

TRIBAL PAINTING IN SOUTH AFRICA,
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO
XHOSA PAINTING

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These three volumes comprise one of seven sets with black and white photographs. If possible, one of the three master sets with colour photographs should also be consulted.

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"Every race has a soul, and the soul of the race finds expression in its institutions, and to kill these institutions is to kill the soul. No people can profit by and be helped under institutions which are not the outcome of their own character."

Edward Blyden: 1903.

FOREWORD.

The following work is an attempt to approach the subject of tribal mural decoration by a discussion of its formal, symbolic and technical aspects. Although an aesthetic evaluation is part of the aim, no attempt will be made to categorise works aesthetically; there will be no attempt to define when the activity of wall painting attains the ambiguous status of art.

The tribal names of the various peoples will be given without singular or plural prefixes: Xhosa instead of amaXhosa, Ndebele instead of amaNdebele. The term Xhosa will be applied in a wide sense to include all the Xhosa-speaking peoples with the exception of the Fingo, whose art retains, at least in the Eastern Cape, distinctive remnants of an archaic style that seems to have been ancestral to present-day Xhosa painting.

An attempt will be made to establish the possibility of a common origin for Nguni wall decoration by comparing its two most important styles, Xhosa and Ndebele. Certain motifs, the tree on a tripartite base, the plant on a mound, the umraitono of the Ndebele and step-pattern of the Xhosa, all seem to indicate the existence of a distinctive style of Nguni painting which predates the abandonment of the grass hut and the adoption of the rondawel from the Sotho.

Much criticism has attended the increasing use of the word "Bantu" as a collective appellation for the Bantu-speaking peoples, yet no other word exists which designates just this particular group. The term is used in this work not to imply any direct ethnic relationship between the peoples, but simply, for lack of any better, as the most convenient of those at present available.

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2.

PART 1

MATERIALS AND ENVIRONMENT

The sculpture of the black man in Africa has deeply influenced European art in the Twentieth Century; there is an extensive body of literature dealing with its history, technique and symbolism. Examples exist, more or less well documented, going back thousands of years.

By contrast, the mural painting of the black man has had no such influence on European art, and even to-day remains a relatively uncharted field of research. In South Africa the history of tribal painting, that is, the written and permanent record of its manifestations goes back only a hundred and fifty years⁽¹⁾, and even then consists, with the exception of Ndebele and Sotho - Tswana painting, of no more than a few of the vaguest and most tentative references.⁽²⁾

Much of this neglect stems from the nature of its materials. Its life span is no more than a few years, even months or weeks. Painted on walls of mud, the works die with the temporary structures they adorn. Much of the sculpture of Africa, because of its scale, purpose and nature has the ability to retain a proportion of its meaning, if only its formal meaning, even when removed from its environment and placed on a shelf in a museum, whereas primitive mural painting exists only in relation to its habitat. It is not exportable, hence it escapes the tendency to become an "airport art."

(1) The earliest detailed documentation of Bantu mural painting seems to have been John Campbell's description, in 1822, of the interior of Sinosee's house at Kurrechane (see p. 14, ill. 3).

(2) Julian Beinart's research (1968, pp. 26-29) at Western Native Township, Johannesburg and Chimhambanine, Lorenzo Marques concerns the wall-paintings of urban, detribalised communities.

3.

The great bulk of African sculpture comes from north of the Limpopo. To the South, important examples become increasingly rare, till in tribal South Africa mural painting tends to take its place as a characteristic mode of expression.

Mural painting in tribal South Africa expresses its environment, and inter-dependes with it for the very nature of its expression. An art form close to the processes of nature, it springs up, blossoms and dies with an almost seasonal regularity, like the flowers and plants it so often depicts. It is an art which strives for unity with surrounding nature.

This organic quality in Bantu painting, this awareness of seasonal change derives largely from its materials, but also from the nature of the people: "African History", observed Schmalembach (1954, p.9), "means primarily immigrant movements". Till fairly recently the Bantu has been semi-nomadic; up till the Nineteenth Century the historical map of South Africa presented the image of an ever-changing pattern of movements and migrations. The prime examples were certain groups of Zulu, who "moved from Natal as far North as Lake Victoria (a distance of c. two thousand miles), and half-way back again in a matter of half a century..." (Clark, 1959, p.168).

The Sotho are usually considered to have among the most stable settlements of the South African Bantu: Sotho "villages are permanent, and many have been occupied for centuries" (Ashton, 1952, p.22). Yet their villages continue to express, by their form and layout, their former nomadic existence.

4.

"Le premier coup d'oeil jeté sur un village des Bassutos", observed Casalis (1860, p. 165) "suffit pour convaincre que des peuplades ont été longtemps nomades. L'établissement a presque toujours la forme d'un vaste cercle, dont les troupeaux occupent le centre tandis que les huttes forment le circonférence... C'est un campement devenu permanent."

It is largely for these reasons that there has been no development of a long-lasting architecture or pictorial art among the Bantu. The basic building materials have been mud, wood and grass, and the duration of the structures is limited to little more than a decade. "Fifteen or twenty years," according to Marquard (1939, p. 21), "is probably as long as a hut would last under tropical conditions." This condition of periodic change has a basis also in the limitations of materials and techniques. There are no methods of working hard stones, and there are few available soft stones (Parrinder, 1954, p. 99). The frequent destruction of the dwelling after the funeral of its inhabitant (*ibid.*) is a parallel manifestation in the religious sphere.

Mural paintings are renewed annually, sometimes more often, yet the forms and symbols relate directly to those used in primeval times. Throughout black Africa, forms retain their usage over thousands of years. "Clay figures are excavated in Nigeria at Lake Chad which are a few hundred or even indeed a few thousand years old, and which are often strongly reminiscent of late wood carvings of the same region." (Schmalembach, 1954, p. 97).

Consequently, the European notion of history as chronology, as a continuous and logical interdependence of dates and events cannot be applied to Bantu painting. Before the coming of the White man, "dates are almost meaningless in Africa" (Segy, 1958, p. 2).

5.

Bantu wall painting is modern in the sense that hardly any examples exist which are more than three or four years old, but is ancient in the sense that works are being produced today which show the use of conventions similar to those prevalent in Iron Age Europe and the Middle East thousands of years ago. According to one opinion, the basic variations of African culture "which are ancestral to those of today, took place at least thirty five thousand years ago." (Davidson, 1966, p.16). An art practiced in our own time, it is nevertheless related to a much earlier phase of artistic expression.

The term usually applied to this type of art is "primitive", a relic of Nineteenth Century evolutionism. "Primal" has been suggested, in the sense of belonging to an early phase of expression, or even "savage", in the sense of the word's derivation from the Latin "silvaticus" (O.E.D.), a person of the woods, of nature, whose life is bound up with natural processes. William Fagg prefers the term "tribal" when applied to traditional negro art, and discerns its main characteristics in those elements which do "not appear to survive the transition from tribal to more complex institutions." (Gerbrands, 1957, p.18).

However, in this work Bantu art will be referred to in the context of this term, in spite of its lack of nuance. The term means early (O.E.D.), but does not necessarily imply that which is the earliest; the mural decorations of the Bantu are in fact the end-products of a long and ancient tradition. Along with much contemporary "traditional" sculpture in Africa, "these are not works of exuberant youth, nor even less of inexperienced childhood; they are the products of conscious and thoughtful maturity, even of old age." (Davidson, 1964, p.370).

6.

Forms are passed from generation to generation, and the traditional imagery constantly modifies forms derived from observation of nature, even though what was probably at first a religious significance has become lost. Schmalembach (1954, p. 84) observed how in many cases "the Negro artist works with models (or prototypes) which he tries to copy as closely as possible." He also observed how late works of sculpture can be produced simply for their own sake, but "show no formal divergence from early religious sculptures." (ibid.)

To the tribal mind, the past continues to survive in the present; the differentiation between what it and what has been is reduced to a minimum. In this sense, the Bantu world-view is ahistorical. "The native's relationship to time", says Jensen (1963, p. 32) "is perceptual. He concretely 'sees' his grandfathers, perhaps his great-grandfathers, and in the opposite time expanse, his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The border is filled in with observable data. Anything beyond this can be known only through intuition." To the tribal mind anything further back than two life spans is virtually prehistory, the realm of myth. Jensen quotes a member of the Totela tribe (1963, p. 31) of the Zambesi as saying:

"Yes, it was a long time ago. It was so long ago, that at that time, no white man had yet come to this country. It was before my father's day, even before the days of his father, and both died old men. Yes, it was so long ago that now only the old people speak of these past times. It was before the time when people got old and died."

Not that the tribal peoples lack history; it is simply that no stress is laid on conscious historical development. History they have, "but it eludes us." (Levi-Strauss, 1968, p. 102).

7.

As recently as the 1950's and 60's opinions were by no means in agreement as to the origins of the Bantu. Perhaps the most commonly held opinion is that "the Bantu are believed to have originated as an offshoot of the main Negro stock, about two thousand years ago, in the country around Victoria Nyanza, through intermingling with a lighter coloured, Hamitic race from the North." (Grossert, Battiss & Franz, 1958, p.156). By contrast, Davidson states (1964, p.37) that the "very existence of ancient Hamites in Africa has become a matter of grave scholarly doubt".

J.H. Soga (1930, p.4) agrees that their place of origin is near Victoria Nyanza, or "more precisely, in the Tana Basin". H.H. Johnston suggests their origin as being farther west, in British Central Africa (ibid.)

Marcel Griaule (1950, p.30) has gone so far as to pose the theory that the "black invaders, who probably landed in South-East Africa, probably came across the earlier occupants (the Negrillos) and drove them back little by little to all the districts incapable of cultivation, like the forests of Guinea. It is thought that these first waves consisted of people of the Bantu type, who settled down and who occupied large tracts of land from the Equator to the Cape".

Because of the dichotomy between constancy and change, evolution has proceeded according to criteria different from those of the West. According to Bergson, the evolution of the primitive goes on by revolving indefinitely around a restricted number of fundamental elements (Huyghe, 1962, p.79). The Bantu world-view corresponds not the past-present-future continuum of the European mind, but to the notion of Giedion's "Eternal Present". The past, even the fairly recent past, belongs to the realm of myth, and its vital force continually influences present events. Till recently the Bantu felt no need to conserve the material past. The past continued to live in the present.

8.

Without external influence, the tribal way of life may have remained substantially unchanged for thousands of years. The European notion of linear progression from archaic to modern is replaced by the notion of eternal continuity and return, "an infinitely repeated series of cycles, in which growth succeeds birth, maturity succeeds growth and death succeeds maturity" (Sharpe, 1970, p. 932). The past and present exist on a plane where actuality and myth are inseparable. Antiquity is an eternally extant force, and remains an integral part of the present.

A work produced within the last five years (ill. 1) can seem as venerable as antiquity itself. For the tribal mind, the ancient world is also the world that is in the making.

It is in this sense that the Bantu is without the historical consciousness that we find dawning in the early civilizations with the birth of writing. The forms used to-day are very likely more primitive than those of the past, simply because they are relics of a dying culture. Under the impact of a European life-style, tribal traditions are on the wane. One opinion holds that "the crafts [of the Bantu] are threatened with extinction within a few generations." (Grossert et al, 1958, p. 18).

Yet, in spite of a century's long subjection to destructive influence, tribal mores are still followed, especially in the rural areas, reserves and farm communities, to an extent that reveals how strong is this impetus toward the primitive. There is an innate conservatism in the tribal being which is partly explained by the inordinate respect paid to ancestors. "To believe that the ways of the ancestors can be improved upon and to depart from them is impious". (Bettison, 1954, p. 29).

In the Albany district of the Eastern Cape, one encounters frequent evidence of the continuing practice of propitiation of the dead by means of ritual cattle-sacrifice (ill. 2), and the mounting of the horns on the post (ixhanti) in the centre of the kraal as a kind of memorial to the dead.

Among the rural Xhosa, a situation exists, unique in the last third of the Twentieth Century, of a "primitive" art still

being produced in situ, without the distorting incentives of either financial gain or the kind of official acclaim that has resulted in certain manifestations of Ndebele art, in a manneristic self-consciousness.

However, before the coming of the European, the face of Bantu art must have remained unchanged over great stretches of time, in spite of the transience of its materials.

The extent of the use of stone as a building material among African peoples south of the Equator is a question by no means settled. The work of Zimbabwe and other Rhodesian stone ruins was at first attributed to ancient Egyptians or Phoenicians; Zimbabwe itself was even thought to be "King Solomon's Mines, or the Palace of the Queen of Sheba." (Willett, 1971, pp.113-4). In 1926, J. Schofield distinguished two cultures at Zimbabwe: "The Second Culture... is almost certainly due to the Baroswe... all the most striking features of Zimbabwe belong to this period..." (Summers, 1963, p.44). G. Caton - Thompson (1931, p.199) concluded that Zimbabwe was of "Bantu origin and medieval date." In 1941, H.A. Wieschhoff gave support to the theory of the "medieval date" and "exclusively Bantu" origin of the ruins. R. Summers (1963, p.107) concluded that Zimbabwe was "the metropolis of a large confederacy under kings whose dynastic name was Monomotapa... later, this dynasty was replaced by the Rozwi Mambos..." He also suggested (1963, p.76) that "the Shona (possibly the Karanga) are likely to have had a large hand in the beginning of the work while perchance the Lemba may have followed and improved the building technique."

In Lesotho, stones are packed to form kraals. In the southern Transvaal and northern Free State, as well as in Lesotho, the Ghoya and Taung (early Sotho) built corbelled stone beehive huts (see Walton, 1956, p.37). Early descriptions of tribal architecture in South Africa mention the use of stone for foundations (see Axelson, 1954, p.93 et seq., p.224). The Venda, as well, seem to have known something about the use of stone (Marquard, 1939, p.21). Ruins of stone houses have been found in upper Volta (Leiris & Delange, 1968, p.165).

10.

The stone circles, tombs and terraces of Engaruka in Tanzania are "probably Bantu" (Leiris & Delange, 1968, p.164).

However, the tendency for mud or grass to replace stone seems to be endemic in tribal Africa. King Ezana, writing about the Meroites c.A.D.325, made reference to "the towns of masonry of the Kasu (or Meroites proper)"... and "the towns of straw of the Noba (Nobatae), who took over the Meroitic culture." (Davidson, 1964, p.57).

The earliest descriptions by Europeans of tribal dwellings and settlements in Southern Africa show that the materials were essentially the same as in modern times. In 1609 João dos Santos described the dwellings in the kingdom of Monomotapa as being "of wood, daubed with clay and covered with straw". (Axelson, 1954, p.44).

In the Eighteenth Century Andrew Sparrman left descriptions of Hottentot dwellings which show them to have been more primitive versions of the grass huts of the Bantu:-

"Every hut is dispersed in the following manner. Some of them are circular, and others of an oblong shape, resembling a round beehive or vault. The ground-plot is from eighteen to twenty four feet in diameter... The fireplace is in the middle of each hut, by which means they are not so much exposed to danger from the fire. The door, low as it is, is the only place that lets in daylight" [to-day small windows are usually added] ...

"The materials for the hut are by no means difficult to be procured, and the manner of putting them together being both neat and inartificial, merits commendation in a Hottentot, and is very suitable to his character. The frame of this arched roof, as I have described it above, is composed of slender rods or sprays of trees. These rods, being previously bent into a proper form, are laid, either whole or

11.

pierced, some parallel with each other, others cross-wise. They are then strengthened by binding others round them in a circular form with withes. These withes as well as the rods themselves, are taken, as well as I can recollect, chiefly from the Cliffortia Canoides, which grow plentifully in this country near the rivers. Long mats are placed very neatly over this latticework, so as to perfectly cover the whole ... These mats are made of a kind of cane or reed. These reeds, being laid parallel to each other, are fastened together with sinews or cat gut, or else some kind of pack thread, such as they have an opportunity of getting from the Europeans...

"The ... distribution of these huts in a craal or clan is most frequently in the form of a circle with the doors inwards, by this means a kind of courtyard is formed..." (Axelson, 1954, p. 81).

In the Eastern Cape both Bantu and Hottentot methods of hut-building seem to have influenced the construction of European farm-houses. Thomas Pringle's description (1835, pp. 52-4) of the dwelling on Wentzel Koetzer's farm, Elands-Drift, in Tarka Valley shows it to have been of mud-brick covered with thatch, with a floor of pounded ant-heap. Bantu influence was further evidenced by the fact that a separate hut, made of clay and reeds, was provided for the cooking.

Pringle's temporary dwelling at Eildon (see Pringle, 1835, pp. 116-7) was a beehive hut on a circular plan; by his own admission it was influenced by the mode of building of the "coloured natives", that is, according to Wahl (1970, p. 58) by the mode of building of the Hottentots.

