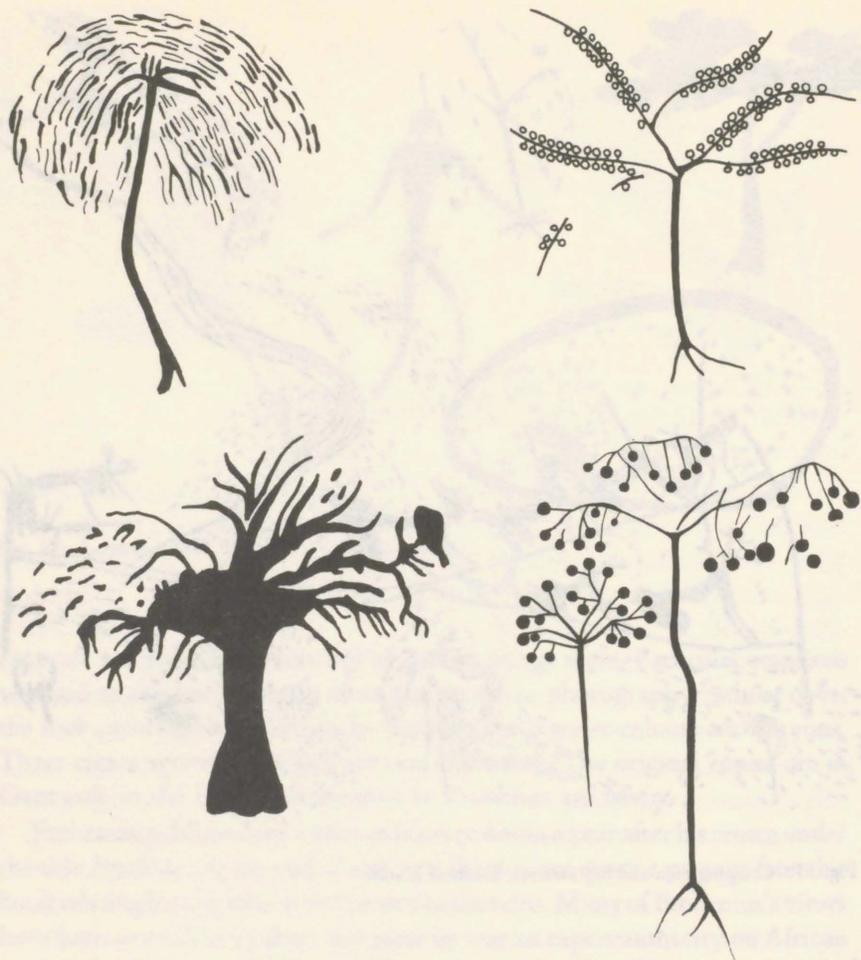


Fig. 16-19: Pictures of trees. Mtoko Cave, Sassa (Mtoko-Distr.), Matopos and Marandellas

unarmed. Some wear a peculiar kind of headdress, consisting of sticks or blades of grass bundled together; the man kneeling on the left has a bag hanging around his shoulder. Another ornament, which recurs frequently on other pictures (Fig. 13) is that worn by the men on their penis. As a closer comparison reveals, this is a form of infibulation, in which a short stick is passed straight through the penis. At the end of this stick a strap or cord is fixed, on which there hangs a small, usually crescent-shaped object. Infibulation has not been practised in southern Africa in recent times: it evidently belongs to the distant past.



Fig. 20-21: Pictures of rocks. Mrewa and Macheke

We conclude this set of motifs with a scene in which we see only women and children: the men have gone hunting (Plate 8b). It is a peaceful picture: some women are resting; others are standing around without pursuing any particular activity. Only the children, running around and playing, bring life into the picture. Their weapons are evidently toys. Containers and bags lie scattered around. On the upper and lower edges of the pictures are elands: it is unclear whether these belong to the scene depicted. The large, elongated shapes which run right across the whole picture may conceivably represent rocks: they are superimposed over some of the human figures and were therefore clearly painted at a different time. We cannot interpret all the details and connections; but it can be assumed that the painter here portrayed domestic life in the form he could observe day by day inside the rock shelter.

We have deliberately emphasised the peaceful character of these pictures. In our material there are to be found no scenes with military themes. Apparently warfare and combat were absent from the early history of Zimbabwe. The weapons, which were generally bows and arrows (depictions of spears are rare: Plate 5b), were above all hunting weapons. The encounters between different groups of hunters passed peacefully. Even the confrontation with the new way of life of the Iron Age does not appear to have brought about any violent conflicts.

Hunting played an important, though often overemphasised role in the procuring of daily food. We can see this from the many bones of animals that could be hunted, found in debris below the rock shelters. Nevertheless the theme of hunting did not have all that great a fascination for the painters of the Late Stone Age, for rock paintings with hunting scenes are relatively rare

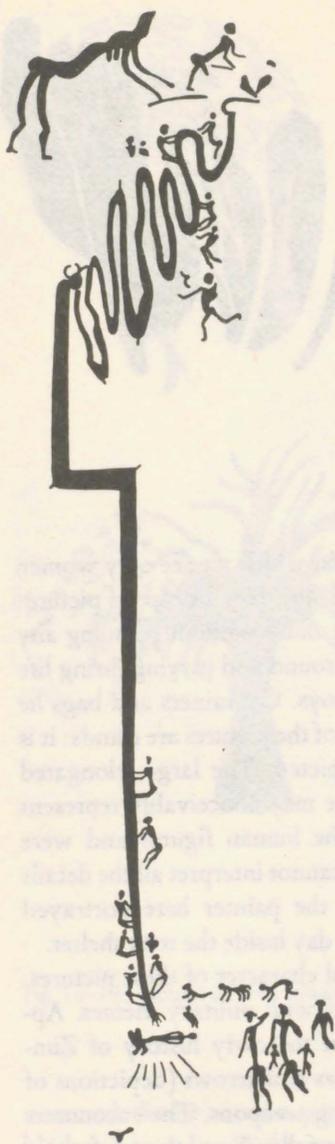


Fig. 22: Mythical scene. Rusawi Valley (Marandellas)



Fig. 23: Mythical scene (rain ceremony). Rusape

(Plates 4b, 5b). The animals most hunted were antelopes, especially elands. Animals without a visible connection with hunting, however, are depicted far more often. Among them we find almost all the important wild animals of Africa: elephants (Plate 5a), rhinos (Plate 2b), antelopes (Plate 4a), Zebras (Plate 2a), buffaloes (Plate 10) and many others, not all of which are il-

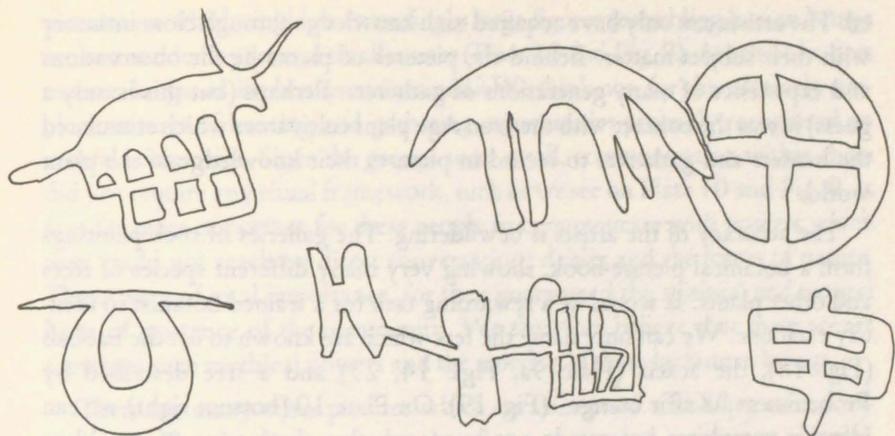


Fig. 24: Schematic and abstract figures. Matopos

illustrated here, including giraffes, baboons, lions and jackals, hedgehogs, fishes (Fig. 14) and birds. Even bees are depicted (Fig. 15, top right-hand corner): honey was an article much sought after in this early epoch, and so honeycombs were frequently used as a motif (not illustrated here).

In addition to wild animals, a few domestic animals are shown, as already mentioned. Sheep are frequently depicted (not illustrated here). Other domestic animals can be seen on Plate 10, including the huntsman's dog (Plate 10, centre) and poultry (Plate 10, centre). In our material, at least, there is no picture which can conclusively be shown to represent cattle. The example often cited (Plate 10, below) is more likely to represent a buffalo.

We have referred to these peoples as hunters and gatherers, but so far we have only discussed hunting. We must not ignore the other aspect of their way of life – gathering –, especially as it has a direct bearing on the rock paintings.

From present-day hunters and gatherers we know that the larger part of their food requirements is met by gathering, not by hunting. In the Late Stone Age the situation must have been similar. In addition to small creatures such as insects, worms, larvae, molluscs and snails, people collected vegetable products – edible roots, fruits, seeds, leaves etc. The rock paintings of Zimbabwe are, as far as we know, the only ones which take much account of this. Animals are not the focus of interest to the same extent as they are elsewhere. Plants, including those of nutritional value, are depicted almost as frequently as animals: the gathering of food was an essential part of life everywhere.

The pictures show that the artists' knowledge of the plants they painted was very accurate: the outer form and peculiarities are realistically reproduced.

ed. The artists can only have acquired such knowledge through close intimacy with their subject-matter. Behind the pictures of plants lie the observations and experience of many generations of gatherers. Perhaps (but this is only a guess) it was the contact with the Iron Age plant cultivators which stimulated the hunters and gatherers to record in pictures their knowledge of the plant world.

The accuracy of the artists is bewildering. The galleries of rock paintings form a botanical picture-book, showing very many different species of trees and other plants. It would be a rewarding task for a trained botanist to identify each one. We can only name the few which are known to us: the baobab (Fig. 18), the acacia (Plate 9a, Figs. 14, 23) and a tree described by Frobenius as "Kaffir orange" (Fig. 19). On Plate 10 (bottom right) we can identify pumpkins; but we do not know whether these were of a wild or cultivated variety.

The depiction of plants is not confined to what is visible above the earth – the leaves, fruit, branches and trunk: it also includes what is hidden inside the earth – the roots, which can be seen on many pictures of plants (Figs. 17, 19). This reflects on the one hand an awareness of the whole organism, which today's artists lack, and on the other, the fact that in at least some plants it was the roots that were of most interest, because they were edible.

But not only the pictures of plants and trees make the rock paintings of Zimbabwe special. Many other features of the natural environment are portrayed. We can see the typical weathered shapes of the granite outcrops (Figs. 9, 20, 21, Plate 8b), watercourses or pools (Fig. 14) and stretches of grass(?), represented by a large number of thin single strokes (Fig. 15). Even rain (Fig. 23) and clouds(?) (Plate 7a) belong to the painters' repertoire. People and animals are often depicted within this natural environment; they move and act within the framework of the landscape.

Finally we come to the human figures. Here, in contrast to many of the animal figures, which show characteristic details, we find a simplification, above all with regard to the human face, of which all the details are usually absent. Apparently the aim was not to portray particular people, recognisable by individual features. Some scholars believe that the reason was fear of magical practices. Whether this was so remains an open question. It is equally reasonable to suppose that man was of importance not so much as an individual person, but rather as part of a group and of his environment. It was these relationships which it was important to preserve in pictures. This is also why we find so many pictures of groups and hardly any of individuals.

Differences between the figures in human form, apart from their sexual characters, are indicated above all by the size of those portrayed. There are

pictures on which single, outstandingly large figures resembling human beings are surrounded by several smaller ones (Plate 10 and Fig. 9). Are these leaders or even kings, as Frobenius maintained? We think not, for the relatively simple structures of hunting and gathering communities probably recognised no central authorities. Since the groups were small, communication within them did not require any ritual framework, such as we see on Plate 10 and Fig. 9. It was far more important for these people to communicate with powers which they could not reach by direct conversation: deities and the forces of nature. These were of vital importance, for they guaranteed the spiritual and natural basis of existence of the community. We therefore believe that these scenes represent such mythical powers and the worship of them by human beings.

There are many other pictures which are concerned with supernatural experiences. People climb up a trunk, whose upper part turns into a snake. Above they are awaited by a female deity with a staff in her hand (Fig. 22). Fabulous creatures and rain animals are to be seen. In another scene the world is depicted as a large snake, on which people and animals live. Many of these scenes are very difficult to interpret. They depict mythical occurrences. Some of the motifs, such as rain ceremonies (Fig. 23; possibly Plate 7a and Fig. 22), show that the myths and beliefs of the hunters and gatherers had acquired a new content through contact with the farmers and herdsmen. This can be illustrated particularly well with the rain ceremonies. Rain was not a matter of life or death for the communities of the Late Stone Age. If drought occurred, they could migrate to a different region, where they would be sure to find enough food. Iron Age communities, however, were sedentary, since they lived largely off the yield of the crops they cultivated. A long period of drought could destroy the harvest and therefore threaten their existence. Thus rain was essential for their survival. For this reason many of their myths and rites were concerned with rain and its procurement. What significance, then, should be attached to the fact that this very theme was represented in many rock paintings of the hunters and gatherers? We can only hazard a guess. Through their way of life, these people had become very experienced in dealings with the forces of nature. Possibly they placed this experience at the disposition of the Iron Age farmers for the procurement of rain. It is therefore conceivable that they participated in the ceremonies which Iron Age communities performed with this aim, and that they recorded this in their pictures.

In this final section we have attempted to interpret some aspects of the rock paintings in the exhibition. We have been able to understand several of these aspects, especially where the paintings are concerned with everyday life. Yet many details and scenes remain incomprehensible, because they reflect a *Weltanschauung* which we can today no longer directly experience. Our

world and living conditions have altered radically. We must therefore be content with understanding individual fragments.

ZIMBABWE AND THE WAHUNGWE CIVILISATION*

By Leo Frobenius

The king and his "venerable" court

The name of the mountain on the slopes of which the residence of the present-day Makoni** is built is Sangano. On this mountain there lived, in ancient times, a people whose king was Madzivoa. Madzivoa did not have the title of "Mambo"***, but he was a king none the less. Before the ancestors of the Wahungwe came, the people of Madzivoa led a miserable existence. They had no fire any longer and fed on raw fish.

Once, the people of Madzivoa had possessed fire. But they had lost the fire. The people did not have the fire drill, but they did have "moto we ngona" which consisted of a horn filled with magic oil and closed with a plug. This fire-making device, like fire in general, was the responsibility of the king's daughters (singular: Musarre, plural: Wasarre), and a Musarre looked after it. To make fire, the plug was pulled out of the ngona horn and the end, soaked in magic oil, was applied to dry grass which immediately burst into flames.

At the time when Madzivoa's father was king on Sangano mountain, the Musarre looking after the fire had a quarrel with one of the Machinda (princes). When the king died, the musarre hid the fire horn. Afterwards, she died without telling anyone about the secret hiding place. This was the reason why at the time when the ancestors of the present-day Wahungwe (or Waungwe) came to this country, Madzivoa's people had no fire and ate their fish raw. The fire horn (ngona) has not been found to this day.

The ancestors of the present-day Wahungwe were then living in the North. They first settled in Chipadze (NE of Makoni) and came to Mount Sangano as hunters. These ancestors were not yet called Wahungwe, but Wadzimba. The Wadzimba are not hunters really, but there would always be a few Wadzimba in all hunting expeditions. A Mudzimba is a man who is a successful killer of animals and warrior, a restless man who never feels at home for long anywhere. The cult of the Wadzimba and the art of making themselves strong consists in smoking. The pipe consists of a horn filled with water. A reed is inserted in it, which carries the pipe bowl called Chemana. Nothing is smoked in the pipe except

* From "Erythräa - Länder und Zeiten des heiligen Königsmordes", 1931, pp. 114-244.

** king. This is a title name.

*** sacral king.

leaves of the rumhanda tree. Ritual smoking makes the Mudzimba strong and fearless. When a Mudzimba is unsuccessful in the chase, one of his ancestral spirits (mizimu) often reveals himself in some other man and says to him: "Mudzimba so-and-so has left something undone and he must therefore make a sacrifice. Then he will be a successful hunter again." As soon as the Mudzimba is told this by his friend, he ties a mutcheka around himself, a black bandage, about 30 cm wide, which encloses the loins but covers nothing else. Then he has some beer brewed, he drinks, dances and sings.

One day, these Wadzimba warriors came to Sangano mountain as simple hunters. They saw the place and said: "This is a good place, let us settle here." The leader of this Wadzimba group (Sabarawara) had stayed on Chipadze mountain. His son (Muskwere) was leading the group. At first, the Wadzimba were afraid of Madzivoa's people. They were afraid Madzivoa's people would chase them away. But the Wadzimba had the fire drill and they gave the Madzivoa some fire. This was the first kindness they showed the Madzivoa.

One day the Wadzimba killed an elephant. They painted the teeth with black mud. Then the Wadzimba called the Madzivoa and his people. They showed the dead elephant to the people and said to Madzivoa: "You are the king of the country, which part of this animal do you want? Do you want the teeth, the breast, the back or the legs?" According to tradition, the chieftains were always given, of every kill, the breast from the neck to the stomach but not the loins, and also the ivory teeth. This is a tribute to the chieftain. However, Madzivoa said: "Give me the legs." Madzivoa wanted neither the breast nor the ivory.

The chieftain of the Wadzimba married Madzivoa's daughter. The chieftain of the Wadzimba said to Madzivoa: "First I brought you fire. Then I ate the breast of the elephant because you declined the ivory. Now I have married your daughter. From now on I shall be the Mambo here on the Sangano and you shall serve me in future." In this way, Madzivoa became the servant of Wahungwe-Mambo.

As soon as the Mambo had built his house on Sangano mountain, he spread the message throughout the land: "Come and get your fire from the new Mambo." All the people who had eaten their fish raw until then went to Sangano mountain to fetch the fire made with the fire drill. For this reason, the Mambo was called "Magone" which means the man skilled to make things. This is the origin of the title Makoni. All the people who lived in the distant areas of the land said to one another: "Let us go to the place of assembly to the Magone who is able to make

the fire." In this way, the people of the Makoni constantly increased and his lands became more extensive.

It was at this time that the ceremony originated which is characterised by the proverb "the new king came with his new fire". As soon as a new king is installed, all fires and hearths must be put out throughout the land. The first official action of the king is to make a new fire with the fire drill. The people call the vertical rod *musika*, the horizontal rod *chissikiro*. The words are substituted for *murume* and *mukadsi*. The people say *begetter* and *shaper*, rather than *man* and *woman*, because shame prevents them from naming in public, by using these words, the sexual act which is expressed by this instrument and its original names.

The timber from which this ceremonial fire drill is made must be taken from the *musamwi* tree. The first wife of the Mambo, called the *Wahosi*, must assist the king during the fire-making ceremony, because it will only be a proper king's fire, if the *Wahosi* has been present as his wife. Moreover, the father of the *Wahosi* must also be present; after this, the elders come and get brands of the new king's fire and take them to their steadings and the house of their *wahosi*. All the other people get the fire from the house of the *Wahosi*, and the whole people think of the time when the fire was made on the *Sangano* mountain by the *Wadzimba* for the first time and fetched by all the other people. When the fire goes out in any steadings, a new flame must be borrowed from a neighbour, and it must come from a fire lighted from the new regal fire.

When the new king has lighted the fire, an ox is killed. The king despatches his messengers to all kings living near or far away and tells them that he, so-and-so, is now the Makoni, i.e. the Mambo in the *Wahungwe* region.

The group of steadings in which the king or mambo lives with his "family" is called *Zimbawoye*. The natives have no doubt about the meaning of this word. *Zimba* or *Dzimba* = house, and *woye* (*uoye*) = a term of veneration, to be translated "august". The "august house"! Present-day translation, adapted to the southern dialects, in which *zimba* = house, *bwe* = stones, is popular etymology, and can only be present-day popular etymology because even the old Portuguese invariably write the word as *Zimbaoe*. *Zimbabwe* as a house built of stone undoubtedly had a meaning different from *Zimba-uoye* = the venerated steadings because the word was applied to graves in the rock, which are rightly called "houses of stone".

Surprisingly, the women at the court of a Makoni have more influence than the men. The huge, forceful men whom we encounter at other African

courts of similar political structure, are completely absent, or are only pale shadows, at Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, the Wahungwe assert that this proportion of male and female participation in the "common weal" has always been the same.

Among the women of inner Zimbabwe, the highest place is taken by the Mazarira, who is also called Uomazarira (uo = the venerable, gracious lady). She is the mother of the king. Mazarira is her honorary title. After her elevation, she is not allowed to do any work. She need not concern herself with water, timber, cooking, working in the fields any more. Everything she requires is supplied by the king's wives third-class, and by the king's daughters. If the Mazarira and mother of the new king was the Wahosi (first wife) of the king's father, the new king is not allowed to see the Mazarira again after her elevation although she is his own mother. Apart from this, the Mazarira was considered to be the "mother of all kings" and was treated accordingly. When a Mazarira died, a new one was elected.

The relationship of the king's real wives was established by the arrangement of the dwellings. Previously, the Zimbabwe included three steadings or three centres. The first "house" was that of the king, the second was that of the Wahosi, the third was that in which the Wuarango cooked and which also served as eating place. The women were divided into three classes: the only member of the first class was the Wahosi, the first wife of the mambo. All visitors were received in her house, and cooking was done for visitors only, as far as preparation was concerned. All heavy work such as that associated with water, timber, cooking, washing and work in the fields was done by the many women in the third class, the Wuarango. Between the Wahosi and the Wuarango is the Wuabanda. If the Wahosi has a message for the Wuarango she sends the Wuabanda as her representative.

Now for the fourth group of royal women, the king's daughters, who are called Wasarre (singular: Musarre). For an appreciation of their abnormal way of life it should be emphasised from the start that the Wahungwe, like, apparently, all Wakaranga tribes, were formerly greatly concerned with the chastity of their daughters; from the time of the Matebele wars, this changed to the opposite. It was once customary to send all the young girls of a stading or village for a bathe in the early morning. When they returned from the bathe, one after the other had to lie on a mat. An old women then checked whether everything was in order. If premature and illicit intrusion was observed, the girl was bullied until she named the offender who was then severely punished. If a young

husband later observed on the wedding night that his wife was no longer able to supply what he was entitled to demand, he got his mother to perforate the bottom of a pot and send the young woman back to her parents with this symbolic gift. It can therefore be said that, generally speaking, the chastity principle dominated among the Wahungwe and the Wakaranga as a whole, since these customs would seem to be fairly universal.

It is all the more striking to observe that this principle is not applied to the Wasarre, the king's daughters. The opposite could justifiably be alleged. The Musarre had the right at all times to dispose of her body as and when she wanted to. There is a proverb about them which mentions "the leopard's skin". This says two things. To wear the leopard's skin or to sit on it is a privilege of the royal family and the proverb intimates that free love is a royal privilege of the Musarre. The native wit characteristic of the Wakaranga tribes has, however, given a second meaning to the phrase which it is unlikely to have had at the beginning: the number of these sexual adventures is matched with the number of spots on the leopard skin.

There was, however, nothing immoral about this right of abandon. On the contrary: passionate abandon was mandatory. The sacral hymn (if the words were profane, the Wahungwe would consider them unpronounceable aloud in public) of the great rain sacrifice which all the dancers sing says: "When the Musarre yields her body to cohabitation, the rain will come". The vagina of the Musarre must never become dry.

However, the Musarre's obligation to indulge in sexual activity was not only outward-directed. Peculiar customs must previously have arisen in the heart of the Zimbawoye. I have been unable to obtain any definite information on this matter from the Wahungwe. A royal messenger of the previous Makombe, however, told me the following story: At the time of the reign of the older Makoni family, the custom among the Wahungwe had been for the Machinda, the heir apparent to the throne, to live with a Musarre, i.e. his sister. This relationship was not considered to be a marriage. When he became Mambo (king) and was given the title of Makoni, it was the duty of his sister and mistress to light the new fire with the Makoni. After this ceremony, the sister-mistress was given the honorary title Mwuiza and remained the keeper of the royal fire. My informant further alleged that the Mwuiza had at one time been the principal wife of the Mambo. After this, the Wahungwe had installed a Wahosi in accordance with the Barozwi custom and had put the Mwuiza among the Wuarongo. If the Makoni had previously had a son by the Mwuiza, this

son was the first in the line of succession to the throne, and, in this case, the Mwuiza was promoted to Mazarira.