12.

Nineteenth Century descriptions of tribal settlements are fairly numerous, and some of the most detailed observations come from this period. John Barrow, a member of the Truter-Somerville expedition to Lattakoo and the Orange River, wrote extensively on the town of Lattakoo, (situated $26^{\circ} 30'S$, $27^{\circ} E$.) the seat of the chief of the "Booshuanas":-

"The town, in its circumference, was estimated to be fully as large as Cape Town, including all the gardens of Table Valley; but from the irregularity of the streets and the lowness of the buildings, it was impossible to ascertain, with any degree of accuracy the number of houses; it was concluded however, that there could not be less than three thousand, all nearly of the same size and construction, and differing in nothing from that of the Chief except that his was a little larger than the others... The ground plan of every house was a complete circle, from twelve to fifteen feet in diameter; the floor of hard beaten clay, raised about four inches above the general surface of the enclosure. About one fourth part of the circle, which was the front of the house and observed generally to face East, was entirely open; the other three fourths were walled up with clay and stones, to the height of about five feet. By an inner circle wall passing through the centre and described with the same radius as that of the circle, and consequently cutting off one third of the circumference, an apartment is formed for the depositing of their valuables... In this apartment, also, the elder part of the family take their nightly rest. The children sleep in the half-closed verandah, which comprehends two-thirds of the circumference of the circle.

13.

"The whole is covered with a tent-shaped roof, supported on poles built into the wall, and forming in front an open colonnade. The roof is carefully and completely thatched with reeds, or the straw of the holcus, and bound together with leathern thongs. All the houses were enclosed by a fence made of strong reeds, of the straw of holcus, or twigs of wood; and within this enclosure, contiguous to the dwelling-house, there stood a large clay vessel erected upon a raised floor of the same material, which served as a store for containing their grain and pulse...

"These granaries had the appearance of large oil jars, the capacity of some being not less than two thousand gallons. They are raised from the ground on three legs, are from six to nine feet high, and like the dwelling houses, are covered with a pointed roof of thatch.

"The dwelling of a Booshuana is not ill calculated for the climate. In elegance and solidity it may probably be as good as the casae or first houses that were built in Imperial Rome, and may be considered in every respect superior in its construction and comfort to most of the Irish cabins... The hut of a Booshuana is not only raised upon an elevated clay flooring, but the ground of the whole enclosure is so prepared that the water may run off through the gateway... his hut is usually built under the branches of a spreading mimosa, every twig of which is preserved with religious care, and not a bough suffered to be broken off on any emergency, though the article of fuel must sometimes be sought at a very considerable distance." (Axelson, 1954, p. 93 et seq.)

John Campbell journeyed to Kurrechane in the Nineteenth Century, and observed how stone was a common feature, not of the actual dwellings, but of the surrounding walls:-

"Every house was surrounded, at a convenient distance, by a good circular stone wall. Some of them were plastered on the outside, and painted yellow, with some taste. The yard within the enclosure belonging to each house was laid with clay and made as level as a floor, and swept clean, which made it look neat and comfortable."

(Axelson, 1954, p. 167)

In some of the houses at Kurrechane, he noticed "figures, pillars etc. carved or moulded in hard clay, and painted with different colours..." (Axelson, 1954, p. 168)

Campbell also left what seems to be the earliest detailed description of tribal mural painting, in his notes on the house of Sinosee, a district captain among the Hurutsi at Kurrechane. He described it as "nearly equal in size to the Regent's", and observed that it

"was nearly furnished; it was circular like all the others, having not only the wall plastered within and without, but likewise the inside of the roof. The wall was painted yellow, and ornamented with figures of shields, elephants, camelopards, etc." (ibid.).

The interior of the same dwelling is represented in an engraving after a drawing by Campbell in the Africana Museum in Johannesburg. (ill.3). It depicts a large hut with a central hearth consisting of a cylinder surmounted by a cone with concave sides. The lower part of the cylindrical section, below a red-painted border, is decorated with a procession of elephants, ostriches and giraffes, interspersed with shields, on a white background. This drawing is an important indication

of the appearance of a Nineteenth Century tribal dwelling and its decoration, and perhaps even of what at one time could have been a court-style of painting. It points also to the possibility that animals figured more prominently in Nineteenth Century tribal painting than they do to-day.

The Nineteenth Century missionary Robert Moffatt left descriptions of the tree-dwellings, stone foundations and enclosures of the Bakones (Tswana):

"My attention was arrested by a beautiful and gigantic tree, standing in a defile leading into an extensive and woody ravine, between a high range of mountains. Seeing some individuals employed on the ground under its shade, and the conical parts of what looked like houses in miniature, protruding through its evergreen foliage, I proceeded thither, and found that the tree was inhabited by several families of Bakones, the aborigines of the country. I ascended by the notched trunk, and found to my amazement, no less than seventeen of these aerial abodes, and three others unfinished... The structure of these houses was very simple. An oblong scaffold, about seven feet wide, is formed of straight sticks. On one end of this platform a small cone is formed, also of straight sticks, and thatched with grass."

(Axelson, 1954, pp.221-2).

Along the Magaliesberg, he noted how "the ruins of many towns showed signs of immense labour and perseverance; stone fences, averaging from four to seven feet high, raised apparently without mortar, hammer or lime. Everything was circular, from the inner walls which surround each dwelling or family residence, to those which encircled a town.

In traversing these ruins, I found the remains of some houses, which had escaped the flames of marauders [of Moselekatse]. These were large and displayed a far superior style to anything I have witnessed among the aboriginal tribes of Southern Africa. The circular walls were generally composed of hard clay, with a small mixture of cow-dung, so well plastered and polished, a refined portion of the former mixed with a kind of ore, that the interior of the house had the appearance of being varnished. The walls and doorways were neatly ornamented with a kind of architraves and cornices. The pillars supporting the roof in the form of pilasters, projecting from the walls, and adorned with flutings and other designs, showed much taste in the architectresses. This taste, however, was exercised on fragile materials, for there was nothing in the building like stone, except the foundations."

(Axelson, 1954, p.224).

This fragility of the materials is a constantly modifying factor in tribal painting. The usual materials for wall-construction in domestic architecture are wattle-and-daub, grass and wood, and sun-dried brick, a later addition (1).

(1) The development of the Xhosa hut, from the simple ngqu-phantsi (bang down), through the transitional isi-tembiso, to the fully developed rontawuli (Afrikaans - rondawel), or cone-on-cylinder type, has been extensively documented by Walton (1956, pp.131-43).

17.

In the Grahamstown district the roof is usually thatched in two layers: an underlayer of finer idywati (Panicum maximum, which can be packed closely to seal the interior from leakage, and an overlayer of course, strong, fibrous ncaluka (Afrikaans - biesroei; Bobartia indica), which prevents weathering. Sometimes the underside of the roof-overlap is reinforced with a partial layer of inwele (Passerina vulgaris). The wattle-and-daub technique (ills. 4 & 5) entails planting a skeleton of strong vertical supports in the ground, usually about three or four feet apart. The next step is to make a grid-pattern of more slender horizontal sticks, which are bound to the uprights, right up to the roof-line by strips of hide, roots (ill.6), strong grass, or more recently, wire. There is no need to make these horizontals very secure, because once the mud is packed into place, it gives a support to the skeleton which is quite adequate for the time during which the dwelling will be inhabited. Sometimes the horizontal pieces may be interwoven with uprights. After these have been bound in place, a further series of slender uprights is placed between the main supports, often no more than an inch or two apart, and these are again bound into place, or sometimes interwoven. The final effect is a kind of primitive weaving, with many uprights and few horizontal supports. Then the mud mixture (udaka) is applied, mixed with cattle-dung and sometimes clay. Sometimes it is strengthened with grass. Usually, two layers of the mixture are applied, one from the inside and one from the outside. The plaster does not necessarily cover the entire skeleton (ill.7). Vertical members often remain uncovered as a visible expression of structure. Quite frequently the windows are formed by the mud-mixture alone (ill.8), so that the wooden skeleton remains undisturbed.

Then finally the wall is plastered with a thin layer of the mixture. However, if it is mixed too wet, the excessive loss of moisture can cause the plaster to crack, but it must be damp enough to work easily. Among the Xhosa, the standard method of applying the plaster (ill.9) is with a series of rhythmically repetitive motions of the hand, so that the clay assumes a pattern of repeating segments whose radius is about two or three feet, or the distance that the outstretched arm can comfortably travel over the surface of the wall, producing a wavy relief-pattern that is widely used throughout negro Africa and as far north as the Hausa communities of Northern Nigeria (ill.10, see Olivier, 1969, p.26). Among the Xhosa, the areas flanking the door are usually left free of relief (ill.11), to provide a suitable surface for painting. The usual plastering procedure is to work in vertical panels, completing one section before moving on to the next.

The result is a repetitive tree-like motif (umthi) which is decorative of its own accord, and after the rain has washed the paint off the hut, these mud patterns remain as the sole means of decoration. However, more important than this decorative aspect is the symbolic and architectonic aspect: these patterns at once symbolise man's desire for identification with nature, and at the same time reassert the skeleton of the building and acknowledge the basic constructive material, wood. According to information first pointed out to me by Nomangesi Lewani, living at Hlosini in the Peddie District, the uprights represent trunks of trees. Very often they correspond to the uprights which they actually cover. The "branches" are formed by the arc-like motions of the hand, always keeping within the bounds of the vertical panel. Ills. 12 - 15 show how this tree motif can vary.

In ill. 12 - 13 it is formalised, simply a succession of horizontal arcs between the vertical divisions. In ill. 14 it is treated more poetically and swells from the wall like a plant in low relief. In ill. 15 the paint has partially peeled off the wall and the tree form emerges here as a result of the combined work of man and nature.

Consequently, the tree motif is not an addition to the structure, but is integrated as a basic symbolic and architectonic element. The symbol arises as a result of the very method of plastering the wall (ukutyabeka), and exists not only on the decorative level, but as we shall see, on a deeper, reverential, religious and symbolic level. ⁽¹⁾

In primitive culture, objects depend for their identity on their integration with what Levi-Strauss might call a structural system of expression, a system which allows for various levels of interpretation. An instance is the ambivalent relationship that exists between structure and decoration among primitive peoples.

"A vase, a box, a wall, are not independent, pre-existing objects which are subsequently decorated. They acquire their definitive existence only through the integration of the decoration with the utilitarian function. Thus the chests of the North-East coast [of North America] are not merely containers embellished with a painted or a carved animal. They are the animal itself... Structure modifies decoration, but decoration is the final cause of structure... The final product is a whole: utensil-ornament, object-animal, box-that-speaks."

(1) "To the savage", observed Frazer, "the world in general is animate, and trees and plants are no exception to the rule. He thinks they have souls like his own, and treats them accordingly" (Sharpe, 1970, p. 935).

(Levi-Strauss, 1968, p.260). In our case, the equation would be "wall that grows as a tree"

All the flower, plant and tree motifs of Xhosa painting are a development of this integration of different levels of meaning, and of this identification with the surrounding plant-world.

In 1894 Ernst Grosse noted how "primitive ornament is by origin and by its fundamental nature not intended as decorative but as a practically significant mark or symbol" (Levi-Strauss, 1966, p.14). Very often these works, interpreted out of context, are credited with merely decorative purpose, and their religious or magico-religious significance is ignored (see Adam, 1963, p.20).

In their architecture, the primeval and ancient cultures often acknowledged this relationship between plant forms and man-made structure. Such an acknowledgement was the papyrus column of the Egyptians, or their lotus column, which was in effect the representation in stone of the bunches of reeds that were bound together to form the archetypal column. The acanthus motif of the Greek Corinthian order is a further example of this tendency.

Among the Xhosa, this reverence for the plant world is explained in fertility beliefs, (see chapter 3), and at a further remove in ancestor worship. The use of this tree motif exemplifies what one could call functional decoration, where the pattern arises from the actual method of plastering the wall. Additional decoration complements this basic motif. In ill. 9, the flower-patterns on either side of the door continue the rhythms of the plaster decoration.

Among those Bantu living close to the towns, sun dried brick is used as a simpler variation of baked brick and mortar construction (ill.16). Sometimes the bricks

are cast in simple moulds, sometimes shaped by hand. Again this type of wall is usually given a final plaster coat on both interior and exterior.

In this example, from a Sotho dwelling near Bloemfontein, the plaster was given a smooth finish by means of a trowel; it was completed with a finger-drawn floral relief (see also ill. 17); this pattern is standard among the Sotho of the Free State, and is again based on the smooth, rhythmic sweep of the arm across the surface of the wall. However, compared to the tree-motifs of the Xhosa, it is less of an expression of construction, and reveals how a motif can be retained on a more superficial level when it no longer has a basis in constructive methods.

Between the brick and wattle-and-daub techniques, all sorts of variations are possible. In ill. 18, from a Zulu dwelling complex near Witbank, a grid of very firm, widely spaced verticals and horizontals was nailed together, and filled with large sods of earth. Eventually it was to be given a final plastering, but according to the inhabitants, who used the building as a store-room, the structure had already been standing for a number of months, and they seemed to be in no hurry to complete the job. Being a store-room (albeit stoutly made), it was not considered necessary to finish it to the same extent as the other buildings in the complex.

Another variation (ill. 19) on the wattle-and-daub technique was observed in an Ndebele dwelling near Witbank, where the wall was erected around a skeleton that consisted almost exclusively of vertical members. That such a system is not as sound as a more balanced ratio of horizontals and verticals is self-evident. Even though the skeleton is eventually covered with layers of mud-plaster, its lack of lateral rigidity makes for a shorter than normal life-span. In this illustration, the difference between

the two layers of plaster is evident; the first layer is rough in texture, and the final one more finely ground both for visual effect and to form a good support for the application of colour.

Lacking mechanical aids for obtaining an even surface, the tribal builder imparts his wall surfaces with a fine feeling for texture (ills. 20, 21), and a subtle modulation of planes which catch the light and impart a strong tactile and sculptural quality to the surface.

The difference between a truly handmade wall and one produced by mechanical means is revealed by comparison between the previous illustrations and ill. 22, a wall built by European methods, and painted in a pseudo-Ndebele style. In the former, the eye is drawn to the surface of the wall, and one's attention is sustained by the variety of texture and the continual change in plane. In the latter, in spite of the attempt to draw one's eye to the surface itself by means of intricate patterning, the surface fails to sustain one's attention, and one's eye is continually drawn away from the surface to the edges of the wall, resulting in a thin, cardboard-like effect. It is mechanical, lacks the vital, organic quality of the former. The painted decoration, although based on Ndebele forms, bears no relation to its surface, and looks as though it were drawn, not by a freely moving, sensitive hand, but with a ruler and masking tape. There is no natural sense of decoration, no sense of the fittingness of the motif to the space to be covered. Unlike a tribal dwelling, which harmonises with its surroundings, this wall is in no kind of sympathy with its environment. It has the effect of a stage-prop stranded in the veld.

The wall does not rise from the earth like a plant or a rock; it has no roots in the soil, no matter how substantial its actual foundation. The feeling for the natural ground which in tribal painting is never allowed

to be submerged, even in the most highly coloured decoration, is here entirely absent.

What Beier enumerates (1968, p. 142) as the basic conditions of Yoruba mud-architecture are also those of the South African Bantu: namely that "a building must rise from the ground like a tree, that it must grow from the soil, not stand on it, that the forms must blend with the forest [or other environment], and that the surface should preserve a feeling of the human hand."

In Bantu painting the ground is the normalising, cohesive element from which form grows. The chiaroscuro of Rembrandt or Caravaggio served a similar purpose. Their ground was darkness, their essential basic matter, the fabric out of which all elements arose and which remained the anchor of their relationships. The brownish-grey of Bantu huts, mute and reticent as darkness itself, serves a similar purpose.

Among the tribal painters, earth-colours are often chosen in spite of opportunities to use modern synthetic colours. The traditional colours are red and yellow oxides, white, and the dun grey of the plaster ground; it is a range which is limited yet infinite in variety and strongly chromatic in even the simplest juxtapositions. These were the colours of Magdalenian art, and of classic Greek painting. Among the Xhosa, black is seldom used, except when synthetically derived. The Ndebele, unfortunately, tend to show an increasing preference for synthetic colours.

Among the Xhosa, the yellow oxide is known as umthoba, red oxide as ucumse or imbhola and chalk-white as ikalika (Afrikaans: kalk), or umhlope.

Among the Sotho of the Free State, a favoured black is that reclaimed from old motor-car batteries, known as mashala. Their ochre they call keketsa.

24.