When two branches of the royal family were fighting for the office of Makoni, with their aspirants, there was a solution. One of the aspirants, A, married the daughter of aspirant B; A automatically became Mambo and Makoni, and B, the father-in-law who had to be present when the new fire was lit. The descendants of B admittedly lost claims to the royal crown once and for all. This custom is a last remnant of privileges resulting from the sexual relations of close blood relations.

A very important point is that the king's daughters really remained unmarried. In the view of the Wahungwe, first, marriage is sealed by payment for the bride (lobolo) and, secondly, a man may send his wife away, but a woman can only dissolve her marriage by arbitration of the elders. Neither of these institutions can be applied to the Musarre. The king accepts no payment for his daughters, he gives them away as a favour. Moreover, the Musarre owes no loyalty to her husband nor is she compelled to maintain a relationship. She can refuse the man the Makoni-father wishes to give her, or she may send him away eventually. The man will remain a simple Muranda in this case, i.e. an inhabitant of the Zimbawoye not related to the royal family. Accordingly, the sons-in-law of the Mambo are not given the customary title (Mukwambo), but are called Wanehanda.

Like all Waranda (plural of Muranda) in the Zimbawoye, these Wanehanda constitute an important factor in the establishment of the Mambo. They could be described as the guards, the only reliable servants of the king. What is certain is that all the Waranda and, consequently, the Wanehanda are the only completely honest and loyal servants of the king in the Zimbawoye. Apart from them, the only male inhabitants of the royal village are the Machinda, i.e. princes, that is to say sons, brothers, nephews, grandchildren of the king. The Machinda, being blood relations are the opposite of the Waranda, who are not blood relations. All these are always involved in "court intrigues". The cause of these intrigues invariably is the eternal question: "Whose son will be the next Makoni"? which is tantamount to the other question: "Which woman will be the next Mazarira?" The problem is one for the old women, who will talk by the hour about their sons' attractions and claims, but will never express their hopes for the office of Mazarira. During such conversations, they will accuse one another of all conceivable crimes and nastiness. Poisoning and witchcraft are commonplace.

The waters of origin

The myth concerning the origin of the Wahungwe refers to a ruler of the name "Madzivoa". They themselves derive this from dzivoa (lake, pond, ford). There are many of these on the southern Rhodesian plain, as would be expected in a granite landscape decomposed by weathering. According to a large number of myths and legends, many of the dzivoa are populated by 'beings' which live at the bottom of the lakes. Whether a dzivoa is inhabited can easily be seen from the rising of bubbles encircled by widening ripples. To illustrate this, the Wahungwe will make a drawing of such ripples in the sand. They are the same concentric ripples that form when a stone is thrown into the water. However, since they form without being caused by a stone and without any external influence, they must be caused by beings that live at the bottom of the lake. Moreover, whirlpools are sometimes found which engulf bathers. They tell the careful observer whether the lake is inhabited or not.

The generally accepted name of the spirits that inhabit the lakes is Wadzivoa among the Wahungwe and Manyika. This is what is stated in the legend about the origin of the Wahungwe. The preferred name of the underwater spirits among the Wahungwe, Barwe, Wateve, Manyika and Wazezuru is not Wadzivoa but Ndusu or Njuvi. Of these Ndusu, the Wahungwe tell that they live at the lake bottom like men, that they have fire in their huts, that smoke rises from their huts and that they love music.

"A man had a wife. He had two sons. When they were grown up, the father only had enough to pay the lobolo (bride-price) for one of them. Only one of the sons was able to marry. The younger son married. The older son had nothing to win a wife with.

The older brother said to himself: 'How am I to win a wife? I shall make a plan'. He prepared his mbira (a musical instrument made of sheet iron "reeds" attached to a wood box). He took his Mbira and departed.

As he went along playing his Mbira he met an army of rabbits (zuro). He said to himself: 'How can I get past the rabbits?'. He played his mbira. The rabbits began to dance. They raised much dust. When you could not see anything for dust, the lad escaped.

He continued his journey and met a troop of large animals. He played his mbira. The animals began to dance. They raised a lot of dust. When you could not see anything for dust, the lad escaped.

He continued along the road. After a while he met a pack of lions. He played his mbira. The lions began to dance. They raised a lot of dust. When you could not see anything for dust, he escaped.

The lad went on and on. At last he came to a mountain that was high and very, very long. At the foot of the mountain there was a dzivoa (lake) which was large and very, very long. The lad said: 'How am I to get across this dzivoa?' He sat on a rock on the bank of the dzivoa and started to play his mbira.

When he had played for a while, a man rose to the surface in the middle of the lake. This man, an underwater man, (Njuvi) stood on the water and listened to the lad playing. Then he went down, but soon returned with another man, and both listened to the music for a while and then went down. After this, many Njuvi came and listened.

Three Njuvi came up to the lad on the bank. They said to him: "Take this mushonga (charm). When you have taken it, you can live under the water like ourselves. Take it and come with us. We shall take you to our Mambo (king)". The lad said: 'All right'. He took the Mushonga. Three Njuvi escorted him to their Mambo at the bottom of the dzivoa. The Mambo of the Njuvi said to the lad: 'Play your mbira.' The lad played. He played his best. He played for three days and three nights. The Mambo was delighted. The Mambo ordered them to show the lad a large village with many people in it. The Mambo said to the lad: 'The village my people have shown you is yours. You can take to wife any maiden in it.'

The lad lived in the lake for several years. He had many wives and begat children. He said to himself: 'I must let my brother share in my riches'. The lad got ready. He left the lake and walked until he came to his brother. He said to his brother: 'I have a large village under the water. Come with me and share my riches'. The younger brother said: 'I am grateful to you, but I want to stay where I am'. The older brother returned to the dzivoa and never came back."

Some Wakaranga say that these beings that live in the depth of the water are the spirits of the dead. There are legends according to which these „Wadzivoa“ ancestral spirits taught men to be blacksmiths, and gave them the tools from the depths of the water. Unfortunately, nothing remained but the memory of the existence of this tradition, the real import of which had been forgotten. A Barwe man gave me an excellent account of the presents given by the Ndusu: „From the Ndusu, men obtained 1. the knowledge of weaving and forging, 2. the knowledge of makona (medicines), 3. instructions on how to bury the Mambo (king), 4. instructions on how to offer sacrifices for rain, 5. the knowledge of the mukuabpassi (high priest), 6. the mbira (musical instrument) and the art of playing it.”

The assertion about the relationship of these Wadzivoa to the primeval culture and about their nature as ancestral spirits may well be connected

with a number of peculiar funeral customs which greatly deviate from the generally accepted form. Among the Wahungwe, these apply in particular to twins. They are called Wakuisa Makomo, i. e., allegedly, „those who climb up the mountain“. This name is alleged to be due to the fact that they infringed the privilege of the king. Man should never have more than one child at a time. Of these, one must be killed, and the other thrown into the water in a pot and drowned. This sacrifice is intended to induce rain. Moreover, all infant corpses are placed in urns or wrapped in cloth and buried on the river bank or sunk in a pond. Again, there is said to be a favourable effect on rain. If a woman dies in childbirth, she is not buried in the cemetery but on the river bank.

The deeper meaning of these customs is reflected in the legends:

„A man had many wives. The wives had children. One wife had a child which went down with smallpox.

The other wives said: ‘We do not want our children to become infected. Take your child and go away’. The other wives drove the mother and her sick child from the steading. The man built her a hut outside the steading next to the corral.

The husband said to his wives: ‘When I die, bury me on the bank of the dzivoa where the hippopotamus live. If you bury me on the bank of this dzivoa, the dzivoa will dry out’.

The man died. His corpse was buried on the bank of the dzivoa in which the hippopotamus lived. All the women and children went, only the sick child and his mother did not go. When the corpse of the man was buried on the bank, the dzivoa began to dry out. The hippopotamus came out and ran away. The dzivoa soon became completely dry.

The sick boy said to his mother: ‘When I die, bury me next to my father on the bank of the dzivoa. You will see that the water will return’. The boy died and was buried on the bank of the dzivoa. When the child was buried, the water began to rise again in the dzivoa. The dzivoa filled up and the hippopotamus returned to it.”

There would therefore seem to be little doubt that there is a relationship between the children buried on the bank and thrown into the water, and the water level in the lake.

The dzivoa is always a water of origin. In the same way as the rain comes from it, as does the knowledge of the arts and sciences, so the ancestors of the original inhabitants of the land are descended, according to the Wahungwe, from Madzivoa.

“A man and a woman had two children, a boy and a girl. The boy’s

name was Runde; the girl's name was Munjari. The children grew up. The two children became adults.

One day, Runde went to his parents and said: 'My sister Munjari is so beautiful that I must marry her. I do not want another man to take her to wife'. The parents said: 'You cannot marry your sister Munjari. Only the Mambos marry their sisters. Otherwise nobody has ever married his sister.' Runde said: 'If nobody has done it before me, I shall be the first to marry my sister.' The parents said: 'We shall never allow you to marry your sister Munjari'. Runde said: 'If you do not allow me to marry my sister Munjari, I shall kill myself (ku vuraya).'

Runde had dogs. He called his dogs. He took his clothes. He took his spears. He went away with his dogs, spears and clothes. He went to a pond. He jumped into the water with his dogs, clothes and spears. Runde went on living with his dogs in the water.

The day after, an old woman came to the pond to draw water. The old woman washed her calabashes. She heard a voice. The lad was singing in the water: 'Dear grandmother' (customary mode of address for old women) 'washing your calabashes, go and tell them that Runde is in the lake; his clothes are the red colour of stagnant water; his dogs have turned into crocodiles; his spears have become reeds; he died for his Munjari'.

The old woman heard Runde's song. She ran into the village and went to Runde's parents and said to them: 'Runde has gone into the lake with his clothes, spears and dogs. He has done this because of his sister Munjari.' The parents became frightened.

Runde's parents said: 'Let us take another maiden to him whom he can marry so that he can return from the pond.' The parents went to the pond with a beautiful maiden. They called into the water: 'Runde, come out of the lake. Here is your sister. You can marry her.' Runde replied: 'This is not my sister. This maiden cannot help me. She is not Munjari. I will not come back.' The parents returned to the village with the girl.

Runde's parents came back with a maiden who was still more beautiful. The parents called into the water: 'Runde, come out of the lake. Your sister is here. You can marry her.' Runde replied: 'This is not my sister. This maiden cannot help me. She is not Munjari. I will not come back'. The parents returned to the village with the maiden.

Runde's parents said: 'The life of our son Runde is at stake. We must give him his sister Munjari'. The parents went to the lake with Munjari. They shouted into the water: "Your sister Munjari is here whom you want to marry. We will allow you to'. Runde heard these words and saw

his sister. Runde was content. He came out of the lake with his dogs, clothes, and spears and married his sister Munjari”.

When this story had been told, an elderly woman from the Eastern Wahungwe area said that the story was rather different and certainly not something one should tell in front of children. She gave me the “authentic” version afterwards. It ran as follows:

“Once upon a time there lived a man and his wife. They had a son who was called Runde and a daughter who was called Munjari. The two children grew up together.

One day, Munjari saw her brother in the bath. She saw her brother naked. Munjari said to herself: ‘Runde is more than all other men. I want to sleep with Runde’. Munjari went to a Nganga* and said: ‘Make me a mushonga (magic charm). What I desire is a man.’ The Nganga made a mushonga. The mushonga was a small grain. The Nganga gave the mushonga to Munjari.

In the evening, after eating, Runde said to Munjari: ‘I am thirsty, give me something to drink.’ Munjari put the mushonga under a finger nail. She brought a calabash of water and held it in such a way that her thumb nail was in the water. Runde drank. The mushonga had fallen into the water. Runde drank the water. He swallowed the mushonga.