Among the Xhosa, the most frequently used synthetic colour is washing-blue. As they already possess red and yellow oxides, the addition of this blue provides them with virtually the third primary colour of their spectrum, and its use accounts for the highly chromatic effect that is evident whenever the colours are used together. This colour range is notably similar to that which Cézanne used in his mature period, at the time when he considered himself to be a "primitive of a new art" (Rousseau, 1954, p.71), or that Picasso rediscovered during his Negro period.

Green, used frequently by the Ndebele, originally from a mineral deposit near Premier Mine (information: W. Battiss) is hardly ever used by the Xhosa in mural decoration, except where the style has degenerated because of the reliance on shop bought paints (ill. 23). It is significant that, according to Aubrey Elliott, "in the Xhosa language there is but one word for blue and green. If they have to specifically clarify which of the two it is, then they describe it either as the colour of the sky or the trees." (Elliott, 1970, p.95). Blue and green they call iluhloza, while green is also referred to as ingca which literally means grass.

Water is the usual medium, but to give body to the whites, the Ndebele add to the water a little soft maize-meal, not too thick.

Among the Fingo, salt is often added to the white to improve its adherence. The choice of colouring matter varies from district to district. Sometimes people walk miles to obtain a particular colour from a clay-deposit.

In ill. 24, an Ndebele woman sprinkles water on the ground of a forecourt, to give the material the right malleability to form a working surface. Beside

her lies her trowel. These forecourts are kept scrupulously clean, and in fact much of the ritual of tribal life has to do with the hygiene of the environment and its inhabitants. She is working a thin slip with cattle-manure as one of its ingredients; manure contains ammonia, which acts as a disinfectant. The porous qualities of manure render it light, workable and more durable than dried clay on its own. The cellulose encourages cohesion, and helps to create a strong, hard surface which can be polished.

The tools are as simple as the media:- fingers, hands, rags, brushes made from feathers (ill.25) (1) and occasionally trowels. The parallel ridges of Sotho litema patterns (see p. 101) are often made by drawing a fork across the wall-surface.

To cover large areas of wall space, the Xhosa use cloths dipped in paint. For small areas they paint with smaller cloths or fingers. Fine detail is added with brushes made from feathers; single feathers are sometimes used for the finest parts. The medium must not be too watery, but should be thick enough to achieve covering power and to avoid dripping. However, when the mural design is blocked out in terms of large areas, the painter often begins at the top and works gradually downward, so that any dripping is eliminated in the actual execution. Simple masking techniques are sometimes used (ill. 26), to achieve the typical hard-edge juxtaposition of flat colour areas. The Sotho use cardboard stencils to make repeat-patterns (see ill. 160).

(1) Feather brushes were also used by the Bushmen. How (1970, p. 33) describes them as "consisting of bird feathers stuck into the ends of tiny reeds, thereby corroborating Chrisol's reference to the use of 'légères plumes d'oiseaux'".

Paints are made by mixing water with powdered colours (ill.27). The Xhosa obtain their red by grinding the dampened top of a slab of imbhola (hardened limonitic clay; Afrikaans : rooiklip.)

The fact that among the Bantu practically all of the mural painters, and hence the most significant creative artists are women is not unique in primitive societies. For instance, among the Californian Indians, it is only the women who engage in creative activity, in their case basket-weaving (Boas, 1955, p.18). Adam (1949, p.68) concluded that "a large proportion of decorative art is a monopoly of women." He noted that several examples of this tendency were to be found among the North American Indians, and that weaving and pottery were introduced by women. This is significant in the light of the relationship that exists between tribal weaving and mural painting (see p. 88).

Generally, Bantu women are more deeply primitive than the men, and as such are the main conservers of traditional culture. They are "now and perhaps always have been, the most unprogressive part of the Bantu race, and the chief obstacles to change, good or bad." (Marquard, 1939, p.39).

However, the women do not consider themselves as specialists, no matter how renowned their work. There is no artist class in tribal society in South Africa. As in most "primitive" tribes, artistic production is not a permanent or exclusive occupation. Artistic individualism is virtually absent in the sense in which it exists in European society. G.P. Lestrade concluded that "Individualism and specialisation, though by no means absent from Bantu society, are not found to the extent to which they are in our own, nor have they penetrated as many departments of life as they have in the more complex

civilized communities". (Schapera, 1956, pp.297-8). The only specialisation of labour is between man and woman, a feature common to most primitive societies (Adam, 1949, p.69).

Among the Bantu, both men and women take part in building, "each having special tasks to perform. Among the Nguni and Sotho, the men cut wood and do all timberwork, while the women cut grass, thatch, and make the floor. When necessary, women also plaster the hut." (Schapera 1956, p.150). The men did the work "that was heavier, but did not take so long to do, such as cutting and fixing the wooden framework and thatching the huts. Women wove the smaller twigs into the framework and plastered them over with mud, and made the hut's floor of liquid cow dung (sometimes mixed with ant-heap and ox-blood)." (Marquard, 1939, p.26).

A similar division of labour prevails among the Pueblo Indians of the South-Western United States, where the men do the building and repair-work, and the women do the plastering (Rapoport, 1969, p.72).

Bantu painting is a village art, made for the enjoyment of all, and is very often a collective activity. Several people can take part (ill.28), but usually under the guidance of a mistress-painter.

There is no notion of a courtly style of painting among modern Bantu, largely because the dwelling of a chief was essentially the same as that of a commoner: "A chief's hut might be larger and more grandly ornamented than those of his subjects, but there was not usually a great deal of difference between his house and theirs." (Marquard, 1939, p.39).

The people live with the materials from their earliest years. The training of a painter consists in watching the mother, or collecting pigments. Gerbrands (1957, p.134) observed that, in tribal Africa there is "hardly any

suggestion of teaching or instruction in a Western sense. At most a few directions are given now and then, but generally the pupil learns by watching and imitating." To the tribal African, art is simply one of the functions of a human being.

PART II

BODY PAINTING : COLOUR AND RITUAL.
(see ill. 29-38)

The basis of most body painting is a belief in the magical or sacred efficacy of colour when applied to the human form. Certain of these colours, particularly red-ochre and white have been granted special significance, and have been used for ritual purposes since remote antiquity.

Haddon (1895, p.254) believed that most methods of placing markings on the body, whether by painting, tattooing or scarifying were due to totemism: "A good deal of body painting has other significances, as when it is done for inspiring terror among the enemy when on the war-path; but it would probably be fair to assume that the origin of what may be termed domestic tattooing or scarification belongs to totemism."

Among the Xhosa, and throughout Negro Africa generally, white, the ingceke of the abakwetha has been the colour symbolic of the life of the spirit, while red ochre has been symbolic of the life of the body and of the rhythms of nature; red represents the blood, the vital force, and hence birth, fertility and all genetic impulse. (1)

White is the purest and most immaterial of the tones, the colour closest to light itself, the furthest removed from dark, fertile reds that represent the earth.

(1) The Bushmen painted their dead with red ochre "to simulate life" (Levy, 1963, p.64).

Symbolically, white and red are the complementary colours of Xhosa body-painting.

However, Elliott found evidence (1970, p.119), among the Xhosa, of a colour symbolism which opposes white, "a symbol of purity and goodness", to black, "signifying evil and bad omens." This is a traditional opposition in European symbolism, but one feels that the Bantu generally base these colour oppositions not so much on moral concepts, as is common in Europe, but on the ability of the colours to symbolise cosmic states.

Levi-Strauss (1966, p.64), for instance, observed that "the Luvala also used red and white soil, but white clay and white meal was used by them as offerings to ancestral spirits and red clay is substituted on the occasion of ancestral rites because red is the colour of life and fertility. White represents the 'unstressed situation'.... while red, the chromatic pole of opposition - is associated with death in one case and with life in another".

He also finds evidence of this red - white opposition in other primitive societies:

"In the Australian tribes in question [some tribes in the north east of the state of South Australia], the members of the matrilineal moiety of the deceased paint themselves with red ochre and approach the body... while members of the other moiety paint themselves with white clay and remain at a distance from it" (ibid).

This red-white opposition exists also in more sophisticated societies, "as in China, where white is the colour of mourning and red the colour of marriage" (ibid).

Levi-Strauss (1968, p.65) believes that white represents colour removed, while red represents "the supreme presence of colour." However, he also gives instances where white-black and black-red oppositions are found (1966, p.65).

In contrast to red oxide and white, yellow oxide seems to have few spiritual connotations in tribal society. Consequently its use is largely cosmetic (ill.29). However, in the Qebe area of the Transkei it is worn by women at the ritual slaying of an ox (Broster, 1967, p.64).

The relationship between the wearing of red ochre, purification and blood is fairly universal in tribal societies. Griaule refers to it as the colour of the menstrual blood (Gerbrands, 1957, p.94). As early as 1810 it was noticed how girls of the South-eastern Bantu were smeared with red earth after the first menstruation ceremony (Fraser & Downie, 1938, p.39). Among the Bapendi of the Belgian Congo a mask with a red colour represented adolescence (Segy, 1958, p.7).

Among the Xhosa, women wear white for the first ten days after they give birth to a child, and after that wear red ochre for a period of six months. The smearing of a Xhosa girl with red-ochre is a sign that her marriage is contemplated (Soga, 1931, p.229).

In contrast to red, white symbolises all that is above the earthly plane, and all that is in communion with the magic world of the spirits. According to Parrinder (1954, p.101), one "finds in many parts of Africa this connection of the supreme God and his priests with whiteness". To effect magical cures, white spots "may be painted on the skin of a sufferer from rash, and then washed off again" (ibid.). (A similar belief is widespread in South Africa in the health-giving properties of red ochre, especially among the Bantu, but also among the Afrikaners, who call it rooiklip.)

To the Limbo of Central Africa "white was... (probably) the colour of the spirits." (Schmalembach, 1954, p.71). In the Mmo society of the Ibo "a white-faced mask was worn at the burial ceremony." (Segy, 1958, p.9).

According to Elliott (1970, p.119) "Xhosa witchdoctors always wear white. I have questioned many tribesmen on why this is so but, as in so many other cases involving traditions, they have long since forgotten and simply say 'they wear white because they are witchdoctors'. The actual reason however, is said to be that white is the colour associated with ancestral spirits." A similar opinion was voiced by Junod: (1938, p.131); "In all rites de passage", he says, "such as initiation ceremonies, the part played by ancestor gods is considerable."

Among the Kikuyu of Central Africa, the supreme god Murungu is [denoted as] the "Possessor of Whiteness" (Parrinder, 1954, p.35). Even among the semi-urbanised Bantu of to-day, members of religious sects often dress in long white robes.

Consequently, to paint one's skin with the sacred colour, accompanied by the appropriate ritual, is to transcend one's human limitations and to gain access to the spirit world, to assume its condition, and therefore to relinquish the particularity of one's own person. It is to disguise oneself as a spirit ⁽¹⁾ and by sympathetic magic to transform oneself into a superior being. "Taken from living nature, the sacred substance partakes of the power of nature." (Schmalembach, 1954, p.68).

(1) The "white clay serves as a disguise for the umkwetha" (Broster, 1967, p.134).

Where the Magdalenian hunters sought spiritual refuge and replenishment in the womb of the earth, the Xhosa to-day assumes its colours as a mantle of revelation.

In traditional Bantu thought, the earth is the abode of both the living and the dead. "The residence of the ama-hloze⁽¹⁾, or spirits, seems to be beneath". (Frazer, 1938, p.62). "The spirit world was generally believed to be somewhere underground". (Bettison, 1954, p.15). The earth is both repository and source; to assume its characteristics is to personify that which transcends life and death.

Body painting implies a reassertion of contact with the earth, a return to origins, and also a personification of elemental forces. It is to mask oneself as a cosmic being.

Consequently, the link between masks and body painting is ancient. Ever since prehistory, man communed with the divine animal by making himself over in its form. A great many of the representations of man in the Upper Paleolithic age are those of persons masked and disguised as animals. The masks of the Negro, by contrast, are usually likenesses of the ancestral spirits, though they sometimes incorporate animal features. The mask, always to be worn, enables the spirits to take possession of the wearer and to reveal themselves through him; it is significant that the wearing of masks "always goes hand in hand with the distortion of the voice". (Schmalembach, 1954, p.145).

(1) To-day the accepted spelling is amadlozi (information: V. Gitywa).

Like body painting therefore, masking has the dual purpose of disguise and revelation. It is to submerge one's individuality in a generic type, and to manifest the attributes of the spirit represented. Giedion observed how "What are to-day called masks were, for primitive and primeval man, a means of transformation into another being, another nature, and a means of contact with the supernatural powers." (Giedion, vol. 11, 1962, p.99).

However, body painting preceded masks, and was perhaps the most ancient of all the means of pictorial expression: "Before he could believe in the magical efficacy of a figure made by his own hands, man may well have thought of transforming himself into one of those mythical beings which he would later embody in fetishes." (Bazin, 1962, p.45). As far back as Mousterian times, men painted the bodies of their dead with red ochre (Levy, 1963, p.6). It is possible that the custom was meant to symbolise a mystic union with the earth: it is paralleled in Africa by the Dogon myth "of the time before death, when people in the extremity of old-age went into an ant-hill." (Griaule, 1950, p.61). Griaule refers to it as a symbol of the earth's sex, and makes the observation that among the Dogon, red is bound up with funeral rites. (ibid.).

In body painting, the face itself, transformed by colour becomes the mask, but a mask that is animated and continually changing. Intrinsic to it is the dramatic element of movement which masks can only imitate in conjunction with the dance. The painted body represents the mask as living form: it is a sculpture animated by the movement of life.

This sculptural aspect of body painting was observed in the early Nineteenth Century by John Barrow:

"This night, they halted at a Makatanie or duck-spring, near which their attention was attracted by a single cone-shaped hill, where they discovered a deep cavern... strewed over with a reddish-brown ochraceous earth, abounding in mica, which is used by the Koras, a tribe of Hottentots who are brown, and the Booshuanas who are black, for painting their bodies, after which the skin has a glossy appearance not unlike the surface of a bronze statue." (Fraser, 1938, p. 89).

Body painting also has the effect of making the body appear less naked. Andrew Sparrman observed that "a besmeared Hottentot looks less naked, as it were, and more complete, than one in his natural state." (Frazer, 1938, p. 174).

Except for the face decorations made for festive occasions, especially weddings (see ill. 30 & 31), the forms of Xhosa body painting stand at the extreme pole of predetermined ritual gesture. No notion of skill is involved in applying the colour, the forms are already defined by convention, and all emphasis is placed on the ritual itself.

A practice so purely symbolic as to be a cult manifestation rather than an art, it has none of the connotations of decorative skill that are found in the ritual body paintings of the Australian aborigines or the Polynesians. It is simply a tool in man's struggle to control the macrocosm by communion and identification with the gods.

Colour is applied less for aesthetic reasons than to symbolise spiritual status. Its relevance is only as part of a series of rituals which express the stages of life:- birth, puberty, marriage, child-bearing, death.

All over the primitive world, the initiation ritual forms one of the most important features in the life of the individual, and has certain common features wherever it is found. Levi-Strauss notes how "no anthropologist can fail to be struck by the common manner of conceptualising initiation rites employed by the most diverse societies throughout the world. Whether in Africa, America, Australia or Melanesia, the rites follow the same pattern: first the novices, taken from their parents, are symbolically 'killed' [the ingcibi who performs the circumcision ceremony for the Xhosa of the Grahamstown district, is known by his pupils as 'killer'] and kept hidden in the forest or bush where they are put to the test by the Beyond; after this they are reborn as members of the society." (Levi-Strauss, 1966, p.264). Among the Xhosa, the circumcision ceremony of the boy (inkwenkwe) marks the initiation of the youth (1) into the responsibilities of adult life, and confers on him the guardianship of the laws and traditions of society. He has become not only a man, but one who has an idea of the significance of his world, and of the importance of maintaining its standards and ideals. Adam (1949, p.64) observed how

"all over the primitive world, at initiation,
it is not merely adult life to which he is
initiated, but it is much more: it is life,
knowledge and power...

(1) The usual age for circumcision is between fourteen and eighteen; however, relatives of chiefs often postpone their circumcision till the age of thirty. (Information by Mpiliso Planga, a member of the royal Tshawe Clan, and blood-relation to Chief Vukile of the Ngqika tribe; Planga was himself circumcised at the age of thirty-two).

"At the end of the ritual journey with its trials, loneliness, 'death', revelations and rejoicings he can say, 'Whereas previously I was blind to the significance of the seasons, of natural species, of heavenly bodies, and of man himself, now I begin to see, and whereas before I did not understand the secret of life, now I begin to know.'"