The next day Runde went to his parents and said: ‘No-one shall marry my sister Munjari. I want to marry her myself.’ The parents said: ‘You are getting above yourself. Only the Mambos marry their sisters’. Runde said: ‘I must marry my sister.’ The parents said: ‘You are not a Mambo and you are not an animal. We do not allow you to marry your sister’. Runde said: ‘If you do not give me my sister Munjari for a wife I shall kill myself’. The parents said: ‘We shall not give you your sister Munjari for a wife.’ Runde left.

He took his white clothes, his spears, and his dogs, and went to a lake. He went into the lake with all his possessions. His clothes became the red sheen on the lake surface. His spears became reeds, his dogs turned into crocodiles, he himself lay on the lake bottom in the shape of a lion.

The day after, an old woman came to the lake shore. She washed her clothes. The old woman’s clothes became red. The old woman was startled. Runde sang: ‘Dear grandmother, you are washing your clothes. Go and tell them that Runde is in the lake. His clothes are as red as the stagnant water. His dogs have become crocodiles. His spears have turned into reeds. He has died for his Munjari’.

* priest.

The old woman heard Runde's song and ran to the village of the parents and said to them: 'Your son Runde has gone into the lake. His clothes have become the red sheen on the lake surface. His spears have become reeds. His dogs have turned into crocodiles. He has died for his Munjari.' The parents took fright. They said: 'We must do anything we can for Runde'.

The parents went to the lake with a beautiful maiden. They shouted: 'Your Munjari is here'. Runde called from the water: 'If you are my sister Munjari, jump into the lake'. The maiden took fright and ran back to the village. Runde shouted: 'This was not my sister Munjari'. The parents went back to the village.

The parents went to the lake with another fair maiden. The parents shouted 'Your sister Munjari is here'. Runde called from the water: 'If you are my sister Munjari, jump into the lake.' The maiden took fright and ran back to the village. Runde called: 'This was not my sister Munjari'. The parents went back to the village.

The parents said: 'We only have one daughter'. The parents called Munjari. They went down to the lake with Munjari. The parents shouted: 'Your sister Munjari is here'. Runde called from the water: 'If you are my sister Munjari, jump into the water'. Munjari took off her dress. Munjari took off her anklets and her bracelets and took the pearls out of her hair. Munjari went into the lake.

When Munjari went into the lake, the reeds became spears, the crocodiles dogs, the red sheen turned into white clothes, and Runde rose from the water dressed in white clothes, and Munjari followed him. Munjari put on her pearls, her bracelets, her anklets, and her dress. Runde and Munjari went to the village. Runde and Munjari married. Runde became the first king of Madzivoa land."

Finally, the woman explained to me why the story should not be told in the presence of children and young people: Because it was the story of the origin of all Wadzivoa and of the first kings.

The last part of the legend is reminiscent of the description of the funeral rites of the second wife murdered after the king. It is said that before her sacrificial death, the second wife "was painfully deprived one by one of all articles of clothing and jewelry", so that she was naked at the moment of death and was only robed again when the corpse entered the funereal cave. — Since this legend is taken for history describing the origin of the royal family, we gain the impression that the peculiar way of life and the life and death ceremonial of the princes followed a mythological model.

Again, the dzivoa appears as the water of origin. Derived from the

dzivoa is all knowledge of engineering, the science of the mukuabpassi, the ritual of regicide. It is the source of rain and, it now appeared, the origin of the first kings, of the first dynasty.

The fertile rain and procreation

There is an odd piece of evidence to show that the concept "rain" is of paramount importance to the inhabitants of Southern Africa. In all the Bantu peoples between Benue and South Africa I found a word for water (mai, maji, mazi etc.) and another word for rain (vula, mwura etc.). The peoples of this region, however, only know the word mvura for rain, which they apply also to the water from brooks, wells, and rivers, having completely given up the other word.

Among all the peripheral peoples, such as the tribes on the Limpopo and the Waremba in the South, the Batonga and the Wataware who live in the north on the Zambesi we were able to record descriptions of dances and celebrations and hymns of the rain cult. The fundamental principle is the same in all of these. Mostly, a round dance is performed, encircling a hill, a tree, a house, etc. and "holy" beer is drunk, and hymns with monotonously repeated texts are sung. These are litanies directed mostly at the king or the ancestors as mediators between man and God (Moari). These dances are continued for days, frequently until the prayers are heard and rain falls.

In the central area of Southern Erythraean culture* the ceremony also involves songs and dancing. One or two priests celebrate to start with. Then a sacrifice is offered up and finally a holy area is defined, which constitutes an open-air temple. Among the Wahungwe the rain sacrifice to be performed in the case of persistent and ominous drought was not originally called Mbila but Masingo. The superficial observer fails to identify any special priests. The suggestion that a sacrificial feast should be held probably comes from the Wasikiro, the mediums of the dead kings. During the ceremony no-one is allowed to walk in the bush or the fields because the Mondoro, the spirits of the dead kings incarnated as lions, which follow the Wasikiro like dogs, scour the area around the site of the sacrifice.

The place of the priest is taken by a Machinda, a son of the royal family. The rite is performed under a tree with widespread branches. The

* In Frobenius' terminology the Southern Erythraean Culture was the southern form of an African culture which had sacral kingship as its most important trait.

people assemble in masses. All bring beer. The officiating Machinda prays: "Ndemba woye, do ti pai mwura. Iwe u wa sika chimge ne chimge. Ti no pa bgabga ne ngombe. Yako iyi." ("Gracious God, grant us rain. Thou and thou only hast created the world. We give beer and an ox. Let this be Thine"). The women then give their shrill shouts of joy and the men clap their hands. Beer is drunk and a black, hornless bull is killed.

Round-dances are then performed about the site of the sacrifice. The conventional hymn is as follows:

"Ku chira musarre, mvura no vuya" ("when the king's daughters cohabit, the rain will come"). This song is very interesting in that normally the Wahungwe are very reserved and chaste in daily speech. For example, they do not refer to the two components of the fire drill by their proper names, murume (man) and mukadsi (woman), but refer to them obliquely as musika = the maker, generator, and chikiro = the shaper, so that the parallel to the sexual act is not unduly close. Nevertheless, the drastic sentence quoted above is repeated by the whole congregation at the ceremony. The old people also told me that there would certainly be no rain if the Musarre (king's daughters) did not cohabit lustily.

At first sight, this would seem to suggest that prayer and sacrifice were addressed directly to God and that the intermediaries, the Mizimu, were excluded. Closer investigation, however, shows that this is not the case. In former times at least the officiating Machinda, i.e. the member of the royal family, had to be a Sikiro, a medium of a dead king. This means that it was after all a Muzimu in person who sent prayers and sacrifice on their way to Ndemba. Like all other sacred acts, the Masingo rite would appear to have been in the hands of the Sikiro. They gave advice, they asked for the views and intentions of the Mizimu, they selected the victim, and it is interesting to note that they had one further function: all the bones of the sacrificial ox "with a little meat on them" had to be thrown from the place of sacrifice into the bush for the Mondoro (royal spirit lions) to eat.

The first rainy season sacrifice, Masingo, was demanded every year by the priest (Mukuabpassi) in the month of Kuwumbi. This month is approximately the same as the month of April. It is also called Madsudsu or Makoni, the latter, allegedly, because the ceremony was celebrated in the homestead of the Makoni. The exact time was determined by the Mukuabpassi by observation of the stars. When he had determined the proper date, he went to the Makoni and said "Changamire Mambo! The day of the Masingo is such and such a date. Let beer be brewed". Beer was then brewed in the steadings of the Makoni. All the people assembled to drink

the beer. The prayer was said by the Mukuabpassi. It went as follows: "bgabga vuyu baba wangu" ("this beer for our father"). After that, there was beer drinking and dancing, and a song was sung which went as follows: "Ti no tevera magora pa nyama. Ti no lya wuchi ne nyama" ("We follow the vultures to the carcass. We eat honey and meat"). An ox is then killed. Previously, this is alleged to have been followed by a hunting expedition during which it was important that every huntsman should cut off the tail of the animal he killed and make a knot in the hair "because otherwise all those who eat of his meat would get a stomach ache".

According to the Batonga, Waremba and Manyika, it was the custom among the Wahungwe previously to sacrifice maidens, that is to say daughters of the king, at the big rain ceremonies. This was done in a consecrated space which had two large entrance gates and was surrounded by a fence. The Wahungwe themselves denied this.

Corresponding to the first regular Masingo festival there is another which is arranged around the "Chizozo". The Chizozo is a sacred grove situated on the northern slope of Sangano mountain with an oval area of dense trees and bushes surrounded by a wide, bare strip of ground. This track is cleared of grass and vegetation every year. In this grove there rest the very old women of the royal family, the "Mazarira", Wahosi, Wabandsi, Worongo and Wasarre. The central undergrowth contains very old graves only.

The date of the purification festivals was also determined by the Mukuabpassi, after observation of the stars. The festival was celebrated in the month of Wuwu or Mawuwu (also called Betsa Mamepo) which coincides approximately with our month of September. This is the month in which the grass was burnt off and spring digging for agriculture began. At the request of the Mukuabpassi, beer was brewed in Zimbawoye. The people assembled, and beer was drunk.

It could be said that this Chizozo spring festival, held at the beginning of the rainy season, corresponds or would correspond to the Masingo autumn festival, begun in Zimbawoye. There is, however, a very major difference which reveals the apparent similarity as to some extent the opposite. The Masingo festival is celebrated every year, the Chizozo festival once every two years. Previously, the performance of both depended on the observations of the stars carried out by the Mukuabpassi priest, whose present-day successor knows nothing much about it. It is therefore impossible to obtain from direct accounts any indication of the way in which the date was fixed. However this may be, one of these festivals gives the impression of being an initiation and integration sacrifice, the other a

conclusion and thanksgiving sacrifice, or, the one could be a sacrifice for the period of rain and vegetation, and the other a sacrifice for the dry period and hunting period. There must be some profound significance in the fact that the rain and vegetation festival is only celebrated once every two years.

Now for the report of the old "high priest" of the Barozwi or Barotse in Southern Rhodesia, who is called the "Mawutse" and is the inheritor of the religious ideas of the past.

If no rain comes, beer is brewed. A circular fence of stakes is built which is called Rushanga. In its centre there is a tree which is called Muhadscha. The place fenced off is called Mutoro. The fence, Rushanga, has two gates in the south, the left-hand one for the Mukaranga, the right-hand one for the Mawutse himself. The rain sacrifice festival is called Mbila.

On the day of the Mbila all the people assemble at the Rushanga. All the heads of families bring beer. The Mukaranga enter the Mutoro from the left, the Mawutse from the right through the appropriate gate. The Mawutse is dressed in a dark blue toga. Under the tree, the Mawutse takes off the toga and spreads it out. He himself is naked. After this, the Mukaranga kneel on the left, the Mawutse on the right, in the centre of the area, facing the entrance with heads lowered.

The Mawutse prays as follows: "Madzibambo wangu wa ndi kumbirira kuna Moari, a ndi pe uyo mvura, a chengete sakanaka zildyiwa ne ku ndi pa uyo ku cheka." ("Ancestral spirits, graciously pray for me to God that he may grant us rain and blessing on food and harvest"). The Mawutse prays aloud. The Mukaranga remains silent. When the prayer has finished, the people clap their hands. The people then begin to dance around the Rushanga. One of several songs is: "Ti no da wazhinyi" ("We ask for much"). All these many people pray unceasingly like a single soul for that which they need, until it is granted. The dancing must be continued for a very long time. A black ox is sacrificed, which has been killed with axe or spear and is not slaughtered. This is done under the tree. There is neither a sacred fire nor inspection of entrails. Fires are lit outside the Rushanga. Those whose homes are a long way off boil their meat there and then, whereas the others take their share of the sacrificial meat home. They all drink the sacrificial beer.

This Mbila festival is held both when there is too little rain and when there is too much. The officiating priest is called Mawutse. The office of Mawutse is hereditary. He is considered to be "the mother of the people". He has to perform two sacrificial ceremonies: 1. The Mbila described

above, and 2. the Rukoto which is held after the harvest prior to threshing. Every head of a family brings a basket full of his grain. This is boiled and a beer festival held in which all take part. A lot of beer must also be brought to the Mbila: it is a religious observance.

The Mawutse is a rain priest whose power extends as far as the Wandjandja in the Charter district. He is a great priest, and yet there is one who is even greater, to whom he is subordinate in difficult rainy seasons and whom he only assists in the rain sacrifice. He is the rain priest Mangongo in the Korekore area near Sinoya. He is a particularly strong medium, who conducts the Mbila and celebrates using exactly the same ceremonial as the Mawutse. The Mangondo also has the title Nehanda. — The Mbila of the Mangondo priest differs from that of the Mawutse in that the Mukaranga is absent. The place of the silent kneeling figure of the Mukaranga is taken by the Mawutse. Mangondo and Wawutse take off the black toga and spread them under the tree. Before starting his prayer the Mangondo observes the stars through a gap between the tree-tops.

On this, a man from Sinoya commented that previously, when famine threatened due to lack of rain, the woman priest called Nehanda had to sacrifice the Mawutse himself, i. e. hang him from the tree on the Mtoro, to bury his corpse later under the roots. In ordinary life, only a maiden would be sacrificed.

The old Bazoe was one of the few members of the old priesthood whose knowledge had survived. He said that his family had originally lived in Zimbabwe where his ancestors had performed the sacrifices in ancient times. They had been the funeral priests of the great kings until the Mutapa came to the land at the time of Banya Mwuetsi. Mutapa had abolished the sacrificial death of the kings, which was the reason why the reign of the Banya Mwuetsi had disintegrated. The kingdom could, however, be restored if the sacrifices were correctly performed and ceremonies were held in a Rushanga.

In Zimbabwe, the west gate had been called the "Mukaranga gate". This is where the princesses (Musarre) had lived their life dedicated to love. This love life had involved not only men but a large snake which lived in the "dzivoa" of Zimbabwe. If the Musarre had not lived in this way and cohabited with the snake, there would have been no rain and the dzivoa would have dried up. This was precisely what had happened: since Zimbabwe had been destroyed and the Musarre driven out, the dzivoa had disappeared and there had been no proper rainy seasons. —

According to tradition, there lived in the large temple of Zimbabwe, in addition to other women, those daughters of the kings whose duty it was to practise the art of love particularly at times of shortage of rain. If the drought became ominous in spite of their endeavours, one of them was buried alive in the Zimbabwe valley.

All these girls were daughters of kings or at least came from the royal family. One group of these girls lived chaste and modest lives. These had to look after a fire which was put out when a king died and was lit again when a successor was chosen. These women performed a festive dance with songs, when the morning star could be seen for the first time.

Another group was that which practised ritual "whoredom". Rain sacrifices were never selected from the former but always from the latter group.

The valley in which the Zimbabwe temple is now situated was previously largely occupied by a large lake, i.e. a dzivoa. From this lake, the Zimbabwe temple, which was later situated in the centre of the dzivoa rose by itself. The Zimbabwe temple was, therefore, not built by human hands.

As long as the people observed the sacrifices and in particular killed the kings, Zimbabwe continued to rise from the dzivoa and to sink again after a lapse of time. With each re-emergence Zimbabwe brought many jewels and gold and Ngoro (shells). After this, there was the evil king Mutape who prohibited the sacrifices of kings, made many laws, and made the people work hard. The dzivoa dried up and the Zimbabwe temple was on dry ground and increasingly decayed. —

It is inevitable that an immense ruin like Zimbabwe should give rise to myths and legends. The strands of ceremonies, legends, and traditions are woven into a fabric which is made even more substantial by a valuable final group of traditions.

In ancient times, no rain fell for a whole year. The Wanganga (priests) therefore ordered a Mukaranga to be sacrificed. The Wanganga said: "It must be a nubile Musarre (king's daughter) who has never slept with a man. The Musarre must be innocent." The Mambo called his first wife and said: "Find among the Musarre a nubile and innocent one to be sacrificed as a Mukaranga". The first wife of the king went. She asked all the Wasarre to come and enquired: "Which one of you has never had anything to do with a man?" The king's daughters laughed and said: "Is it the business of the king's daughters to live like other girls?" The first wife of the king said: "Lie down on a mat". The king's daughters laughed and lay down on a mat. Among the nubile daughters of the king the first

wife of the king found not one who had never had anything to do with a man.

The first wife of the king went to the Mambo and said: "Mambo, among the nubile Wasarre there is not one who has never had anything to do with a man." The Mambo called the Wanganga together and said to them: "Among the Wasarre there is not a single one who has never had anything to do with a man. Tell me what is to be done". The Wanganga said: "Mambo, the Mukaranga must be sacrificed. If no untouched nubile Musarre can be found, find the oldest Musarre of those who are not as yet nubile. She must be locked up at the place of sacrifice and remain there until she is nubile. Then she can be sacrificed as a Mukaranga". The Mambo called the first wife and said: "Find the oldest of the Wasarre who are not as yet nubile and who has had nothing to do with a man". The first wife of the king called together the little girls of the Simbawoye. She found a child that had had nothing to do with a man. The little girl had no breasts as yet.

The little Musarre was taken to the place of sacrifice. The place of sacrifice had a high wall (the man explained: circular like the wall of a hut with a door but built not of timber and clay but of stone). In the centre there was a termite hill. On the termite hill there was a tall tree. The girl was taken to the sacrificial chamber. The entrance was sealed with stones. The grown-up Wasarre took food and water to the Mukaranga every day. They passed it down across the wall. The Wakaranga ensured that no man went near the place of sacrifice.

The girl grew up at the place of sacrifice. It took two years before she was grown up and had breasts. No rain fell during these two years. All the cattle died. Many people died. The rivers dried up. The grain did not germinate. The day came when the girl was nubile.

The Wanganga went to the king. The Wanganga said: "The Mukaranga is nubile. The Mbila can be held." The king called the people together. The people assembled around the place of sacrifice. The Wanganga opened the door to the place of sacrifice. The Wanganga dug a pit in the termite hill between the roots of the great tree. The Wanganga strangled the Mukaranga. The people danced around the place of sacrifice. The Wanganga buried the girl between the roots of the great tree in the termite hill. The priests called the Mizimu. The people danced around the place of sacrifice.

When the Mukaranga had been buried between the roots, the tree began to grow. The tree grew and grew. The tree grew all through the night. The people danced all through the night. The tree grew for three days. The people danced for three days. When day came, the top of the tree reached

the sky. The morning star appeared in the sky for the first time. The top of the tree spread across the sky. The stars and the moon could no longer be seen. A great wind arose. The leaves of the tree became clouds. It began to rain. It rained for 30 days.

The cosmic god and the earthly king

What moves me most deeply of all these things is the idea of the god-king who in the high endeavour of creating an ultimate symbol is first chosen as a man without blemish, is then invested with all conceivable powers and privileges, only to end his life by being sacrificed. This applies to the Musarre, the princesses, but it becomes even more manifest in the great kings themselves, the Mambos who were preceded, surely not only in legend, by a great prototype, a kind of emperor. We will now proceed to deal with "ritual regicide".

Reports that under certain circumstances the kings were put to death reached the Portuguese a long time ago. In the 80's, the ancient Mpossi, the Waremba chief in the Belingwe district and the grandfather of the present chieftain, told Harry Posselt that previously the Wakaranga kings were put to death once every four years. Mpossi added that good kings were spared by the priests and went into exile.

Among the Walowedi (or Lovedu) the sacred fire of state was still guarded. In addition to the king, there was a "Mojaji", a female regent whose husband was only prince regent and whom nobody was allowed to see face to face. Ritual murder of kings "was practised by Bahungwe and Manyika. A chief ruled for not more than five years and was then killed by a claimant method: the youngest wife (Mukaranga) of the ruling chief was secretly approached and bribed with presents in the stillness of the night. On a given date she would assist the claimant to enter the hut of the chief, who had his throat cut whilst asleep. The new chief would then proclaim his ascendancy and the tribe be summoned to pay homage."

From the Marandellas district it is reported that succession is regulated according to birth. The king is succeeded by his brothers in order of age. When there are no more brothers, it is the turn of the sons. When the king has become so old that he has lost his regal vigour, he is killed. The murder is decreed by his successor, who acts on his own judgement, without consulting priests, oracles, etc. The murder is done by men instructed to do so, at the time of the new moon. The king is blindfolded with a piece of black calico, and is then strangled.

The last Mambo of the Barozwi was murdered as follows: About 1780

there reigned the Mambo (king) Rupenya Mpeno; he was called "the mad" because he was so cruel. The Barozwi lacked the courage to murder this king because he was very powerful. The priests, whose business it was, approached the people of Selukwe and arranged a simulated war-like expedition which proceeded as planned. The Selukwe people insulted the Barozwi, the Barozwi complained to the Mambo Rupenya, who straightway started an expedition against the Selukwe. The warriors marched in front. The Mambo followed in a litter. When the enemy was sighted, all the warriors and the royal litter bearers of the Barozwi ran away. The Selukwe charged the litter, captured the Mambo and strangled him with a black cloth which the Barozwi priests had given them for this purpose. The Selukwe left the king's corpse lying in the field and returned to their villages. The Barozwi priests soon stopped running and returned to the "battlefield". They found the corpse of their king strangled in accordance with the proper rites and carried him home. The Mambo's corpse was buried with due ceremony.

On the subject of the ritual murder of kings, the Barwe told me that previously they had killed their kings every two (?) years. Concerning the way in which the assassination was done, there were two different views. Some said he was strangled, others said he was stabbed and his throat cut. It seems to me that strangling was the earlier form of assassination. Some of the Barwe told me the name of the cloth used for strangling; it was musangwua. It appears that the king's principal wife, the Imasonge, took part in the assassination. Shungano told me that in recent times the king was frightened of death and fled to a ruin where he hid himself. He had not been pursued there because the ruin had been considered as a place of asylum. I obtained no definite proof that there was a connection between the cult of Venus and ritual murder of kings. I was however told that the king was only murdered when Venus and the moon had not yet risen, and when the seed corn had been consecrated but not sown. The old king always conducted the seed ceremony, and never the new king, because the new king first had to grow into his office, together with the seed.

Now, best of all, a story told in December 1928 by a Barwe man on Messica farm:

Once upon a time there was a Makombe king who was more powerful and stronger than all other Mambos who lived before him or after him. This Makombe subjugated all peoples. He was the only king. All other kings served him. He was king of Zimbabwe too.

The Makombe became ill. The day arrived on which he was to be killed.

All great kings must be killed. The four Morongo (regents of the four cardinal points) went to the Makombe and said: "Mambo! Choose the man who shall be Makombe after you". The Mambo said: "My eldest son shall be king after me".

The day on which the Makombe was to be killed approached. The Makombe asked: "Has there ever been a Mambo who was not killed?" The four Morongo went to a Nganga and said: "Has there ever been a Mambo who was not killed?". The Nganga cast the Hakata (dice). The Nganga cast the Hakata three times. The Nganga said: "There has never been a king who was not killed; but a king can return if his own sister takes his illness upon herself".

The king was killed. The king was wrapped in cloths. After three days, the people came to squeeze the corpse dry. The dead Makombe had a wife who was his sister. The wife said to the people: "Leave it to me; it is my business". The woman squeezed the Makombe's corpse. She did it every day for twelve months. She would not let anyone help her. After twelve months, the king's corpse had dried out completely. The grave diggers carried the corpse of the king to the cave in which the corpses of the kings were laid.

When the corpse of the king was laid in the cave, the sister said: "Leave the cave. Close the cave. I shall stay with the Makombe". The sister lay down next to the corpse of the king. The grave diggers placed rocks in front of the cave and left. The sister of the Makombe remained lying next to the corpse. Her hair dropped out. Her fingernails and toe nails dropped off. Her teeth dropped out. All her flesh dropped off.

The day after, the guardians came to the cave. They took the rocks away from the entrance and entered. They looked for the corpse of the king; they looked for the sister of the king. The corpse of the king and the body of his sister had crumbled to dust. The guardians were frightened; they ran to the Morongo and said: "The corpse of the Makombe and his sister have crumbled to dust". The Morongo went to a Nganga. They said to the Nganga: "The corpse of the Makombe and his sister have crumbled into dust. What does this signify?" The Nganga cast the Hakata. He cast the Hakata three times. The Nganga said: "Wait four days. Then you will see what happens". The Morongo left.