Painted with white clay from head to foot, the umkwetha undergoes a symbolic entry into the spirit-world accompanied by ritual diet and isolation. He hides himself in the day, he keeps apart from women, obeys the taboos associated with hlonipa, (see Broster, 1967, p. 134, & Soga, 1931, p. 210) and paints his body in the colour of the spirits; the form seems human but also more than human, as though he were arrogating to himself the condition of the supernatural. In body-painting, even more than in the wearing of masks, there is no dissociation between the actor and what he represents. That the abakwetha are sometimes seen in the proximity of females (ill. 32) does not indicate a decline in traditional tribal ritual: many of the taboos observed by the abakwetha toward mature married women do not apply to young girls or women with their first infant at the breast (see Soga, 1931, p. 259). Even to-day, however, the taboos can be observed with fanatical strictness. Ntaba kaNdoda (1971, p. 7) reported a recent murder of a woman who strayed too close to an abakwetha hut.

Standard costume during the initiation period in the Grahamstown district includes a headdress, sometimes with feathers or tassels, sometimes merely a white painted cap; a white blanket or skin, and a short skirt which is often decorated with tassels and needlework. The skirts are made by the abakwetha during their stay in the bush.

Ills. 33 and 34 show one such skirt from the front and back. From the front the design is largely traditional, with the geometric zig-zags of painting and bead-making transcribed into a medium of stitched wool. The view from the back includes a grimacing figure with arms raised in a position indicative of joy. There is an efficient pictorial use of the words "ndoqa uliggala", meaning literally "umkwetha, there is the initiated youth", and in two words indicating the nature of the journey he is undergoing. In past times these skirts were made of dried fibre or palm-leaf, which when swung to-and-fro made the characteristic hissing noise of the umtshilo dance (see Broster, 1967, p.135). Griaule has observed that this type of skirt was originally bound up with the wearing of masks to which they related as an "aesthetic and choreographic necessity." (Griaule, 1950, p.61).

After the initiation period is over, the umkwetha is said to have been reborn. The link between birth and the painting of the body with white can also be related to the physical manifestations of birth itself: "The Xhosa," observed Soga (1931, p.85), "when an infant is usually very light in colour; some are almost as fair as European infants." The umkwetha adopts a new name as a key to his identity and as a badge of his adulthood. His ceremonial costume is buried. Contact is re-established with the world of mankind by the symbolic application of red-ochre to the face, and by replacing the white blanket of the umkwetha ceremony with the red blanket of the post-initiation phase (ill.38).

After the symbolic death of the initiation phase, he assumes a new being as a man (umntu) in the adult world. With regard to the new name and being, Placide Tempels (1959, p.68) has this to say:

"In some countries, we are told, the initiate

receives a new name at circumcision. Such seems logical enough if the initiation is more than a mere surgical operation: in fact, a ritual (magical) act to strengthen being. The carrying out of this rite is found, indeed, according to Bantu ideas, to be in strict relationship with the growth of procreative potency and to constitute its human vital power."

Certain of the Xhosa tribes employ a more elaborate form of body painting than do the Xhosa of the Eastern Cape. A photograph in the Africana Museum in Johannesburg (ill.35), taken by L.G. Hallett, shows a gathering of Bomvana initiation pupils.⁽¹⁾ They wear short grass skirts, very full, and cylindrical headdresses which completely cover the head and face, and which end in long, hair-like strands trimmed to equal length. Their appearance here substantiates Thompson's description in the early Nineteenth Century of the appearance of a "Kaffer" initiate: "They are obliged to wear a sort of kilt, a petticoat of palm leaves... They also wear a cap of the same material, which is so contrived that the leaves partly cover the face." (Frazer, 1938, p.9).

(1) The Bomvana are a Xhosa speaking tribe living near Elliotdale in the Transkei.

The cult of body-painting is perhaps the closest approximation of the Bantu to an exclusively cult-oriented art. The direct connections that wall-painting have with religious expression have been attenuated by decorative considerations. There is no objectification of a deity among the Bantu, no temple; the cattle-kraal is their closest approximation to the altar (see Broster 1967, p.66); the painted figure itself must suffice as a vessel for the beings of the spirit-world.

Another method of using the human body as a ground for expression is by scarification, or body-engraving. This practice is found all over the primitive world, and is widely used among the South-eastern Bantu. Soil or other foreign matter is rubbed into incisions on the skin, which heal to form patterns in relief (ill.36). Again relating to the most ancient human practices, for instance the ritual mutilations of the paleolithic hunters, it can be either simply a means of beautifying the body or else can have a ritual function.

Among the Pondo it is used to mark the advent of the female to maturity, among the Baca, of the male.

It was used by the Kuenta to signify the status of a warrior. Stow observed how "the warriors of this tribe had a custom of making scars on their left sides, as a mark of distinction, which recorded the number of enemies they had slain in battle."

(Stow, 1905, p.45).

One of the earliest reports of scarification among the South-eastern Bantu was made in 1827 by McCall Theal: "Many of them worked in lines and simple patterns on different parts of their bodies - chiefly the breasts, shoulders, cheeks and stomachs - by raising the skin in little knobs with a sharp iron awl and burning it." (Frozer, 1938, p.35).

In the Qebe area of the Transkei, scarification has an important place in healing rituals:

"The witch doctor makes two small incisions on every joint, and as well, two on the throat at the base of the neck, two on the nape of the neck, two on the chest, and two on the forehead. Into these incisions he rubs the black medicinal paste. After the patient, all members of the family are scarified in the same way. It is believed that this procedure prevents the spread and re-entry of the evil spell." (Broster, 1967, pp. 52 - 3).

Among several of the South-eastern Bantu tribes, a new-born child is scarified and rubbed with the charred remains of animal charms (Schapera, 1956, p. 95).

Among the Xhosa, the cutting and raising of the skin is known as umvambo; when a woman is umdlezana (with a child at the breast), a series of small horizontal cuts are made on either side of a vertical axis; the wound is rubbed with an extract of ubushwa leaf (1) in order to aid healing and to produce a flattened scar (information by Mthuthulezi Shoba)..

(1) Ubushwa is widely used by the Xhosa as an aid to the healing of wounds. According to the botanical catalogue at Rhodes University, several plants are identified by the Xhosa as ubushwa.

They are:-

Aizoon glinoides.

Plumbago auriculata.

Venidium arctotoides.

Venidium decurrens.

Withania somnifera.

Of these, the specimen which I presented for identification was probably Venidium arctotoides.

Among many Bantu tribes, the scarification of girls is accomplished by "fastening ridges of flesh on their foreheads and stomachs with hooks and rubbing dust into the wounds." (Wellard, 1970, p.1918). Both circumcision and scarifying are acts of ritual mutilation. All over the world, a painful trial must be undergone by initiates, which is a symbol of the hardships of life, and which is also "supposed to appease the god spirits." (Wellard, 1970, p.1917).

Like body-painting, tattooing lessens the effect of nakedness in the unclothed figure. It is not generally practiced among the Bantu. On a darker skin, primitive tattooing, often accomplished by pricking soot into the skin with thorns and other objects, is not prominently visible. The very word has its origins in the Tahitian "tatau" (O.E.D.).

Painting in Oceania derives from tattooing (Bazin 1962, p.45), and this probably accounts for the altogether more dynamic aspect of Oceanic painting when compared with that of the Bantu. An art that must attune itself with the dynamics of the living form will of necessity be very different to one attuned to the static monumentality of a wall-surface.

.....

The ceremony of the umkwetha begins (1) at dawn with the shaving of the head and the commencement of circumcision; it is usually witnessed by the adult male relatives, always by the father. In the absence of the father, an agnate officiates (information: V. Gitywa).

(1) The preparations for the ceremony as conducted at Ncera near Alice have been described by V. Gitywa (1970, pp. 11 - 24).

Among the Xhosa, details of the ceremony may differ from place to place, but the basic features remain constant. For instance, in the old days, according to Shoba, the ceremony at Makana's Kop seems usually to have been held in winter; in the Ciskei, the ceremony to-day usually co-incides with the ripening of the annual maize crop, which is about March, or later (Elliott 1970, p.84). To-day in Grahamstown, however, the ceremony has to co-incide with the school holidays. Usually 2 schools are held, one in June, one in December, the duration of each being three weeks.

In the early Nineteenth Century, in Bantu abakwetha ceremonies, the pupil was isolated from the community for up to three months. (Frazer, 1938, p.9). The commencement of the ceremony was "usually determined by the appearance of the great Northern Constellation "Izilimela" or Pleiades. (Frazer, 1938, p.143).

The following is a verbatim description by a relatively recent initiate, Mthuthulezi Shoba, of the ceremony as conducted at Makana's Kop, just outside Grahamstown:-

"The old people (the male relatives) build a hut (ibhoma or itonho - see Soga, 1931, p.247) for the pupil. It can be any shape. On the farm, grasses and trees are used, in town it is made of cardboard boxes, or pieces of cloth or sacking (see ill.37).

"When you meet the Ingcibi (killer), he cuts straight away. Umkwetha crouches on the ground with his legs open, and the Ingcibi cuts the skin with a special knife known as umkhonto, or assegai (1).

(1) Umkhonto is a general term for the spear; the specific term for the surgical assegai is umdlanga (information: V. Gitywa).

The wound is bound with the leaves of isichwe (1).
"You then put on a small leather belt with a
long loop in front (ityeba), and the loop is wound
around the leaves; at first the wound is painful,
but the leaves and the tight binding take the pain
away.

(1) According to the botanical catalogue at Rhodes
University, several plants are identified by the Xhosa as
isichwe. They are:

Gerbera discolor.

Gerbera piloselloides.

Haplocarpha scaposa.

Helichrysum miconiaefolium.

Helichrysum nudifolium.

Helichrysum pedunculare.

Pentanisia prunelloides.

In the Eastern Cape, it seems that *Helichrysum pedunculare*
is the most commonly used (see also V. Gitywa, 1970, p. 11).

According to Ndabazandile Kashe, a Grahamstown ingcibi,
on the first day the wound is bound with the bark of uluzi,
which is absorbent and aids the drying of the wound. According
to the botanical catalogue at Rhodes University, two types of
ficus are identified by the Xhosa as uluzi. They are:
Ficus capensis, and the widely used Ficus nataliensis.

"When the incibi is finished, he says:-
'Yithi ndiyindoda' (say you are a man). The umkwetha replies: 'Ndiyindoda'. Then all the old men, standing around, reply in chorus: 'Mmmm...indoda'. Then they direct you to your hut, saying 'Hamba uye endlwini yokho.' (Go to your hut). You go alone to your hut, and a little later three or four of the old people enter and tell you again: 'Now you are a man. You must stay here and behave like a man; you must obey the incibi in everything he tells you. We are leaving you.'

"Then some small boys, friends of the umkwetha, amanqalathi they are called, bring food for you. Their job is to bring food and wood and to help you make fires. At mid-day the incibi returns to put on fresh leaves. The old leaves must be buried in a hole in the ground, so that thikoloshe does not get them. If he does get them it will take you a long time to get well. Sometimes, only the hospital can make you right if this happens. In the old days, if the thikoloshe got the leaves, herbalists (amaxhwele) would be called, and they would give you medicine to put on.

"The hole for the old leaves is made under the hut, underneath your bed. For the first three days, the bed is made of cardboard and old cloths.

"At evening the incibi returns and binds you again. He comes again on the morning of the second day, at dawn. He binds you and tells you to smear white clay (ingceke) on your body

and your face because your skin must not be burned by the sun. You must be white in complexion because you are becoming a new person. You must be white also so that you can be seen easily at night, especially by the women, who must keep away from you.

"After you have put on the clay, you go to the bush to look for *isichwe* which you keep next to your bed, and for wood to make a new bed. This is made from the branches of two trees or big bushes, and some small, soft bushes and soft soil.

"Then you can go to your friends and play. Maybe you will play *iceya*, where you hide little stones or sticks between your fingers. You hold your hands together and then open them, and your friends must guess where the sticks are hidden. All the time you are playing you make a big sound with words that belong only to this game, and which have no real meaning:

'Butlem!butlem!' you say, 'mthelekede!

If *ingcibi* is coming, he shouts 'Hiyo makwedini! (Hey, boy!). He is raising the alarm, letting you know that he is coming to cause you more pain.

Your reply: 'Nqash!' which is the warning cry of the *abakwetha*, and which he shouts when anyone comes close. 'Nqash!, you say, 'I am inside and ready for it.'

"The *ingcibi* rebinds you on the second day at morning, midday and evening. He repeats this for a week, and by then, if you are not a coward, you should know how to bind yourself, taking

care to always make the binding quite tight. Sometimes you must call another umkwetha to help you.

"In the first week you eat food without salt, because they say salt makes you thirsty and you drink much water, so that the wound stays wet. You must eat dry foods, such as inkobe (dry maize).

"In the second week the ingcibi comes only once a day. By the third week the wound should be healed. Then, to cover the wound, the ingcibi gives you a soft piece of skin, made from any animal, or in town a tobacco bag with a string around the top. This pouch is called isidla. It should be made to fit properly, and tied at the top.

"Also, in the second week, the ingcibi tells you that you may now eat umphokoqo namasi (maize-meal with sour milk). Once the wound is healed, you can spend much of your time shooting birds or chasing animals. You live this happy life till the end of the third week. Everyday you must put on more white clay, so that you can get whiter all the time and be happy. You must also have a small bag which contains a very fine white clay called umbhukuzo, which you use especially for your face. You carry it with you, and put it on quickly if people come past. (1).

(1) Only water mixed with white clay (ifutha) can be drunk before the slaughtering of the goat (ukojiswa). When the ifutha begins to come off the face, the umkwetha will be told by his inqalathi "Mdoqa, uxhosile" (Umkwetha, you begin to resemble an ordinary person).

"You also wear the isibeshu, or skirt, made from grass or cloth and a hat called isigqoko, which can be any shape, and which is to-day often made of cardboard. You also have a long stick called ikrali. (1).

"In the third week the old people bring you a goat, slaughter it, and say: 'Ukojiswa', which means that you can now eat meat and rich food. When the time comes to go home, usually on a Saturday at the end of the third week, the old people come at dawn. They bring you a new white blanket (utoliwe), and tell you to wash off the white clay.

"The young men chase you to the dam with sticks. You wash the clay off and come naked to the hut. In front of the hut the old people surround you, and with amafutha okuthambisa (butter without salt), they smear your body from head to foot to remove the clay from the skin. They put the butter on your head, run it down your face, and smear it on your body.

(1) The ikrali is usually cut from the umthathi (Sneezewood; see McLaren, 1963, p.158); the wood of this tree, when burned in the hearth (iziko), has the power to ward off lightning. According to Mpiliso Planga, at the Grahamstown and Adelaide circumcision schools, the umkwetha reduces an erection, which is painful in his condition, by striking the trunk of a tree with the ikrali. According to Mcebisi Makubalo, Tembu abakwetha at Cala in the Transkei produce the same effect by allowing their amanqalathi to strike them with the ikrali on the palms of their hands.

"Then the old people say: 'Kwedini, ngoku uyabushiya ubukhwenkwe bakho apha. Ngoku uyagoduka' (Now we take you home, you are through with this business). They cover you with your new blanket and give you your ceremonial stick umnqayi. (1). The blanket covers your head and every part of your body except the feet. However, they do leave a small gap for you to see through. Your inqalathi begins leading you back to town. His head has also been shaved by that time, and he also wears a white blanket and carries a stick.

"The old people set fire to your hut, with everything in it: the blankets, the underblanket with blood stains, your isibeshu and isigqoko, and all your tins for food. As you leave they tell you not to look back, because it will bring you bad luck. But people try to tempt you, and call out 'Bheka, kwedini, bheka.' (Look back boy, look back).

"When you approach your home, your mother and the other women begin to beat the ingqongqo, or ceremonial drum, with sticks. In the old days a special drum was used, to-day they use metal drums (2).

(1) The umkwetha keeps his umnqayi throughout his life. If it is used to strike anyone, ill-fortune will follow.

(2) When cowhide is stretched over a metal drum, the instrument is known as igubu (information: V. Gitywa.

They sing the song of umyeyezelo, the song of the coming from the bush. They sing:

'Hohoyo hoyo unyoko ulibele nguyihlo endlwini.'

(The mother is staying with the father.)

'Aach unyoko ulibele nguyihlo endlwini,

Halala! ho! ho!

He! he! he!

Ulibele endlwini ha!

Mh! ha!

Ooh hoyo-hoyo unyoko ulibele nguyihlo endlwini.'

"At the same time the girls who are happy at your return, raise a shout, which sounds like 'Hi hi hi hi hi!'

"When you enter the yard, you go to the cattle kraal, led by your inqalathi, and sit with him next to you. The old men enter and instruct you how to behave as a man. One by one, the old men give you their maxims: 'Now, as a man', they tell you, 'you must stay in the house of your father and mother. You must keep the honour of your family. You must love your father and your mother.'

"Another may tell you that you must hit your mother and your father, but you are meant to take the opposite meaning. He is testing you, in the same way as if he were to tell you to go naked in the streets. 'Behave as a man', the old men say, 'be the pillar of your house, because your father has made you a man.'

"When they are finished instructing you, your inqalathi leads you into a hut apart from the main house, where the young girls are waiting. They wear red clay on their faces and bodies, and no garments other than short skirts, called izibhaco,

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and bead necklaces. When the inqalathi enters the young girls rip off his blanket, then yours, showing that you wear only the isidla. They smear your body, face and blanket with red clay (see ill. 38), and lay down a small mat called ukhoko, where you sit with the inqalathi next to you.

"Your sister, brings the two of you some breakfast. Then the girls tell you to stand up again, and again they smear your body with red clay. You put on the black cloth head-dress, or doek, called iqhiya emnyama. Just as white clay is the sign of the god of the bush, so red clay is the sign of a return to real life.

"Then, the men who are not young boys, but who are neither the old men, come and bring you gifts; then you mother and the other women do the same.

"Everyone drinks some umqombothi (a common beer made from maize and kaffir-corn). At about four o'clock you take your blanket and return to the dam, again led by the inqalathi. You wash, renew the red clay on your face, and return home to sleep.

"At dawn the next day you return to the dam, wash, renew the clay on your face, and go back home, where some of the young girls of the previous day still remain.

"That night you wash at the dam for the last time, and after returning home you put on khaki pants, shirt, black doek and black blazer.

This is a type of clothing that was worn even in the old days. You wear no shoes because you must paint your feet red, like your face.

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The red clay (imbhola) is used because it attracts the amafutha and ingceke; like the ingceke it gives you a white complexion. It also takes any shine off your skin, so that you look like a new man.

"The next day, the third day back home, usually on a Monday, you wear your khaki clothes, but no longer have to wear the black doek. You may wear any cap you wish. You continue to put on red clay for the next week, but if your white employer does not like it, as sometimes happens, you may use a brownish clay which is not so noticeable, which is called isibindi. You continue to wear these clothes for six months, or a year; by that time you are ikrwala, an initiated youth."

PART III

WALL PAINTING

CHAPTER I - THE SACRED PLANT.

The human quality in Bantu art and architecture is evidenced by the way in which all aspects of the structure and decoration are pared down to their finest proportions to fit the scale of the inhabitants. An accommodating art, intimate in scale, there is grandeur but no grandiosity. Nothing is larger than life. Even plants, when monumentalised, are adjusted to the human scale. This applies especially to the art of the Xhosa, whereas that of the Ndebele, in many ways at the opposite pole of tribal pictorial expression in South Africa, tends more toward the harshly formalistic.

However, even this is humble art, because it is an art for the ordinary man, and speaks in the idiom of the vernacular. Within the tribe or group, it is for the enjoyment of all, and is instinctively understood by all. Works that to the European eye have a lack of differentiating features, are easily identified with their creators by the natives. What Marcel Griaule observed with regard to Dogon masks is equally true of Bantu painting: namely that "une œuvre n'est anonyme que pour des yeux étrangers, à des détails frappants ou infinitésimaux, chacun reconnaît la sienne et celle du voisin." (Gerbrands, 1957, p. 94). Within the tribe it is not esoteric, not an art for initiates. It has none of the cult-orientation we find in body painting; nevertheless, an examination of its style, meaning and links with the past reveals a religious basis; in animism and the worship of trees and plants; in fertility cults, discernible in the recurrent symbols of plant and seed. "As man began to develop ideas about gods and spirits," observed Huxley (1971, p. 2201), " ... he connected many of these ideas with plants - for if a plant could kill, intoxicate or soothe, it must have an inner power."

According to Frobenius, in various parts of Africa ancestors are often venerated, in tree form. (Gerbrands, 1956, p. 55).

A specific instance of this practice was found at the initiation lodge of the Lobedu, where the initiate "used to do homage to a morula tree near the fire as if it were his ancestor." (Krige, 1943, p. 118).

Among the Nineteenth Century "Kaffers", it was observed how two pieces of wood from a shrub or tree consecrated to a particular caste was regarded by that caste as a "deified parent." (Frazer, 1938, p. 13).

Even today in the Transkei, certain forests are considered sacred (Broster, 1967, p. 93).

The Damaras used to consider a tree to be the parent of the whole tribe (Axelson, 1954, p. 295). The Ekoi of west Central Africa believe in kinship ties between persons and trees (Jensen, 1963, p. 25).

Also relating to these beliefs in plants which are ancestral to humanity, as well as to beliefs in fertility, are the myths, widespread in Africa, of the bringing of the first seeds. "According to the Wa-Taba (Tabwa) who live at the southern tip of Lake Tanganyika, the first men came from heaven and carried the seed grains to earth in their hair." (Jensen, 1963, p. 109). Gerbrands endeavoured to show how the seed symbolism incorporated into the Kanaga masks of the Dogon accounts for a creation myth that encompasses not only man, but the whole cosmos. Griaule, he observed, found this symbolism present in the architecture, as well as every object and action, not only of the Dogon, but of "l'homme noir dans toutes les populations." (Gerbrands, 1957, p. 102).

This multivalence that we find in the Dogon seed symbolism is also present in their attitude to plants; of the twenty-two families of plants that are known to them, each "corresponds to a part of the body", as well as to a technique, a social class, and an institution (Levi-Strauss, 1966, p. 22).

Among the Bantu, a special link exists between the fertility of plants and humans; semen and parts of sexual organs can be used ceremonially to ensure the fertility of grain (Bruwer, 1963, p. 147). "What is it that causes fertility? Plants which grow exuberantly." (Schapera, 1956, p. 235).

This link was acknowledged by early civilizations like the Mesopotamians, whose art shows characteristics that are strikingly similar to certain aspects of tribal painting in South Africa (see pp. 140-45). Their divinity of fertility Abu, also served as the divinity of vegetation. (Giedion, vol. II, 1961, p. 213).

Mesopotamian religion gave an important place to the sacred tree of life (see p. 140). Divinities are often shown in intimate association with plants. Plants were an intrinsic part of religious symbolism. The Warka vase from Uruk has three bands of ritual decoration, with priests occupying the highest bands, the animals the middle, the plants the lowest (Giedion, vol. II, 1962, p. 119).

Fertility is the great gift of woman, and among the agricultural peoples its symbol is the plant. As we have seen (p. 26), Bantu mural painting is essentially a woman's art, and its study necessitates an understanding of the traditional place of the woman in her society, and perhaps what is even more important, the nature of womanhood, its concern with fertility and growth.

The fruitfulness of woman and earth is one of mankind's oldest symbolic equations. In the mother goddess symbolism of early man, "the earth is regarded as a woman... conversely the woman may be regarded as a ploughed field..." (Sharpe, 1970, p. 935). Among the Xhosa it is the women who tend the fields, and whose whole being is intimately bound up with growth, fruitfulness and reproduction. "Fertility is particularly valued in agricultural societies... Here life depends on earth's fructifying power. The fertility of the crop is the symbol of the fruitfulness of man himself." (Sharpe, 1970, p. 931). Right from the period of the very first beginnings of civilization, woman's role seems to have been bound intimately to the fertility of the field. In the Eyhan and Mount Carmel regions of Palestine, where the Natufians seem to have formed some of the earliest agricultural communities, it was the women who "began to gather the wild grasses still growing in the Galilean hills, the oat and barley and einkorn wheat, and ground their seeds into meal. Eventually, they found it more convenient to plant the seeds in a small plot near their camp spring." (Sandstrom, 1970, p. 11).

Among the Bantu, and perhaps more specifically among the Nguni, the depiction of the plant is largely the prerogative of the female. From studies conducted in Natal schools, Grossert (1969, p.A.115) concluded that "the subjects in which they [Zulu girls] show most interest are flowers, plants, people and animals, in that order."

Among the Xhosa, where the "special relationship" between plant forms and architecture is particularly noticeable, a religious attitude to the plant world is exemplified by the "special ritual" to which twins were subjected, which was associated with the euphorbia tree (Bettison, 1954, p.149; see also Soga, 1931, p.296).

Important among the Nguni peoples generally were the first-fruit ceremonies, which were acts of thanksgiving for the fruits of the earth (Junod, 1938, p.22).

The Xhosa regard as magical the plants of the ixhwele. His "hundreds of barks, roots and leaves" (Schapera, 1957, p.229), taken from the whole range of the vegetable kingdom, must have had some effect on their notions of the magical status of the plant world. In the Qebe district of the Transkei, the smoke of the isifutho shrub has the power to repel evil spirits (Broster, 1967, p.122).

Parallel manifestations have been observed among primitive American peoples like the Omaha Indians who observe a strict ritual in the gathering of plants (Levi-Strauss, 1966, p.43), or the medicine men of eastern Canada, who propitiate the soul of the plant after the plant has been gathered (ibid.).

This special feeling for the plant world which is so widespread in primitive cultures is due largely to the intimate dependence of these cultures on the environment, to the extent that the environment largely determines the culture (Clark, 1959, p.32). All over the world, "popular stories reflect a firmly rooted belief in the intimate connection between a human being and a tree, plant or flower." (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1951, vol.22, p.445).

Among the "Kaffers" of the Nineteenth Century, certain manifestations of the plant-world were symbols for the commencement of certain annual activities.

"Seed time seems to be divided into three distinct periods, which according to an interpreter, are governed by three particular signs in nature. The shooting flower of the kaffir-boom is regarded as the signal for planting the first crop of maize; when the wild plum-tree puts forth its blossoms, then they put in millet, or Holcus Sorghum, and upon observing the willow's aspect changed by the advance of spring, they count it high time to sow their last crop of Indian corn." (Frazer, 1938, p.43).

All over the primitive world, people show an interest in plants and a knowledge of them which reveals how important a part they play in these cultures.

The Hanuñoo of the Phillipines manifest "a precise knowledge of plant classification... Ninety-three percent of the total number of natural plant types are regarded by the Hanuñoo as being culturally significant." (Levi-Strauss, 1966, p.3). The Pinatubo Negritos of the Phillipines have an

"inexhaustible knowledge of the plant and animal kingdoms... Most Negritos can with ease enumerate the specific descriptive names of at least four hundred and fifty plants... and the botanical knowledge of the Mananambal, the medicine men and women who use plants constantly in their practice, is truly outstanding." (Levi-Strauss, 1966, pp.3-4).

In the Gabon, about eight thousand botanical terms were collected from "twelve or thirteen neighbouring tribes." (ibid.).

This intimate relationship between plant and human is in fact no more than an all-pervading philosophy which considers all phenomena to be interdependent, linked in a chain of vital forces.

"Just as Bantu ontology is opposed to the European concept of individuated things, isolated in themselves, so Bantu psychology cannot conceive of man as an individual,

as a force existing by itself and apart from its ontological relationship with other living beings and from its connection with animals or inanimate forces around it." (Tempels, 1959, p.68).

The use of plant forms in connection with architecture is widespread in African mural decoration. At Zaria in Moslem northern Nigeria (ill.39), flower-motifs occur, framed in rectangular panels, reminiscent of Ndebele painting. Another decoration from a house in northern Nigeria (ill.40) shows the use of a similar convention.⁽¹⁾ Also of interest in this illustration is the decoration of the cornice, which is markedly similar to the treatment of ketting (chain) motifs (see p. 89) in Ndebele painting. No evidence has yet been put forward to show that these forms have any symbolic meaning; but with regard to the Bantu, it seems certain that the use of plant forms in an architectural context exists on more than a merely decorative level. To pigeon-hole the manifestation under the label of "aesthetic impulse" would be to circumscribe it too severely.

(1) Another instance may be noted of the use of plant-motifs by Islamic peoples in domestic mural painting: according to W. Battiss, wall decorations in the Hadhramaut around Aden often include plant forms painted in white on the mud wall. Like the Bantu, Islamic peoples have a special regard for plants and flowers; Moslems "envisaged Paradise as a verdant garden" (Stewart, 1968, p.175). Moslem prayer-rugs incorporated floral motifs and flowered columns flanking symbolic entrance niches (see Stewart, 1968, p.177).

As long ago as 1895, A.C. Haddon (p.133) observed that

"Neither mere utility nor intrinsic beauty appear to be a necessary qualification for the establishing of plant-life in decorative art. It is only, so to speak, when plants are provided with a soul, when inner meaning is read into them that they become immortalised."

Nevertheless, the general effect of Bantu mural decoration is festive rather than religious in the cult sense. Unlike body painting, it makes no attempt at symbolising the stations of life. It has been stripped of the ritual which still motivates tribal painters in other parts of Africa, like the ceremonial restorations of rock-paintings of the Dogon in the Western Sudan, the initiation paintings on mud walls of the Kissi of West Africa (Jensen, 1963, p.254), or the initiation paintings of the Buyeye society of the Sukuma in Tanganyika (see H. Cory, 1953).

Nevertheless, even today the most purely decorative of the paintings of the Southern Bantu still retain certain ritualistic implications. The woman makes her mark of possession on the dwelling, and identifies it as a product of her life - experience. Leonhard Adam (1949, p.73) discusses this attitude in the light of the relationship between primitive art and primitive law, and quotes Huntingdon Cairns' notion that property is "basically conceived of as a part of the personality or self; it is a relation between the person and the thing. Something that the individual has touched or handled becomes imbued with a portion of his personality."

The magico-ritualistic bias implicit in this attitude toward architecture is paralleled at the other end of history in the figure of Imhotep, the world's first great architect in stone, who was later deified by the Egyptians as a god of medicine and who was identified by them as the "guardian of the Secrets of the Royal Magic." (Huyghe, 1962, p.77).

In Central African sculpture, this magic element is discernible in even the most everyday object. A footstool, for instance, will be supported by the tribal ancestors, or among the more totemistic, by animals (Schmalembach, 1954, p. 145).

As shelter, the hut is intimately bound up with man's survival, existence and death: "C'est là que l'homme vient au monde; c'est là aussi qu'il meurt." (Casalis, 1860, p. 168). Consequently the functions of the Bantu dwelling-place have always been enshrouded in ritual: a married Xhosa woman who has not yet conceived her first child "may not approach her husband's hut, indeed any hut in the kraal, from the front. Wherever she may be coming from, she must pass round behind the huts and come to the front from thence." (Soga, 1931, p. 353). Also, the daughter-in-law may not smear the walls or floor of the men's side of the dwelling (Soga, 1931, p. 211). At the end of the confinement period, "the mother has to clean the hut and freshly smear the mud-walls and floor with cow-dung." (Elliott, 1970, p. 57).

Among the Sotho, huts are protected from sorcery "by means of pegs and stones smeared with medicine... They also smear medicine on the door above the lintel." (Ashton, 1952, p. 24). Among the Bantu generally "magical rites were employed when a new hut was built. A diviner would be employed to put medicine under the threshold and round the hut, at dead of night, to keep off evil spirits." (Marquard, 1939, p. 22). The Pedi, when building a dwelling, "maintain a state of absolute continence during the work of construction, and any departure from such restraint, it was thought, would impair the soundness of the completed dwelling." (Maple, 1970, pp. 361-2). The very siting of Bantu huts was "ruled by customs and taboos which varied enormously from tribe to tribe, but which in all were more or less strict." (Marquard, 1939, p. 25).

The focus of many of these rituals seems to have been the entrance to the house or village. To protect Lobedu villages, the gate-posts were made from a special wood, and were "smeared with medicines on the day they were set up." (Krige, 1943, p. 18). Among the Ndebele, symbolic emphasis is often given to the entrance. In ill. 41, twin guardian figures were placed on either side of the entrance to the courtyard. The heads of the figures are geometric spheres identical to that over the doorway, and all three spheres have "shoulders" of identically formed crenellation. Each body is formed by a vertically inclined rectangle flanking the gateway, and framing the letter S in an effect of colour and form recalling the illuminated initials of medieval art. The S signifies the biblical Simon (1), and reveals how the Ndebele have extended the protective marking of entrances to incorporate a missionary-derived symbolism.