The Morongo waited four days. Four days passed. When it got dark on the fourth day, the Morongo for the first time saw the new Mwuetsi (moon) rise and saw the Marinda (evening star) follow it. —

Further, there is a fragment recorded among Mpossi's Waremba which probably came from the Nganga of the Piri mountains. It was difficult

to extricate the meaning of this fragment, which ran as follows: A young lad fell in love with the evening star and wished to marry it. He asked the Hakata dice how he could obtain the object of his desire. The answer given by the Hakata was: "You must steal the corpse of the king". He cast again, and the Hakata replied: "You must steal the corpse of the king and take a horn from its head". The lad said: "What use will that be to me?" The Hakata said: "You will find out".

The man went to the funeral cave of the king. The people had just finished mummifying the last king. The corpse was ready to be carried away. The corpse had two horns on its head. The lover of the star of Venus wanted to break off one of the horns of the corpse, but the king's corpse jumped up and, carrying the daring lad on its back, ran off until it reached the evening star.

This description brings to mind the image of the corpse of the Mtoko which is concealed in the skin of a bull and lies in state in this form – or of the fool who riding a bull with the moon on his chest rises from the dzivoa to royal estate. We are reminded of the horns of the moon which are animal horns; we are told of a boy with a birth mark in the shape of the moon who later becomes king. Bull, moon, king on the one side, star of Venus and the king's daughters on the other. All of these apparently images of the night sky. The night sky seen as a picture book.

Let us now turn our attention to what popular legend has to say of the stars. There is first of all a statement which is known to practically all the peoples of this civilisation and which I shall now report in its most comprehensive form, as told by a man of the Wahungwe:

"When the moon is full he is exactly opposite to his principal wife, the sun, and she makes him ill because she is jealous of the moon's second wife, the Nehanda (Venus). The moon prefers the latter. The sun with its rays makes the moon ill so that from then on it wanes until at last it dies. Nehanda who loves him follows him into death and saves him. The moon becomes well again and rises in the sky as a very small and still sick man. Nehanda follows him as his loving mate."

It seems important to me that we found people in all tribes to whom knowledge of the identity of the evening and morning star is a matter of fact. This means that the stars must have been observed attentively in past ages.

The most important feature of these views and traditions is contained in a cluster of tales which as a whole represent the products of decay of a large uniform myth; this we succeeded in discovering in a fairly good original condition.

Let us report the most important item of this fabulous material:

A man married a woman. The woman conceived. A boy was born. When the father saw the boy, he said: "The boy has a birth mark (wuarra-ndaema) on his forehead". The mother said: "Let us ask the Hakata whether the child is to stay alive". The father said: "Let us ask the Hakata".

The father went to a Nganga. The father said to the Nganga (magic priest): "My son has a birth mark on his forehead shaped like the moon. Shall we let the child live or shall we expose him on the bank of the dzivoa?" The Nganga asked the Hakata. The Nganga said: "Do not take the child to the dzivoa. The child will become a great Mambo, but, one day, the Mambo will be bitten by a snake and killed." The parents did not take the boy to the dzivoa. The boy grew up.

When the boy was grown up, he said to his father one day: "I shall go away and seek a wife." The father said: "You do that". The boy with the birth mark went away. He went a long way.

One day he came to a land where no rain had fallen for a long time. Everything had dried up. The cattle died. The people died. Along the road, the boy met a daughter of the king guarding the last cattle of the land. The boy spoke to the girl. The lad saw that the girl was very beautiful. The boy said to the girl: "I want to take you to wife". The girl said: "I will gladly go with you. The Mambo, my father, will however only give me for a wife to the man who gives rain to the country". The lad said: "Go to your father and tell him that I shall give rain to the land. I can do it".

The girl went to the Mambo and said: "I have met a boy who can give rain to the land". The Mambo said: "If the boy gives the land rain, I shall give you to him for a wife". The girl returned to the boy and said: "The Mambo agrees. Give the land rain".

The boy with the birth mark like the moon on his forehead went to a cave. In the cave there was a snake. The boy said: "I am the boy with the birth mark shaped like the moon on my forehead. Crawl from the feet up across my body and across the birth mark on the forehead." The snake said: "I will". The snake crawled over the body of the boy from the feet to the birth mark.

When the snake was crawling across the boy's feet, the horizon began to turn grey. When it crawled across his body, large clouds came. When it crawled across his forehead and the birth mark, which was completely covered by the body of the snake, it began to rain. It rained for five days and five nights.

The boy went to the king's daughter. The boy asked: "Has there been enough rain?" The king's daughter said: "Yes, there has been enough rain. My father will give me to you for a wife. I shall become your wife. But do not forget the thing I now tell you. As long as I am your wife you must eat nothing except the porridge I cook for you. You may take a second and a third wife, but you must never eat the porridge they cook for you." The boy said: "I agree".

The boy with the birth mark in the shape of the moon on his forehead married the girl. Every time the rain failed the boy went to the cave and said to the snake: "I am the boy with the birth mark shaped like the moon on my forehead. Crawl across my body from the feet and across the birth mark on my forehead". The snake did this. Then it rained.

From the day on which the boy came to the country all the fields had enough rain and the people had enough food. One day, the king died. The Machinda wanted to make a son of the dead king the new king. The women however said: "The boy with the birth mark in the shape of the moon on his forehead must be the new Mambo". The boy with the birth-mark became the Mambo of the country.

One day, there had been no rain for a long time. The king went to the cave where the snake was. Near the cave there was a small steading in which lived a woman and her daughter. The king passed the steading. The king was thirsty. The daughter stood in the door of her hut. The king said: "I am thirsty, give me something to drink". The girl went into the hut and brought the king a cup of water. The king drank. The king saw that the girl was very beautiful.

When the king had drunk, he went into the cave. When he returned from the cave, it was raining. The king entered the house of the woman. The king said to the woman: "I want to marry your daughter". The mother said: "You can marry my daughter, but the father of my daughter is a Mondoro (spirit lion). Therefore, you must eat the meat my daughter prepares as mulivo (side dish)". The king said: "I agree".

The king took the daughter of the Mondoro to be his second wife. Every day, the king ate the porridge prepared by his first wife and the side dish prepared by his second wife.

One day, the first wife said to her husband: "Ever since you took a second wife, you have not tasted of my side dish. The side dish I prepare is not meat but it is good and I want you to eat it." The king said: "I have promised my second wife". The first wife said: "If you do not eat my side dish today, I shall go into the dzivoa". The king got frightened. The king ate the side dish prepared by his first wife.

Next day the king entered the hut of his second wife. The second wife said: "Yesterday, you did not eat my side dish". The king said: "Forgive me, I did it so that my first wife would not go into the dzivoa." The second wife said: "No, I do not forgive you. I shall return to my mother". The king said: "Forgive me". The second wife said: "No, I do not forgive you. I want a husband who lives with me and eats my mulivo." The second wife got her things together and returned to her mother.

The second wife returned to her mother's house. The second wife then went to the cave where the snake lived. The second wife said to the snake: "I want a husband who lives with me and eats my mulivo". The snake said: "I shall come with you". The snake went to the hut of the second wife. The second wife lived with the snake.

One day, the king said to himself: "I love my second wife. I must visit my second wife and be with her." The king went to the hut of his second wife. The second wife said: "Mambo, what do you want of me?". The king said: "Forget the quarrel; let me stay with you until tomorrow." The second wife said: "It cannot be done, go away". The king went up to the second wife and wanted to embrace her. The snake jumped out from under the bed of the second wife and bit the king.

The king became ill and wasted away. The second wife said: "I want to see the Mambo once more before he dies". The second wife went to the steading of the king. The second wife went up to the bed of the king. The king died. The second wife lay down next to him and also died.

Further, I report, without any lengthy introduction, the myth told me by a Mukaranga, an old Nganga from the Mpiras region:

Moari (god) made a man who was called Mwuetsi (moon). He made him at the bottom of a dzivoa and he gave him a Ngona (= a horn containing ointment). Mwuetsi first lived in the dzivoa (lake).

Mwuetsi said to Moari: "I want to go on land". Moari said: "You will regret it". Mwuetsi said: "Nevertheless, I want to go on land". Moari said: "Well then, go on land". Mwuetsi went from the dzivoa to the land.

The land was bare and empty. There were no grasses. There were no bushes. There were no trees. There were no animals. Mwuetsi wept and said to Moari: "How am I to live here?" Moari said: "I told you before you started. You have chosen the path at the end of which you will die". Moari said: "Even so, I shall give you what belongs to you". Moari gave Mwuetsi a girl who was called Massassi (morning star). Moari said: "Massassi shall be your wife for two years". Moari gave Massassi a fire drill.

In the evening, Mwuetsi went into a cave with Massassi. Massassi said: "Help me, let us make fire. I shall hold the Chimandira (horizontal stick);

you work the Rusika (the vertical drilling stick)." Mwuetsi did what Massassi asked him to do. Massassi held the horizontal stick. Mwuetsi worked the drill. When the fire was lit, Mwuetsi lay down on one side of the fire. Massassi lay down on the other side of the fire. The fire was burning between them.

Mwuetsi thought: "Why has Moari given me this girl? What am I to do with the girl Massassi?" When it was night, Mwuetsi took his Ngonahorn. He moistened his index finger with a drop of oil from the Ngonahorn. Mwuetsi stood up. Mwuetsi said: "I cross the fire from one side to the other". Mwuetsi stepped across the fire. Mwuetsi went up to the girl Massassi. Mwuetsi touched Massassi's body with the anointed finger. Then Mwuetsi returned to his bed and slept.

When Mwuetsi woke up towards morning, he looked across at Massassi. Mwuetsi saw that Massassi's body was swollen. When it was day, Massassi began to give birth. Massassi gave birth to grass. Massassi gave birth to bushes. Massassi gave birth to trees. Massassi did not cease to give birth until the earth was covered with grasses, bushes and trees.

Thereafter, the trees grew and grew until their tops reached the sky. When the tops of the trees touched the sky, it started to rain.

Mwuetsi and Massassi lived a full life. For food, they had fruit, roots, and seed. Mwuetsi built a house in which he lived with Massassi. Mwuetsi made iron and a spade. He made hoes and dug a field. Mwuetsi made fabrics out of bark and bast. Massassi made baskets and caught fish. Massassi brought water and wood. Massassi cooked. In this way, Mwuetsi and Massassi lived for two years.

After two years, Moari said to Massassi: "Massassi, the time is up". Moari took Massassi from the earth and returned her to the dzivoa. Mwuetsi lamented.

Mwuetsi wept and said to Moari: "What shall I do without my Massassi? What shall I do without my wife? Who will hew wood and draw water for me? Who will cook for me?" Mwuetsi lamented for eight days.

Mwuetsi lamented for eight days. Then, Moari said to him: "I told you at the beginning that you were on the way to death. I shall give you another wife. I shall give you Morongo (the evening star). Morongo will stay with you for two years, and then I shall take her back." Moari gave Morongo to Mwuetsi.

Morongo came to Mwuetsi's hut. When it was evening, Mwuetsi wanted to lie on the other side of the fire. Morongo said: "Do not lie on the other side of the hut. Lie next to me." Mwuetsi lay down next to Morongo.

Mwuetsi took the Ngonahorn and was about to use the index finger

and the ointment. Morongo however said: "Do not do this. I am not like Massassi. Anoint your belly with the Ngona oil. Then anoint my belly with the Ngona oil." Mwuetsi anointed his belly with Ngona oil. Mwuetsi anointed Morongo's belly with Ngona oil. Morongo said: "Now have intercourse with me". Mwuetsi had intercourse with Morongo. Mwuetsi fell asleep.

The next day, towards morning, Mwuetsi awoke. Mwuetsi saw that Morongo's belly was swollen. At day break, Morongo began to give birth. On the first day, Morongo gave birth to chickens, sheep and goats.

On the evening of the second day Mwuetsi again had intercourse with Morongo. In the morning, Morongo gave birth to elands (nuka) and cattle.

On the evening of the third day Mwuetsi again had intercourse with Morongo. On the fourth day, Morongo gave birth, first to boys and then to girls. The boys who were born in the morning were grown up by evening.