Like all Negro art, the wall painting of the Bantu is an art submitted to rhythmic formalisation. Its tendency to what we would call abstraction is partly explained by the fact that it is oriented rhythmically rather than visually. Grossert, (1969, p. 149) has remarked on the "outstanding capacity for rhythmic action of the Bantu people." Forms are abstracted from the visual world in a way that has much of its inspiration in music and the dance. The rough-hewn rectangles that are found so frequently in Xhosa wall painting (ills. 42-44) can be likened to the monotonal rhythms of a drum beat. Among Negroes generally, visual art can be equated with music, just as in European art the traditional equation has been between visual art and literature. Even when visual art in Europe was "musicalised", (the prime example being perhaps the work of Giorgione), it was the melodic rather than the rhythmic aspect which was stressed.

(1) information: W. Battiss.

So that while literary symbolism has prevailed in European art, Negro art utilises what could be called an accoustic symbolism. Like music, Bantu wall-painting tends towards rhythm rather than melody.

What are stressed are the correspondences between elements; form is submitted to a rhythmic unification. Similarly, Bantu language is eminently rhythmic.

Negro art rejects naturalism for expressiveness; because Bantu painting is rhythmic, its forms and colours are limited to those which make for correspondence rather than divergence.

Forms are geometrically simplified, as in the art of the most ancient civilizations and proto-civilizations. Geometry has always been the most basic symbol of man's control over his environment. To geometricise nature is to order it by submitting it to schematisation as opposed to organic synthesis. The organic symbolises nature as mysterious, uncontrollable. Organic art confronts the unknown. Not that Bantu painting rejects the organic principle in nature; but it does submit it to a primeval, rough-hewn geometry and produces images that are often reminiscent of primitive cultivating implements (ill.45).

Primitive people generally, notes Grossert (1969, p.29), "unconsciously geometricise their delineation of objects." The Bantu tend towards variations on circular or rectilinear forms; the use of spirals so common among peoples whose lives are bound up with the eternal movement of the sea, like the Minoans or the Polynesians, is rare in Bantu painting, except among certain Sotho tribes, like the Balokoa-Musong, a subdivision of the Southern Sotho. Their mural decorations, "all painted on the interiors of their houses, have many spirals and curves..." (Grossert, 1969, pp.111-2).

This tendency to geometricise objects in primitive art raises the question of how far a form can be geometricised without losing its representational intention.

CHAPTER 2 - MEANING IN PRIMITIVE ART.

In the Nineteenth Century, the basic motivation of art was thought to be realistic representation, and this was applied as an absolute qualification for all forms of art, ancient and modern. This view was typified in the work of A.C. Haddon who wrote (1895, p.7) that "the vast bulk of artistic expression owes its birth to realism; the representations were meant to be life-like, or to suggest real objects; that they may not have been so was owing to the apathy or incapacity of the artist or to the unsuitability of his materials."

It was a notion characteristic of Nineteenth Century evolutionism, and was used to reinforce the belief that art was concerned with continual perfection of imitative techniques. In Balfour's words (1893, p.22), "imitation is the mother of art." According to this belief, geometric form was an early, less successful attempt at representation, and was therefore confined to man's early development.

"On the basis of the material that was known around the middle of the last century, they had already posited the thesis that the earliest forms of art had a geometric character. The idea was grounded on the fact that the oldest [European] ornamentation then known was purely geometric in character."
(Gerbrands, 1957, p.28).

This view went hand in hand with the belief that the two poles of art were on the one hand the ornamental, the purely formal, and on the other the realistic (Balfour, 1893, p.21). The religious implications of primitive symbolism had not yet been grasped and an artificial distinction was made between pictorial art and decorative design. This attitude persisted till as late as 1969, when Grossert (p.195) stated his belief that "the Bantu has never shown any inclination to develop a pictorial art even where mural art was practiced, as among the Ndebele."

He differentiated between pictorial representation and "two dimensional decorations and pattern related to form and function." (ibid.) However, a fertility symbolism is implicit in much Bantu painting which transcends the categories of form and function; moreover, attempts at foreshortening (ill.370 p. 150) and the creation of depth-illusion (ills.275&368, pp.130 & 149) can be found in Bantu art.

Moreover, discoveries in the Franco-Cantabrian region since the finding of Altamira in 1879 have shown that the Paleolithic phase of man's artistic development was by no means limited to the use of geometric forms, and that when used they were intended as symbols rather than as mere ornaments (see Giedion, vol.1, 1962, pp.9-44). Triangles, for instance, "appear to be an age-old symbol of future life; a triangle with the apex pointing downward signified the female." (Giedion, vol.1, 1962, p.99, quoting L.A. Stone).

Furthermore, paleolithic art ran the whole gamut from organic realism to geometric schematisation. In fact the use of geometric forms was more typical of the art of Neolithic, or the early civilizations, or for that matter, certain phases of Twentieth Century art. These latter manifested the belief that forms should have a life of their own, independent of what they are supposed to represent, and that abstraction, which in the Nineteenth Century, would have been limited to the realm of the ornamental, accounts for a whole range of expression which is neither ornamental nor realistic.

In 1893 Henry Balfour (p.64) observed how it "is impossible to estimate how many of the decorative designs with which we are surrounded, and which we are accustomed to regard as mere ornamental patterns, could be traced, were the material forthcoming to originals having a definite significance."

Although Balfour adhered to the evolutionist belief, he was one of the first to posit a theory that inverted the whole logic of evolutionism, namely that primitive art can evolve from a realistic prototype toward a conventional, that is, schematic one (Balfour, 1893, p. 22).

A characteristic common to both primitive art and Twentieth Century abstract art is a direct relationship between geometric form and plurality of meaning. A form in which the general is stressed rather than the particular is capable of a variety of interpretations. Xhosa beadwork provides several examples of similarly simple, geometric forms having different meanings. In ill. 46, the depiction in the lower example was interpreted as a tree, which became a woman dancing in the upper example simply by the addition of legs. The upper part of the form remains unchanged. Boas has shown (1955, p. 102) how "sometimes primitive symbols can serve to denote several heterogeneous objects, as with the Californian Indians, who interpret the same symbol as a lizard's foot, or a mountain covered with trees, or an owl's claw", and how the "geometric patterns of the Brazilian Indians represented fish, bats, bees, and other animals, although the triangles and diamonds of which they consist bear no apparent relation to these animal forms." (Boas, 1955, p. 89). Similarly, Gerbrands found that "various kinds of animals and plants [these latter of special interest with regard to Bantu painting] are represented by figures which show no likeness whatever to their prototype in nature." (Gerbrands, 1957, p. 64). Among the Xhosa, even the simplest geometric forms can represent plants and flowers (ills. 47 & 48).

Sometimes this attitude is due to the fact that to the primitive artist, there is no inevitable equation between the reality of an object and its outer appearance. The part can stand for the whole, animals can be represented by as little as the pattern markings on their skins (see Boas, 1955, p. 89).

Among the Bakairi of Brazil, simple geometric figures are in reality diagrammatic representations of concrete objects, mostly animals: "Thus a wavy line with alternating spots denotes a large, dark-spotted, colossal snake, the Anaconda; a rhomboidal mark signifies a lagoon-fish, whereas a triangle does not by any means indicate that simple geometric figure, but the small, three-cornered article of women's clothing." (Haddon, 1895, p. 174).

Sometimes this attitude can be traced back to the curbs imposed by the technical limitations of a medium, such as the basketry designs of the Indian of British Guiana, which are "explained as animals but are derivatives of geometric forms arising out of the technical qualities of the material." (Boas, 1955, p. 90).

The simplest geometric forms can have the most disparate meanings: from the course of the sun through the heavens (see Giedion, vol. II, 1962, p. 129), to the flowers and plants of the Ndebele, which become so schematised and stripped of individual particularities as to be interpreted, on occasion, as lamp-posts. The painting in ill. 49 was described as a plant form, but has definite anthropomorphic connotations. It can be interpreted as a plant on a triangular mound (see p. 141), or as a figure with legs astride, and arms raised above its head. The work seems to relate to certain masks from Nigeria and the Congo (ill. 50), which represent the eyebrows and nose as triangular forms whose apices point inward, toward an imaginary point between the eyes. It also relates to the horned masks which are found all over the primitive world (ill. 51), especially those consisting of two motifs which are mirror-images of each other. Studies of works in Central Africa have shown that a representational intention is discernible in even the seemingly most abstract geometric arrangements.

The Bangba wall painting in ill.52, from the Northern Congo depicts the sun, the moon, and the feet of the moon (Trowell, 1960, p.84). The sun at the centre of the composition is fairly easily identified; the vertical bands depicting the moon, and the feet of the moon are unidentifiable except to one familiar with the symbolic devices of the tribe. The criterion is symbolic rather than visual, and as the meaning of the symbols becomes lost, the painters themselves retain only the outer form of the image and reduce it from the level of symbolism to that of decorative abstraction. However, the tendency for symbols to lose their significance is not confined to late examples that have forgotten their origins. Works with very similar motifs, produced at more or less the same time, and at no great distance from each other, can vary widely in meaning. In ill. 53, the letter S has been incorporated into a depiction of a protective biblical figure (see p. 61). In ill.54, painted the same year and no more than a few miles away, the same letter is used, but the painter attached no particular significance to it. It has become little more than an ornamental theme suitable for abstract, formal variations.

Eventually even the makers lose track of the meanings of their images, and instances can be cited from all over the primitive world where the original meaning of a particular symbol or custom has been lost. Levi-Strauss (1968, p.18) observes that "among most primitive peoples it is very difficult to obtain a moral justification for any custom or institution."

According to Dr. H. Stolpe, the carved ornament of Polynesia always has a meaning and is never merely decorative.

"Polynesians cling tenaciously to ancient customs, though often they are no longer capable of accounting for their original meaning...

"If one asks the reason for a device or custom, one usually gets no satisfactory information... Should anyone... today, ask a native of these islands whether the ornamentation here delineated has any significance, and the reply should be 'no', I could not recognise in it any decisive evidence." (Balfour, 1893, p. 270).

A similar difficulty with regard to the interpretation of symbols was encountered by Grossert, who found (1969, p. A. 110) that "most tribal Bantu, the Ndebele for instance, deny that their mural designs have any meaning", but adds that "it is generally considered that they have some meaning which they prefer not to divulge."

G. P. Lestrade found parallels in primitive literature with this obscurity of meaning that we find in pictorial and plastic art.

The "Highly figurative and allusive nature of words and expressions used... requires a considerable amount of extensive and intensive historical as well as ethnographical knowledge for their understanding, and which are, even with such knowledge, often lost to us and still more often only partly explicable. This obscurity of language and allusion, it may be added, presents itself even to the very writers of such poems, who though they declaim the verses at the greatest speed at which their vocal organs can articulate, are often quite at a loss to give an intelligible explanation of their meaning." (Schapera, 1957, p. 296).

Henry Balfour (1893, p. 64) observed how "symbols of the various religious beliefs and institutions of Man in his different stages of culture have been repeated again and again, ever with an increasing tendency to vary from the original, and have been transmitted from one people to another, till all semblance to the original and all knowledge of its significance has vanished."

From these observations Balfour derived the notion of archetypal symbols, which he called "root-designs", by means of which it would be possible to categorise the descendant type (ibid).

In order to ascertain the original meaning of symbols, Haddon (1895, p. 332) advocated two methods of approach:

1. Inquiry from the people who employ the design, or the testimony of written evidence when the people no longer know the significance of the designs.
2. An investigation of induction and interpretation where oral or written tradition fail."

With regard to Bantu painting, both approaches are fruitful, except that the people often no longer know the significance of the designs (even though they have names for certain types of forms), and because the gathering of written evidence with regard to this subject is still in its infancy.

CHAPTER 3 - COLOUR AND ARCHITECTURE.

As negro sculpture is bound to the form of the tree-trunk, so Bantu painting is bound to architecture. The Bantu painter continues to use the most basic and ancient devices of architectural painting: painted dados, window borders, cornices, ornamental entrances. Among the Xhosa, (ills. 55 & 56) the elements are concentrated on the focal points of the main façade, the doors and windows. Among the Ndebele, by contrast, the emphasis is more overall, and each wall has its own focus (ill.57). Doors and windows have little of the inevitability of relationship with decoration that one finds in Xhosa art. Also, Ndebele painting tends to proliferation rather than to sparseness. The Xhosa accents the main architectural features rather than spreading the decoration over the wall surface; his aim is to emphasise the natural contrast of interior and exterior, the passages from light to dark. Doors and windows, the instruments of this transformation, are given a symbolic importance not found when the whole wall is treated as a uniform decorative entity. Among the Xhosa, white, the colour symbolic of contact with the world of the spirits, is used to sanctify this passage, and, it seems, to protect the inhabitants from the effects of evil spirits. The ability for white to ward off evil is recognised in many parts of Africa (see pp.30-32). Sudanese women still whiten their skin to protect their children from the effects of a spell. (Wellard, 1970, p.1962) The Xhosa word for white, umhlope, also means pure and innocent. Most Xhosa dwellings retain the white surrounds for doors and windows, or else use white in the areas of

of their proximity (ills. 58 - 61)⁽¹⁾. Similar conventions can be seen among peoples as widely separated as the Hluhlubi of South Africa, and the occupants of Kano in Nigeria (see Olivier, 1969, p.11), whose architectural decoration is frequently restricted to a structural outline in white around the doors and windows (ill.62).

Among the Xhosa, the most basic form that these surrounds have is a simple white border with straight sides. In ill.58 this has been developed into what the Xhosa call "step" pattern (see p.124) of ascending right angles; like column-capitals or bases, these steps are used as transitional features: that is, they have the effect of softening the change of direction from vertical to horizontal.

In ill. 59, the verticals and horizontals meet more starkly, without any transition; but the colour-range has been widened to include an ochre surround framed by straight white lines.

In ill. 60, richness of effect has been obtained economically, by including in the painted scheme the outlines of the low platforms or stoops that are a feature of most Xhosa dwellings. These platforms oosoze, or izitulo sodoka - literally, chairs of mud) are used a great deal by the inhabitants of the dwelling and like any floor area are subject to heavy ware. Here however, they appear crisp and freshly painted, and one is reminded that a synonym for mural painting among the Xhosa is "to make clean".

As the eye adapts to this pictorial vocabulary, one becomes aware of the infinite variations on this basic theme. Because the forms are so limited, one becomes sensitive to the slightest change from the norm: the relative strength or tenuousness of the lines, their variations from the basic directions (ills. 63-65).

(1) V. Gitywa is of the opinion that the decoration at these points may enable the spirits and, at night, the ordinary individual, to recognise the entrances to the dwelling.

Even the simplest variations produce effects of chromatic and formal richness. In ill. 66, from a site near Blaaukrans Pass, the vertical flanking areas have been retained, but now include two inward-pointing triangles which give the doorway the effect of being enclosed by an enormous leaf.

Among the Xhosa the white door surrounds are often painted to give them the appearance of being flanked by poles or columns supporting the roof (ills. 67-69), as a visual counterpart to the actual means of construction. Again this is a convention that is widespread in Africa, and has been observed as far north as Nigeria (ill. 70). The decoration in ill. 67 was the work of a Sotho woman, Nowelile Ncese who had married a Xhosa husband and had settled with him at Honeykop Halt in the Eastern Cape. It is in the orthodox Xhosa style, and furnishes added proof (see pp. 95, 102) that style depends not so much on tribal origins as on the influences of the area of one's everyday environment.

As with all the simplest Xhosa mural painting, the elementary convention of painted vertical bands signifying supporting-poles sometimes reaches a high level of decorative effect. In ill. 68 (ill. 69, detail), the addition of washing-blue to the basic range of earth-colours has resulted in a highly chromatic colour range.

Here knobs have been raised in plaster on the yellow-painted bands to give the impression of a pole from which the secondary branches have been pared. It is likely that the motif was suggested by actual protuberances in the wood; at any rate it is a further example of wall painting used as a means of expressing construction.

Throughout the ages, protrusions from plane or other surfaces have been equated with the symbolism of fertility.

In the palcolithic age, men made marks on smooth swellings of rock that clearly identify the swellings as symbols of breasts (Giedion, vol.11, 1962,p.211). In ancient Greece, the multi-breasted Diana of Ephesus symbolised fecundity, in the example under discussion, however (ill.69), the imagery seems phallic rather than mammary. Examples of a similar symbolism occur as far as North as Chad, where wooden protuberances standing out from the wall of the dwelling are incorporated into erotic fertility figures. (ill.71).

Among the Bantu, the dwelling is imbued with strong sexual implications, as is evidenced by the compulsory ritual intercourse that must take place in the hut between husband and wife before the setting up of house (Schapera, 1956, p.235).

From these observations it may be seen that the forms of the Bantu dwelling are integrated with a system of religious ritual which encompasses practically all aspects of everyday life. "Religion," observed Soga (1931, p.353), "is the most binding factor in tribal life, touching almost everything within that life." Consequently, the forms of the dwelling complex and of the huts themselves express the social organisation of the group, in this case a social organisation based on polygamy.

The door-decoration in ill.72 again seems derived, on the one hand from ritual markings above doors (see p. 70) and on the other from acknowledgment of constructive methods in pictorial form. In the Qebe area of the Transkei, part of the healing ritual referred to on p. 41 entails the witchdoctor's painting a cross above each door in the dwelling complex. (Broster, 1967, p.53).

At the same time, the vertical stroke of the motif in this illustration exactly corresponds to the underlying structural member which is also partly revealed by leaving it free of plaster, so that the member is either revealed or

expressed pictorially along the whole of its length below the roof.

The façade of this dwelling (ill.73) also furnished an example of an archaic building method rarely found to-day among the Xhosa, where only the wall surface in the immediate vicinity of the door has been given an exterior coat of plaster. In Xhosa mural-painting, it is precisely this area that is made the focus of decorative activity; in ill.74, the practice of plastering only the immediate vicinity of the doorway is still acknowledged pictorially, by differentiating the colours of the plaster ground. The door surround is again enriched with skeuomorphic representations (see p. 85) of wooden supports, and with formalised heads of flowers (detail ill.75). It seems likely that the earliest representations of plants on the exterior of a dwelling were always meant as enrichments to the door surround (see also ill.76). In all probability, the practice of confining the decoration to the door and window surrounds has a dual basis: one deriving from the religious significance of the entrance, the other deriving from considerations of form and function. However the significance attached to the painted entrance is not always religious or ritualistic. The painted relief above the door in ill.77 represents a clock-face with the hands at six o'clock. According to the maker, this signified the time of home-coming from work, when all are happy in anticipation of the evening's relaxation (1).

The bird between the arms was (unsuitably, perhaps), identified as an ostrich, specimens of which are kept on farms in the area. Underneath the clock the maker has painted the surname of the family. Here we have a painted entrance whose symbolism is purely therapeutic or sedative in intent, and which can be thought of as the tribal equivalent of Matisse's notion that art should be comforting, "like a good armchair." (Lassaigne, 1959, p. 93).

(1) In Ndebele wall paintings in the Pretoria district, the theme of the clock with hands at mid-day is said, according to W. Battiss, to symbolise happiness; spirits prefer the darkness, and shun the noon-day light.

The practice of concentrating the painting around the door and window areas can be seen also to have a basis in structural considerations. Being apertures, these areas are weak points of the wall, and because of the nature of the materials are liable to frequent cracking at these points. Consequently these are the areas that are repaired most frequently (ills. 78 & 79). The final painting often follows lines that have already been established by the repair-coat of plaster. To some extent, therefore, Xhosa painting has a basis in the need to impart visual strength to areas which are structurally weak.

It is an art that gives significance to the basic architectural features (ills. 80-81). Even on small huts, there is a monumentality of conception and an instinctive preservation of the surface of the wall. The painted decoration emphasises the structure of the hut, sometimes even entails what is virtually a pictorial re-creation of the method of construction. It turns the most modest door or window into a monumental feature.

The sense of scale is not realistic, but decorative and emotional. Huge leaves are frequently used (ills. 82 & 83) which cover the whole height or breadth of the wall.

Large-leaved motifs are a feature of tribal painting in the Albany district. Usually they occur in monumental relationship with the doorway, sometimes along the whole length of two or more walls (ills. 84 & 85). This type of decoration leads to, for the Xhosa, an uncharacteristic emphasis on precisely that area of the wall not adjacent to the door. Here large, simple, triangular areas grow upwards and form a dado of red and white leaf-like forms. Brought to the human scale, they establish continuity between nature and the man-made environment. Just as the Egyptian glazed hippopotami from the tombs of the Middle Kingdom are

decorated with the swamp vegetation in which they live, so the tribal dwelling is decorated with the surrounding growth and is brought into accord with nature. Nature is brought into the interior itself, where the forms depicted are essentially the same as the exterior, but can be smaller, more intimate, more delicate in scale.

Among the Bantu generally, painting gives scale to architecture, and helps clarify the composition of architectural forms that go to make up the living complex (ill. 86). Wall strength is emphasised by a continual echoing of the two basic directions of architecture, the vertical and the horizontal. Diagonals tend to be inclined at an angle of 45 degrees. Painted form is incorporated with architectural form, so that flower and leaf designs become reduced to geometric motifs; flowers and abstract motifs are married to the stepped structure of a wall (ills. 87 & 88). Segmental or triangular pediments are placed above entrances (ill. 86), windows, or at the gable-ends of pitched roofs (ill. 89), and are decorated with house or plant designs. The nature of the wall is asserted with motifs based on elements of building construction. Brick patterns are often used (ill. 90) or patterns reminiscent of wood and grass construction (ill. 91).

On the main façades of Ndebele dwellings, there is a tendency to break up large, plain areas into smaller units. Bous (1955, p. 462) observed that this tendency is a common feature of primitive art, and that "often the tendency to break up the decorative field is so strong that even when a natural division is not given, it may be broken up into smaller parts." In Ndebele painting the decoration can become so intense as to sometimes dominate the building; its structure becomes visible not so much in terms of three dimensional masses as of juxtaposed areas of colour or pattern. However, clarity is maintained by the use of compositional devices

found in mural painting throughout the ages: symmetry of composition, formalisation of motifs and recognition of the integrity of the wall surface.

Symmetry is one of the most basic features of primitive painting. With the Bantu, compositional schemes are usually bilaterally symmetrical on either side of a central axis, as are the individual forms themselves. One of the reasons for this is that, with the Bantu, painting functions as an extension of human action, and echoes the structure of the body. A Xhosa painter, when drawing on the ground as explanatory or preparatory to mural painting, often draws simultaneously with both hands. She begins at the top of an imaginary vertical, and the resultant forms on either side of this are simultaneously realised and are mirror-images of each other.

According to Boas (1955, p.33), "symmetrical motions of the arms and hands are physiologically determined. The right and left are apt to move symmetrically, and the motions of the same arm or both arms are often performed rhythmically and symmetrically from right to left and from left to right. I am inclined to consider this as one of the fundamental determinants, in importance equal to the view of the symmetry of the human body and of animals."

He further notes (1955, p.349) how symmetry is "very generally left and right and... this may be due to the symmetry of manual movements as well as to the observation of right and left symmetry in animals and in man." Wilhelm Wundt observed that "the creative and artistic work appears to us as a peculiar development of the expressive movements of the body. Gesture and language pass in a fleeting moment. In art they are sometimes given a higher significance." (Boas, 1955, p.13).

This bilateral symmetry that is common in primitive art has the vertical as its central element of organisation.

Its presence pre-supposes the right-angle, the basic element of all architectonic organisation, and by consequence, the horizontal. All Bantu painting is related to this principle of bilateral symmetry; even when the lines vary from the vertical and horizontal, they are governed by them: angles of forty five degrees are prevalent, and practically every straight line which varies from the two main directions is coupled with either a vertical or a horizontal.

In addition to bilateral symmetry, Herman Weyl has defined two other types: "translatory or shifting symmetry, by far the oldest type... It arises from the horizontal shifting of a given form, as in linear ornamentation." (Giedion, vol. 11, 1962, p.446). Rotational symmetry, on the other hand, "comes about when a motif turns through a certain angle before repeating itself. It too appeared earlier than bilateral symmetry... It was used most efficiently on the ceramics of the Fourth Millenium, a period of transition from prehistory to history." (ibid.).

Both types are found in Bantu painting (ills. 145 & 207), but it may be added that shifting symmetry arises also from the vertical shifting of a given form, as it is frequently found on either side of the entrance of Xhosa dwellings.

Shifting symmetry is essentially rhythmic repetition, and as such relates to the rhythmic patterns of music or literature.

Boas compared the repetitions of primitive poetry with "a rhythmic succession of decorative motives." (Boas, 1955, p.314).

The great advantage of mud architecture is its plasticity; yet the Ndebele tend to reduce it to an architecture of silhouettes. Two-dimensional effects are everywhere found. To overcome the limited means of the Bantu builder, emphasis is laid on variety of silhouette by means of pediments, crenellations, finials, free-standing pillars and lintelled entrance gateways (ills. 92-96).

In ill. 96 the pediment decoration of the outer portal adds strength to the design and passes the visual thrust diagonally down the wall. When a fully sculptural form is used, like the sphere of the finial in this illustration, it is because it retains its circular silhouette from any angle, rather than because it is a projection in depth. Because of this two dimensionality, one's progress from the exterior, through the portal of the courtyard, and finally through the portal of the interior itself is a progress through a series of screens which are analagous to the use of stage-props in the theatre. These screens each mark a transition from one environmental situation to another: from the light-filled outside to the more human space of the courtyard, and finally into the cool darkness of the interior. These divisions reach their greatest degree of formalisation among the Ndebele, who use special terms to refer to the entrance to the courtyard (esangweni) and the entrance to the house (emnyango).

We know that the Egyptians also loved half-darkness, "not only in their temples, but also in their houses" (Giedion, vol. 11, 1962, p.391). In Zozer's entrance-hall at Sakkara, the world's

"first authentically constructed interior space... the windows of the side wall consisted of small slits so that only a small amount of light could penetrate. In Chephren's three aisled valley temple, the only temple from the Fourth Dynasty whose lighting can be securely established, the sun's rays also enter through narrow horizontal slits in the ceiling. In the Hypostyle Hall at Karnak, the aisle was lit from high, inset stone grilles, which let in the light as through a filter." (Giedion, vol.11, 1962, p.510).

This love of darkness that is strong in primitive and primeval cultures, in prehistory becomes almost a cult. The Magdalenians placed their most sacred images in the deepest part of the cavern. Buildings like the one in ill. 97 with its smoke-blackened entrance, the flames gleaming in the darkness, the doorway whose narrowness is emphasised by the flanking areas of painted white, all remind one that man's first gathering-place was little more than some narrow aperture in a face of rock.

This dwelling was a cooking hut in a group of perhaps thirty houses in a farm community. The centre piece of the group was the building in ill. 98. Surrounded by buildings whose dominant colours were browns, greys and ochres, and whose decoration had been reduced to essential door and window surrounds, it stood out as the only building with a white façade and with a decorative motif derived explicitly from plant forms. As mural decorations, the plant forms of the Xhosa often have an architectural function. In this case, the stalks of the plants are like columns supporting the windows, and this effect has been emphasised by making the topmost flower function as a capital which marks the transition from the column to the window.

The symmetry of each design has been broken slightly by making the left hand leaves overlap. This is no accidental irregularity because the same convention has been applied with equal emphasis to both plant forms.

This type of design can be considered as transitional between the older, more formal designs of Xhosa art and the later, more supple style.

The more archaising elements of Xhosa painting are evident here:- the restriction of the colour to a white applied over the dun plaster, and the raising of the motif in slight relief in the plaster prior to application of colour.

The inhabitants of this dwelling, the Fihla family, were the highest ranking church members in this settlement, and the use of an explicit flower motif, and the painting of the whole dwelling white, was said to be indicative of their status. These observations support certain theories with regard to tribal painting: firstly that white is a colour signifying spiritual status, and secondly that the flower style may have been influenced by the evangelising activities of missionaries in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries.

In the other dwellings in the settlement (ill.99), the colour-prerogative had been reversed, so that the white assumed a minor relationship to the dun plaster, which as the dominant element had been subjected to a consequent complication of treatment by the addition of an extra tone; one grey tended towards blue-black, the other toward the classic colour of Bantu mural art, the dun blending of cattle dung and earth. The doors and windows are bordered with traditional white surrounds in turn bordered by large white scallops, spreading laterally across the facade. These were identified as conventionalised leaf designs, although their appearance did not make this explicit. A blend between symmetry and imbalance has been achieved by extending the top leaf on one side of the door to include the window area itself. Because of the particular variations from a central axis of the door-window relationship, these were just the adjustments needed to establish the symmetry of the facade.

The leaf-pattern had faded because of weathering, whereas the door and window surrounds, had been renewed more recently, an observation that supports the theory (see p. 75) that the application of white to door and window surrounds is a visual parallel with the renovatory process of the building itself.

The oldest Xhosa style seems to have been limited largely to straight lines, simple geometric forms, steps, diamonds chevron patterns, and to the application of white on a dun ground, but was always used with a feeling for decorative effect and the fine balance of positive and negative spaces (ills. 100 & 101). This style is still common today among the Xhosa and Fingo of the Transkei, Ciskei and north-eastern Albany district of the Eastern Cape.

In spite of the strict formalism, it seems that many of the works in this style represent flowers and plants, especially in the Qamnyana district of the Ciskei. According to the Xhosa painter Nothandekile Tatayi, the design on the front of her dwelling (ill. 102) was meant to represent "many flowers." The painter of the designs in ill. 103 & 104, a Fingo by the name of Nomalungelo Hoyi, said that the motif represented the evergreen, large-leaved iphewula (Crassula portulacea). She identified the segmental shapes on either side of the door and windows as the leaves, and each of the trapezoids above the doors and windows as the "corolla" of the plant (her word).

The interior of the larger of these dwellings provided several unique examples (ills. 105-107) of tribal art serving an educational purpose. At various points on the wall, and just below the windows and slightly to one side (to avoid dripping from the rain), were configurations of simple geometric forms, which according to the painter, were meant as aids in teaching the younger members of the family to count. As such they were the equivalent of the counting beads in European nurseries.

CHAPTER 4 - NDEBELE MURAL PAINTING.

The basis of Ndebele painting is linear and monochromatic (ills. 108 & 109). The skeleton of their polychrome style is a limited range of three graphic tones, grey, black and white, almost always applied in that order, by which the colour is subordinated to a rigorous framework of monochrome. This monochrome treatment is believed to represent the most archaic aspect of Ndebele painting, and is usually regarded as the basis of First Phase decoration (Walton, 1965, p. 36). The polychrome elements of first style decoration are "formal traditional motifs, similar to Ndebele beadwork" (Berman, 1970, p. 207). The second and third phase are today exclusively associated with polychrome painting; the second depicts "plants, patterns from environmental elements - wrought-iron gates, razor blades, numerals and letters" (ibid). The third phase entails "a semi-realistic translation of modern urban artefact and architecture", with "finials, domes, hanging lights and ornamental ballustrades" (ibid.). Motifs derived from these sources are on the increase in the traditional art of Negro Africa: witness the painted clocks, bicycles and automobiles on the walls of Hausa settlements in northern Nigeria (ill. 110; see also Willett, 1971, p. 119), and the teacup motifs of Xhosa painting (ill. 111).

The three phases of Ndebele painting developed in chronological succession, but today are found in juxtaposition, as elements of a single, unified style. The wall decorations in ills. 112-114, with their emphasis on straight-edged, rectilinear forms, seem to indicate a preference for forms in a chromatic version of the first style. That in ill. 115 inclines toward first style, but integrates second phase elements in the form of alphabet letters. That in ill. 116 apparently combines elements from the first and third phases. The colours in these examples (ills. 112 to 116) have a Leger-like brightness, and this tendency is emphasised by placing the colours against the white background that seems gradually to be replacing the dun backgrounds of past times.

However contrary to popular belief, the Bantu has an eye for the subtlest relationships. In ill. 109, grey and ochre relate with a subtlety that matches that of the drawing. Blacks are varied in thickness and tonal depth from strong, broad marks to the finest lace-like patterns of zig-zags. A dun-grey slip is applied as a final plastering coat, in this case on top of a white that has been used for renovatory purposes. Then the black lines are applied, but with a variety of tone and treatment ranging from the densest possible lines and areas of deep black to subtle, liquid washes, sometimes so faint as to be almost indistinguishable from the grey ground. Ills. 117-119 show the varying stages in the technique, with the yellow ground of the wall on the left, and the beginnings of the white lines on the right which eventually cover much of the darker drawing.

Usually the façade of the dwelling is painted in the chromatic style, as well as the exterior of the courtyard wall parallel to the façade; the interiors of these walls, as well as the walls of the forecourt and the side walls of the house are usually painted in the simpler graphic style. When colour is used in these latter areas, it is subordinated to large masses of monochrome.

The main lines of the drawing entail a pictorial reconstruction of the wall (ill. 120). Verticals support superstructures, long diagonals and horizontals run the entire length and height of the wall like stabilising beams. The upper parts give pictorial interpretations of the superstructure. While at first appearing abstract, these marks are actually descriptive of the structure of a house; they do not necessarily repeat the actual forms, but give an artistic parallel to them. They strengthen the wall surface, and provide a visual counterpart to the architectural process.