On the evening of the fourth day, Mwuetsi again wanted to have intercourse with Morongo. A thunderstorm threatened and Moari said: "Leave off. You are approaching death". Mwuetsi was frightened. The thunderstorm passed. When the thunderstorm was over, Morongo said to Mwuetsi: "Make a door and block the entrance so that Moari cannot see what we do. Then have intercourse with me." Mwuetsi made a door. Mwuetsi closed the entrance of the hut. Mwuetsi then had intercourse with Morongo. Mwuetsi fell asleep.

The next day, towards morning, Mwuetsi awoke. Mwuetsi saw that Morongo's belly was swollen. When it was day, Morongo began to give birth. Morongo gave birth to lions, leopards, snakes and scorpions. Moari saw this. Moari said to Mwuetsi: "I warned you".

On the evening of the fifth day, Mwuetsi wanted to have intercourse with Morongo again. Morongo however said: "Behold, your daughters are grown up. Have intercourse with your daughters." Mwuetsi looked at his daughters. He saw that they were beautiful girls and that they were grown up. He had intercourse with them. They bore children. The children who were born in the morning were grown up by evening. Mwuetsi became the Mambo (king) of a great people.

Morongo, however, had intercourse with the snake. Morongo did not give birth any more. She lived with the snake. One day Mwuetsi came back to Morongo and wanted to have intercourse with her, but Morongo said: "Leave off". Mwuetsi said: "I will not". Mwuetsi lay down next to Morongo. The snake lay under Morongo's bed. The snake bit Mwuetsi. Mwuetsi fell ill.

When the snake bit Mwuetsi, Mwuetsi fell ill. The day after, there was no rain. The plants dried up. The rivers and dzivoa (lakes) dried up. The animals died. Men began to die. Many people did die. Mwuetsi's children asked: "What shall we do?" The children of Mwuetsi said: "Let us consult the Hakata." Mwuetsi's children consulted the Hakata. The Hakata said: "The Mambo Mwuetsi is ill and wasting away. Send Mwuetsi back into the dzivoa".

Mwuetsi's children then strangled Mwuetsi and buried him. They buried Morongo together with Mwuetsi. Then they made another man Mambo. Morongo had lived two years in the Zimbabwe of Mwuetsi.

This creation myth provides a key to a number of doors. Most of the accounts we were given later, on life, on death, on the spirit life of the kings, on the Ngona horn and the fire drill, on the creation of nature, on the rain rite and the circumcision ceremonial, on star gazing and on hierodule princesses, are gathered together in this great myth which I do not hesitate to number among the most impressive that have come down to us from the great age of the "cosmic view". It would be presumptuous to offer interpretations and explanations. A man who, like myself, has devoted a lifetime's study to these subjects, acquires very high opinion of the significance of the major achievements of a civilisation. He will therefore never lay clumsy hands on that which the human spirit was enabled to bring forth as a superb product of that age, and which can only be experienced in moments of grace but can never be captured by processes of ratiocination.

What has been put into words is however sufficiently clear and transparent to provide a glimpse of a vast picture. We are face to face with a past which, with profound piety and sudden vision has discovered the mystery and puzzle of nature's procreation and fertility, interpreting them in accordance with the creative powers of the mythological age, powers which it is so difficult for ourselves, the impious children of a materialistic age, to comprehend. We must "understand" with the intellect what the mythological age described in pictures. We write and read little books in dusty corners, whereas their vision encompassed the universe, the earth, flora and fauna, and the heavens in their purview and created "understanding" from the cosmos, in humility.

The great mystery and puzzle of procreation and fertility is thus symbolized by the movement of the celestial bodies. The moon becomes the symbol of human greatness and yearning, the evening star the symbol of fulfilment, but both are subject to the tragic fate of all that lives, i.e. to death and rebirth, leading to a new dramatic existence. The moon and the

evening star and their rhythmically repeated changes of image reflect the mystery and riddle of life, the ultimate problems of which are procreation, fertility and death.

At this time when the myth flourished, this vision of the cosmos was projected on to the earth. Human beings lived their lives in accordance with the self-created vision of the universe. Life was made into a drama. The royal court, the *Zimbawoye* originally defined by its fence, became a symbol of the sky touching the earth at the horizon, the king became *Mwuetsi*, and his wife the *Nehanda*. Just as the moon rises, waxes, wanes and dies, the king became visible, blazed forth in lavish splendour and then receded into complete obscurity and was executed. He disappeared like his great exemplar, until his sister and wife redeemed him and delivered him in his new and young incarnation to the light of day before the eyes of the people. The brightness of the young stars (*chisi*, also meaning holiday) is represented symbolically by the sacred ceremony of fire making and fire distribution. The hierodule nature of the princesses signifies the sacred function or life-giving water. Circumcision of the boys is connected with the cult of the goddess of love, of dedication, of procreation.

All this presents itself as a projection onto the earth, in the form of a cult, of the movements of the stars in the night sky, down to the details. Just as in the popular legend the boy with the birth mark in the shape of the moon on his forehead and with the moon on his chest riding the ox emerges from the lake and returns to it, the reigning king is likewise adorned and his corpse lies in state in the skin of the black ox, on the forehead or between the horns of which a white mark must be placed.

There can be no doubt that no amount of hard work and dedication has been able or will be able to recover all the images of mythical perception.

This is how the mythical vision is projected: from the sky to the earth, from the earthly to what is under the earth. This is how, in particular, the cosmic god became the earthly king, in order to act out the role of his exemplar in his life and death, in all its awesome drama.

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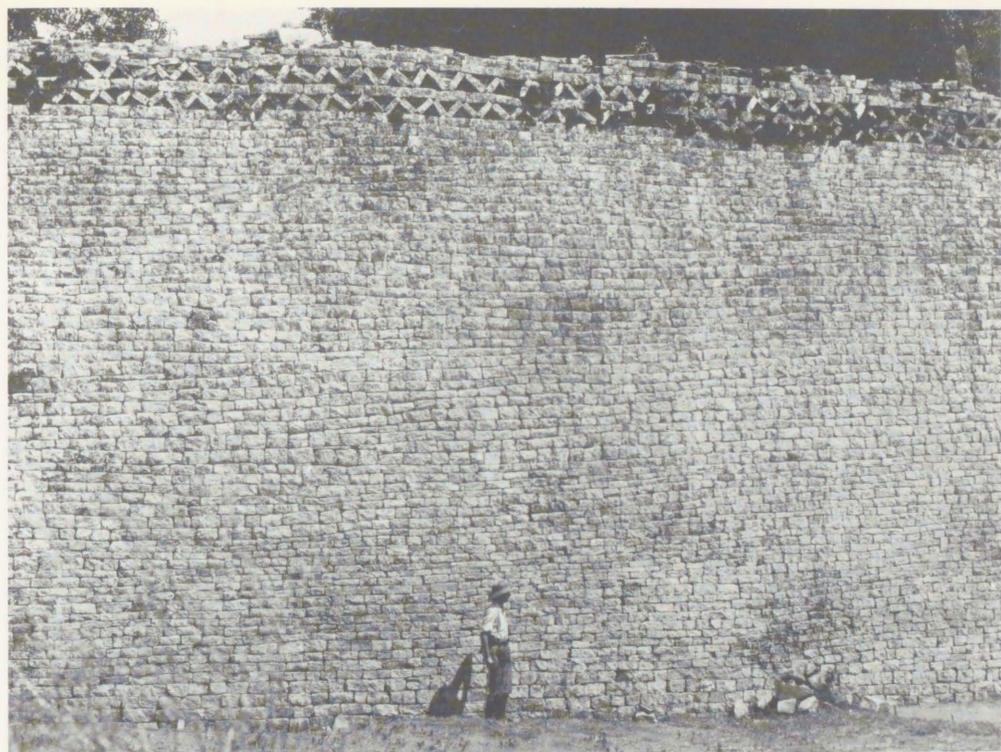


Plate 1 a. Great Zimbabwe: exterior of the outer wall of the elliptical building
b. Domboshawa Cave, north of Harare

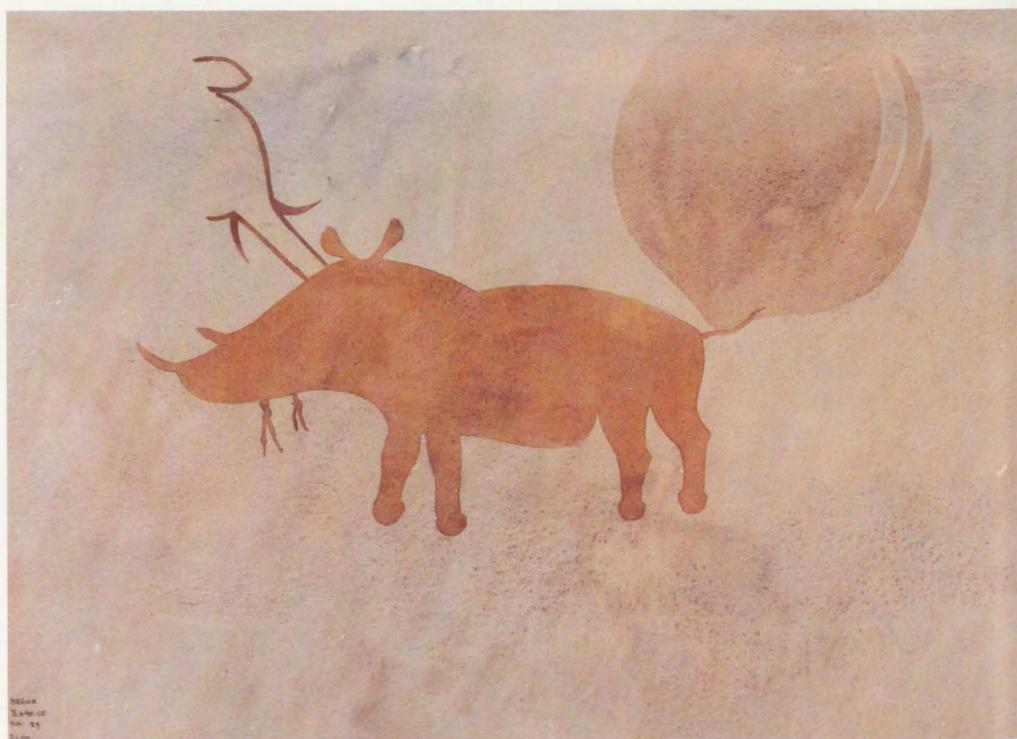


Plate 2 a. Animals, people and other figures. Mtoko
b. Rhinoceros. Mrewa

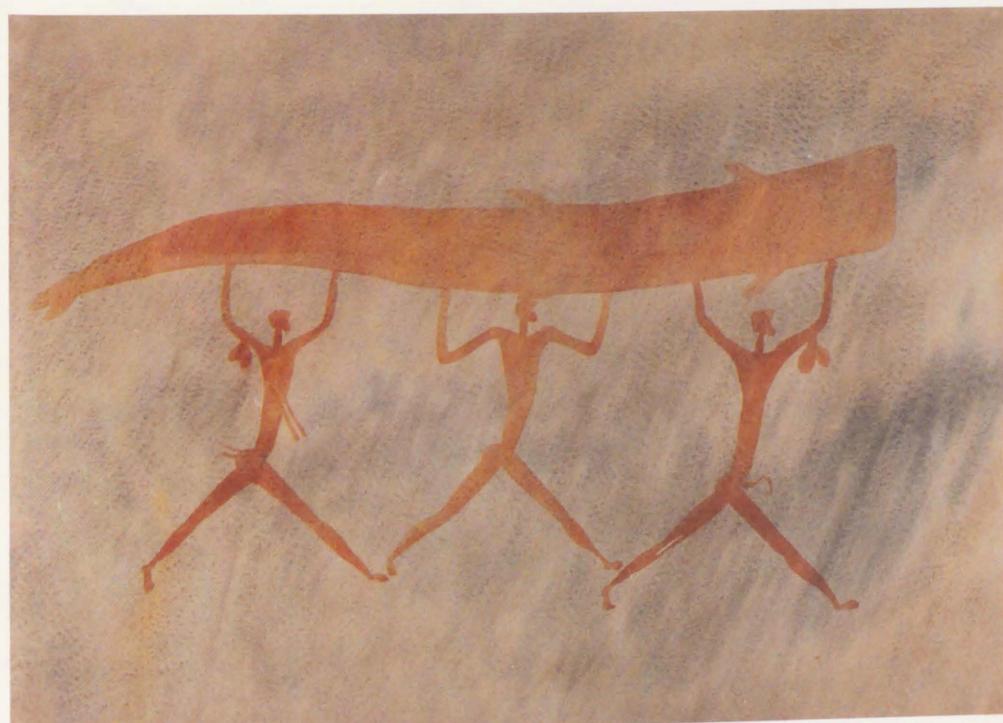


Plate 3 a. Composition with people and trees. Rusape
b. Three men carrying a fish. Mrewa



Plate 4 a. Five antelopes. Makumbe Cave, Chinamora
b. Hunting scene. Marandellas



Plate 5 a. Three elephants. Domboshawa (north of Harare)

b. Hunting scene. Sassa (Makaha)



Plate 6 a. Scene with men. Mrewa
b. People with a branch bearing fruit. Wedza

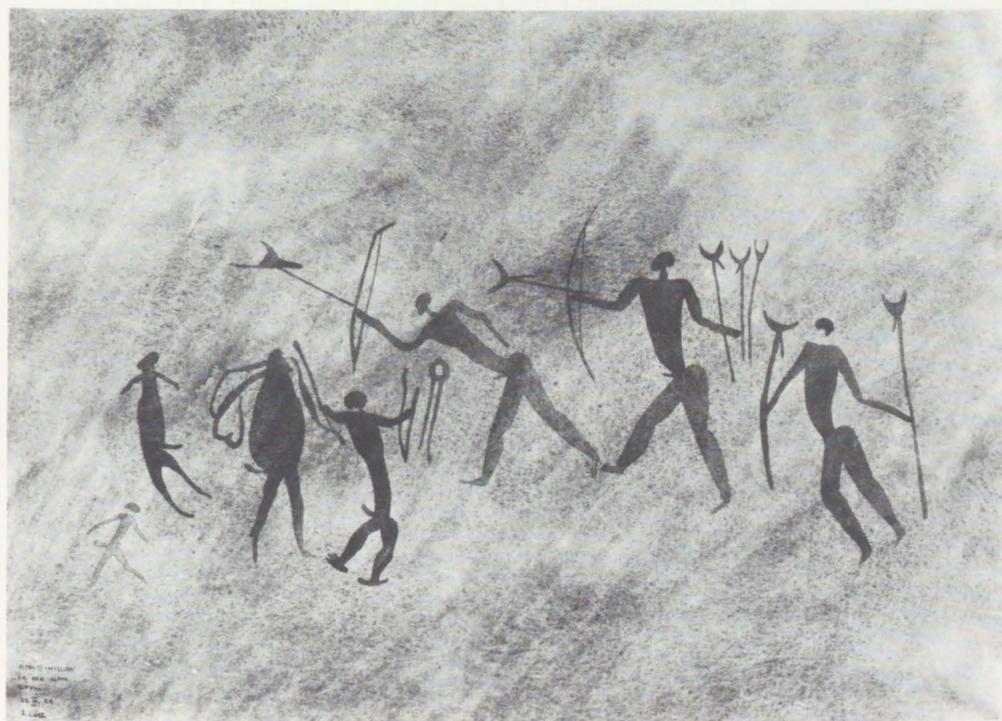
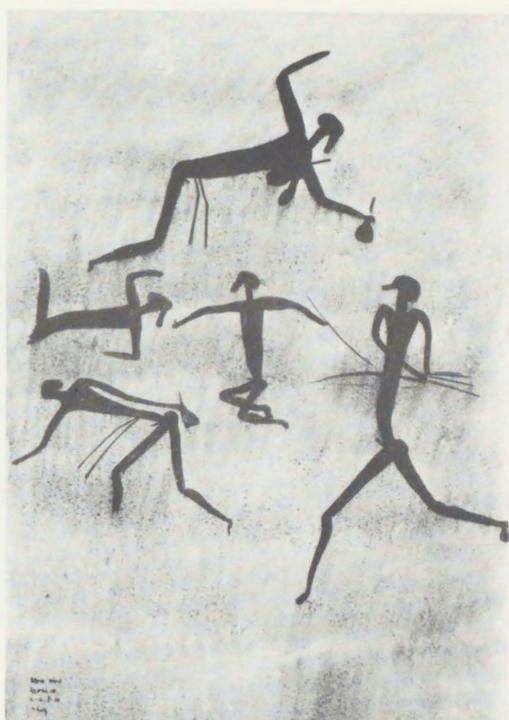
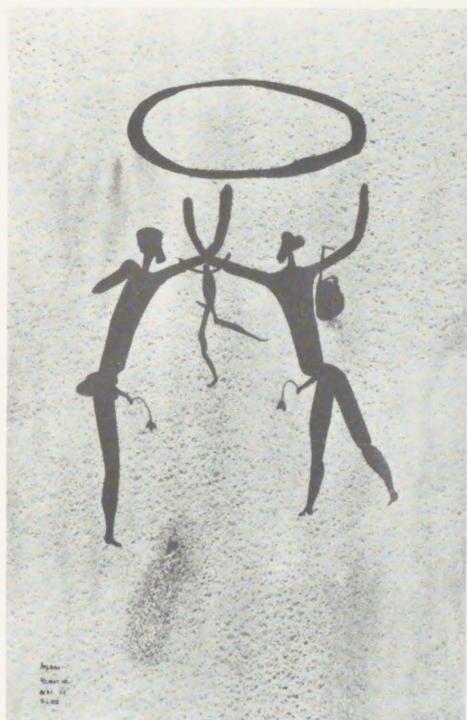


Plate 7 a. Three men. Msami (Mrewa)
 b. Men and women. Mrewa
 c. Fighting scene. Mtoko

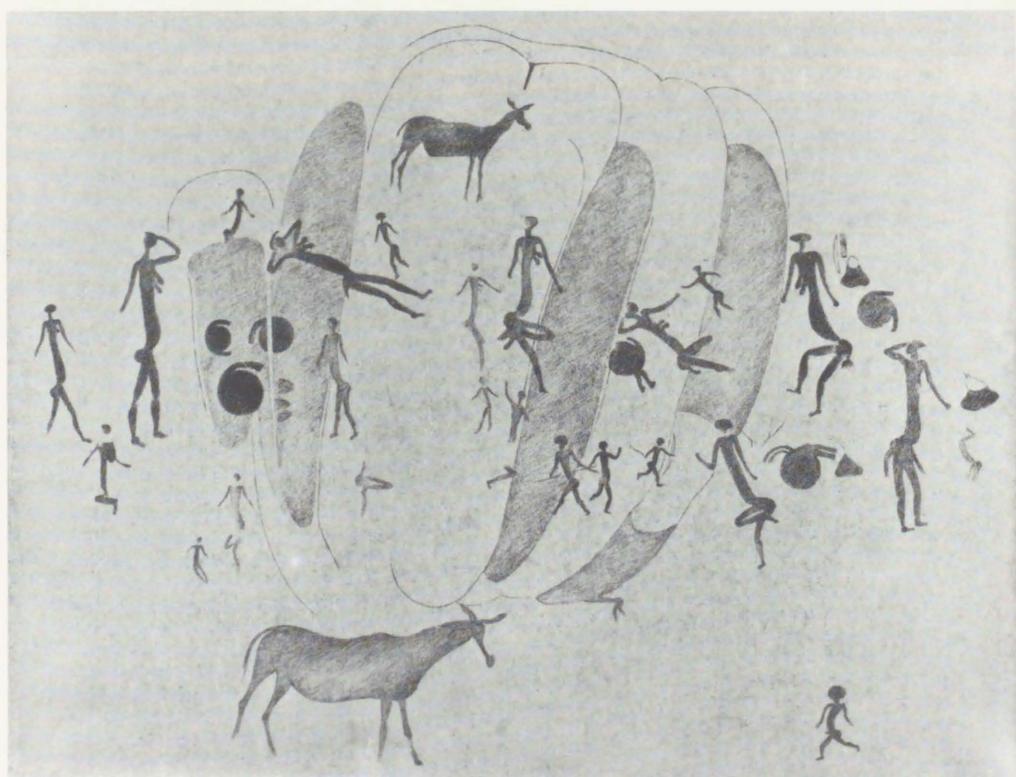
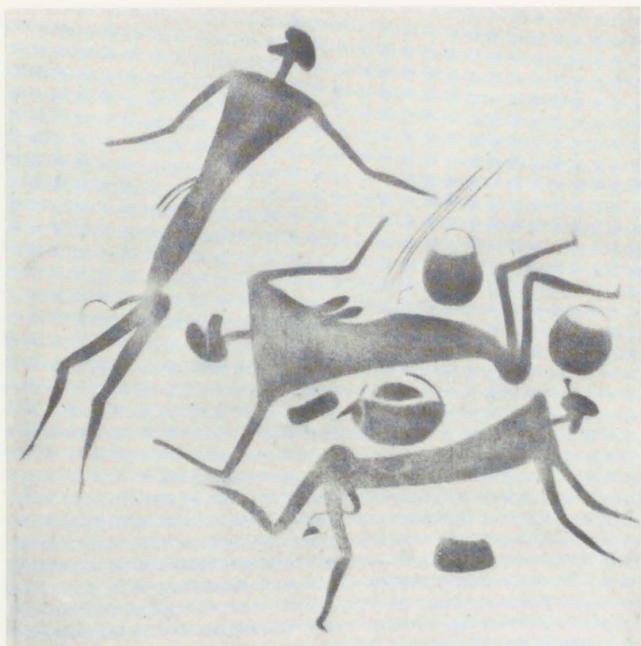


Plate 8 a. Domestic scene: men, woman, utensils, Mtoko

b. Domestic scene: women with children, utensils. Marandellas

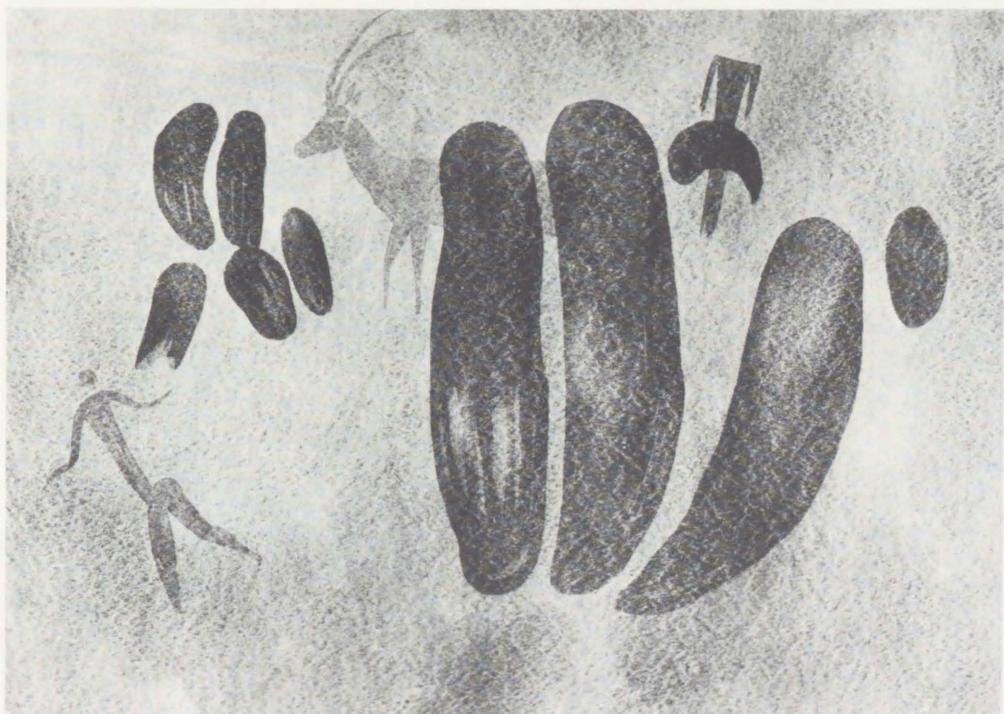


Plate 9 a. Large tree, trees with fruits, people. Makoni District
 b. Rocks(?), men and animal. Mtoko



Plate 10 Above: Dead king. Below: Large composition with men, animals, utensils, fruits and other objects. Rusape