Just as the Xhosa arrived at their technique of plastering the wall of a dwelling by a poetic association with the wooden skeleton of the wall, so the Ndebele appear to arrive at the graphic or monochrome element in their mural style by association with the materials used in building and covering the structure (see ill. 121). "In the decoration of objects useful in the everyday life of the savage," observed Balfour (1893, p.72), "the ornamentation has, in its earlier stages at least, been often necessarily influenced by the form or function of the object."

We have seen (p. 17) how one of the oldest wall-making techniques of the Bantu incurs the use of interlaced boughs, which is in effect a primitive form of weaving.

There are many instances in primitive and primeval art of the influence of weaving on painting and architecture. As early as 1860, Gottfried Semper noticed the influence of designs developed in weaving, pottery and basketwork on architectural forms, especially "walls, cornices and ceilings." (Boas, 1955, p.15).

"Plaiting, then", observed Gerbrands, "is the primal technic from which not only weaving develops, but also through weaving all ornamentation." (Boas, 1955, p.29). Boas observed that "weaving in coarse material seemed to be a most fertile source of patterns that are imitated in paintings, carvings and pottery" (ibid.).

The world's first great stone building, the Necropolis of Zozer at Sakkara, contained a "chamber whose faience tiles were designed to imitate reed matting." (Giedion, vol. II, 1962, p.266).

In 1895, A.C. Haddon (p.89) referred to this tendency to copy the forms of manufactured objects in another medium as the skeuomorphic principle, and defined it as "the representation of anything made." He noted how one of the earliest architectural fabrics was wattlework, "formed by the interlacing of flexible boughs and wands. The most ancient huts were doubtless made of wattlework daubed over with clay." (ibid.)

There is strong archaeological evidence to support the belief that the transfer of woven patterns onto clay walls was a practice known to early man. At Ebersberg in Switzerland, Dr. Kelles found, among the remains of a lake village "fragments of clay daubing, smooth on one side, and marked on the other with deep depressions of the basketwork." (ibid.)

Ill. 121, a detail from a Ndebele dwelling near Witbank (1), and ill. 122, a reproduction of a rubbing from a Tongan club show a number of similarities.

Haddon (1895, p.86) observed that "one frequently finds designs in the ornamentation of objects from Oceanic which are evidently based on sinnet lashings...the decoration of this club irresistibly suggests bands of plaited sinnet irregularly bound around the club." Differences between the two examples are evident: the presence of diagonal dividing lines in the latter, their absence in the former; the overlapping and inter-lacing of the various groups of parallels in the Tongan rubbing have been eliminated in the painting and replaced by a purely two-dimensional relationship between verticals and horizontals. Also, the change from vertical to horizontal directions is continuous; but a striking similarity is the use of a uniform zig-zag motif contained between parallel lines.

(1) This work has all the formal rectilinearity of orthodox Mapoch art, but instead of a uniformly dry, hard-edge technique, there is a fluid painterliness and an interest in subtle, low-keyed tonal relationships based on black. Derived from the monochrome style of Mapoch art, it simplifies and narrows down the tonal range while widening the technical means of the painter. It is an example of floor design phantsi (based on the natural sweep of the hand across the floor, but possibly meant to initiate mats) used as mural decoration (emtangaleni or bodeni). Floor design among the Ndebele can be highly refined; the Xhosa of today pay less attention to this aspect than in the past when, according to V. Gitywa, floor patterns were often made more permanent by smearing the floor not with cowdung, but with ground goats' droppings, giving the floor a greenish hue.

These differences indicate that the Tongan rubbing has remained fairly close to its source, whereas the painting is at a further stage of abstraction. (1).

However, in Duggan-Cronin's photograph of a Pedi dwelling (ill. 123) taken in the early years of the Twentieth Century, the wall-painting still retains evidence of overlapping, especially in the lower right-hand section, where channelled zig-zag patterns are again used. Much of the remainder of this wall-design shows derivation from reeds fixed to framework, a motif similar to the fence on the extreme left of the picture.

Ill. 124, from a wall just outside Pretoria, shows how the original system of verticals and horizontals has been filled with a similar basketwork-derived pattern: the reed-like quality of this wall contrasts with the greater sense of solidity given in the adjacent sections by the fuller colour and more solid detailing of the motifs.

Almost seventy years separate the last two examples from each other, yet there is a notable similarity between them, in spite of the fact that they were produced by different tribal groups. The "surprising amount of change" that Grossert notes in Ndebele painting, a change that "has taken place in the last few decades" (Grossert, 1969, p.A 112), is confined by and large to secondary motifs. No matter what secondary motifs are introduced as detail in the Ndebele designs, whether they include "razor blades, the alphabet..., tea-pots, clocks, electric lights" (Grossert et al, 1958, p.103), the overall composition is conditioned by the basic skeleton of the monochrome style. One seldom finds an Ndebele dwelling where this monochrome element is entirely absent, even if its existence remains only in the method of plastering the floor, which among the Bantu generally seems itself to have originated in the imitation of woven floor-mats.

(1) In Mesopotamia, the skeuomorphic representation of plaited withes has its origin in sacred ritual. According to G. Levy (1963, pp.102-3), the nuptials of the goddess Ninkhursag and the Moon-God of Ur seem to have taken place in a booth or hut which is sometimes symbolised in vase-decoration as imitating wattle-work.

Haddon observed that "thresholds from Abyssinia were undoubtedly carved in imitation of rugs; from the monuments we may suppose that the walls were often decorated with woven stuffs, the ornament of which was transferred to stone and glazed bricks." (Haddon, 1895, p. 150). Ill. 125 shows the courtyard floor of a Sotho dwelling in the Transvaal, on which a similar rhythmic pattern is discernible. Its appearance seems to indicate a derivation similar to the wall painting in ill. 121, and to confirm Haddon's notion of thresholds made over in imitation of rugs, or in this case of basketwork matting (1).

Other examples of this skeuomorphic tendency in Bantu art should be noted: the designs on Sotho pottery, which "bear close resemblance to the designs on their walls and floors." (Grossert et al, 1958, p. 91), or the beadwork designs of the Ndebele, which are "similar to the designs on the walls." (Grossert et al, 1958, p. 104).

Because of the limitations inherent in the technique of interlacing vertical and horizontal strands, the more primitive forms of weaving, like the Navajo blanket from New Mexico of c. 1880, shown in ill. 126, always entail some degree of rectilinearisation of the motif represented. The motif here is a centralised step-design, symmetrical on both its axes, and resulting in a form similar to a commonly-used motif in Ndebele painting, which is sometimes said to depict flowers, sometimes steps, but which is always referred to as umraitono. By 1971, the Bantu have had at least a century's long familiarity with woven cloths especially blankets, and the possibility exists that these flower designs have been first modified by the weaving process, and then transferred according to skeuomorphic considerations, so that the technical limitations of the former have been retained.

(1) The Ndebele differentiate between painting which is done on the walls (emtangaleni or bodeni) and that which is done on the floor (phantsi). (See p. 86)

In ill. 127 this has been made more apparent by the inclusion in one of the compartments of a would-be naturalistic, less formal rendering of a tree-motif. According to the painter, this was inserted by her son, who depicted the kind of plant form he had learned to draw in elementary school.

Haddon (1895, p. 133) compared examples of lotus leaf decorations in Egypt to show how the curvilinear forms of plants can become rectilinearised over a period of time, and explained it as having resulted from "an attempt to copy...a painted design...in textiles, and the pattern became metamorphosed by the new condition."

Ndebele painting, and sometimes Xhosa painting, can be architectural not only in the sense that the painting enhances the structure, but also in the sense that it deals with subject matter that is itself architectural. Because of this it has links with some of the most ancient forms of architectural decoration. The description by Lloyd and Safar of the Painted Temple at al'Uquair, south of Baghdad includes the following observation: "The design on the front is of an architectural character, and one sees in it the representation of the facade of a building." (Giedion, vol. II, 1962, p. 210)

Among the Ndebele, representations of architecture often cover the main, central area of a wall decoration, with roofs, walls, steps, doors, lamps, windows, even gardens being alluded to in a brief, cryptographic, severely rectilinear style.

In ill. 128, the wall paintings on either side of the doorway are identical. In each, the central motif is a large house, with a pitched-roof, flanked by two flat-roofed houses whose entrances are, according to the painter, also horse-shoe patterns. Flowers surround the house, one crowning the roof, one placed below and two flanking it in the upper parts; large pendant lanterns flank the composition on its extremities. Forming a cornice below the roof is a ketting pattern, a traditional and widely used motif in Ndebele decoration.

In ill. 129 the focal point is an actual window flanked by monumental flowers, which in turn are flanked by house-motifs which subtly vary the symmetry. We are presented with a virtual garden landscape, with houses, flowers, trees, and even with what some of the inhabitants identified as a water pattern. To the right of the window, the design is crowned by an easily recognisable profile of a gabled house; below this to the left and right are two more houses which the painter described as "houses on a corner." Below this one descends symmetrical flights of steps, past a sunken courtyard with a tree represented by an upward pointing blue arrow, to a house "on the river" with a large segment-shaped flower in front of it.

The inhabitants gave varying interpretations of the diagonal parallels of the bottom register, some saying that they represented water, others that they represented flowers.

The design to the left of the window shows slight variations on this scheme.

The side of this dwelling (ill. 130) incorporated a pediment design with an assymmetrically placed house in a red field. Below the ketting-pattern is another house, this time flanked symmetrically by two flights of steps. Flowers surround it, and the step-motif is continued in the bottom extremities in cruciform flowers, at either end of what was interpreted as a wall and forecourt with an arched entrance.

Among the Xhosa, the doorways and windows tend to become the focal points for painting on the façade; they act as the anchor, the backbone to which all decoration is related and from which it takes its lines. By contrast, the painted wall of the Ndebele has no such natural focus; its pictorial starting point, its centre of gravity must be created solely by the relation of the painted features to the frame of the wall itself. A favourite device in the Witbank area entails the clustering of elements around the frame which all point inward (ill. 131); by means of the contrast of expansive open space with clustered centripetal elements pressing into the area of the central space, a tension is created which has all the blunt, static rhythm of the primordial.

By opening a space in the centre of the wall, and then edging it with motifs seeking to traverse the space, a definition is given to the wall purely by means of painting, without the need for architectural focus. The notion of the wall as a space to be traversed is underlined by the concentric circular motifs, which appear as moon or sun symbols floating in space (see also p. 131). Characteristic of Ndebele decoration is the emphasising of the screenlike quality of the wall by the use of a dark border which encloses the wall like a picture in a frame.

A less monumental variation on this theme was that in ill. 132, enriched in this case by replacing the grid-patterns of the central area with triangles and by moving the grids to the flanking areas.

Modern Ndebele decoration gives an important place to the written word, most often as a means of identifying the inhabitants of a dwelling. In ill. 133, the surname of the family, Skhosana, occurs together with the name of the locality, Brakfontein.

Above the door in ill. 134, four distinct groups of word-images occur. The first, aligned with the pediment-motif over the doorway, links the word "woman" with the notion of change, of arrival and departure: Nozilethe mfazi akungenwa (come woman, go away). Flanking this motif on either side are the words gugamzimba salahliziyo, a maxim to the effect that the body grows old but the heart remains young. To the left of the pediment-motif is a complimentary slang comment (smoden) on the modernity of the images; below it are the letters (TP, TCD) of automobile registration-plates.

The side wall of this dwelling (ill. 135) incorporated words along the whole of its length just below the roofline. The name of the nearest large town, Pretoria, is given, alongside the appropriate registration-plate letters. To the left of this a message reveals that the images on the walls are the food of the eye: Mehlo kiriga ukudlakwa.

To the right, homage is paid to the Apollo Eleven space-craft (Apholo leven); then follows the painter's name Maria Mahlangu. At another point on the wall (ill. 136), the Afrikaans imperative "kom kyk" reveals an invitation to view. On the corner of another wall (ill. 137) the words "Diyazi wozanie Smalpoort" indicate that "I know you come to Smalpoort"; they seem to refer to the composite creatures shown in the murals, which were described as not particularly malevolent.

Some of the richest and most refined examples of Ndebele painting come from the Eastern Transvaal, especially in the area around Witbank (see complex in ill. 138-142).

There is an evident contrast between the humility and simplicity of the means and materials, and the exotic splendour of the final result. This complex was situated in a relatively isolated position on a farm. The dominant colours were a rich but restricted range of greyish purples, interspersed with pure whites, and given occasional warmth by a band of red or an area of ochre.

Entering the complex one passes a white, miniature, altar-like step-pyramid painted at the base with purple rectangles; one then proceeds between the raised platforms that are a feature of Bantu exteriors, in this case flanked at their corners by uprights, past the gateposts and the courtyard-wall. The paintings extend around all four sides of the courtyard. On the lateral sides they are in the more reticent monochrome style, and help concentrate attention on the main façade and its focal point of an arched, entrance-portico recessed behind low walls, and supported on painted columns. The shafts of the columns are a purple grey; the capitals and bases are emphasised by horizontal bands of deep purple and white. Here we have a painter dealing with architectural motifs, like columns, for which her traditional art provides no preordained treatment; yet the elements have been decorated with the greatest possible taste.

A uniting feature in this complex is the use of red and blue bands which surround the highest parts on all the exterior walls of the house itself like a cornice (ill. 141). This detail from the façade of a hut flanking the main dwelling illustrates the wide variety that these painters achieve within a limited range. Below the inverted triangles of the upper parts there run two registers which have each been divided horizontally into six areas that are approximately square. Each square has been decorated with what one could call centripetal patterns, with forms tending to seek a central nucleus which in most cases has been left free of detail or contrast. In the top left hand square, for example, two triangles and two squares start their journeys from the mid-points of each of the four sides and form the arms of a squared flower. In the next square, squares and diamonds are replaced by roughly segment-shaped forms.

The next large square contains a further variation on the square-and-triangle arrangement. After that, segments combine with diamonds, triangles, step-forms and other geometric shapes. In spite of the narrowness of the range, no pattern is repeated twice, and this unified diversity is in the great tradition of decorative art. There are two exceptions to the centripetal scheme. On the top register, the fourth square from the left contains a downward-pointing step design, while the fifth square of the lowest register contains an upward pointing arrow whose top is truncated by a semi-circle. The centripetal quality of the drawing is repeated in the tonal range, because the colours are confined to the tonal extremes: either pure white, or those colours at the lower end of the tonal scale. This contrast between bright white with deep purples and greens give the work a luminous yet nocturnal quality, comparable with the night-paintings of Paul Klee.

The walls of those structures forming the lateral sides of the entrance court (ill. 142) were decorated with the type of monochrome painting that, releasing the painter from considerations of colour, allows her to indulge in the fluid virtuosity of handling that is a constant in the Ndebele monochrome style. The full range of blacks

is used here: heavy defining lines giving the main directions, then the more subtle blacks which weave like water patterns between stronger banks of black (for further examples of zig-zag patterns symbolising water see p. 121), or echo the main lines of force. Again the squares have been subtly varied; they are separated from each other, in one case by vertical meanders, in another by broad parallel hatches across the whole width of the separating zone. The strengthening lines of white are not final but primary marks; they have a weathered appearance, but were painted at the same time as the whites of the other walls, so that their appearance was intentional and not due to effects of weather. This is obvious because the darks of the separating zones were painted after and on top of the whites.

The whole range of the monochrome style is evident here: broad, fluid washes, modulated over a wide tonal range, effects of transparency, harsh, uncompromised blacks, and finally the scumbled effect of the white lines.

Again, a comparison between this painting and the Tongan rubbing from Oceania in ill. 122 is enlightening with regard to the question of painted patterns derived from primitive plaiting.

CHAPTER 5 - MURAL PAINTING IN THE ORANGE
FREE STATE.

When a mixing of tribal peoples occurs, as so often happens in areas close to larger cities, the immigrants tend to adopt the style of the dominant or indigenous group, and at the same time tend to infuse this style with elements alien to it. Something of this nature occurs in that area of the Orange Free State between Bloemfontein and Kroonstad, where members of the Zulu and Xhosa peoples are subject to a dominant Sotho influence (ills 143-160).

In this area there is a tendency to use surface relief decoration, and in most instances some kind of three-dimensionality is given to the surface by the use of deeply stippled textures, stones placed on the surface that recall the Taung decorations of Southern Lesotho (see Walton, 1965, p.34), or patterns in relief. This pattern is not incorporated with the structure of the building as it is among the Xhosa, but is an addition, after the building has been completed. Usually the relief is used to re-assert the flatness of the wall surface, which is broken only to assert its integrity.

The people of this region use a high proportion of synthetic paints. Only white from chalk, ochres and brown are obtained from the earth. Black, which the Sotho knows as mashala, is often obtained from old automobile batteries. Pinks, greens and blues are made of shop-bought distemper, known throughout the area by the trade name "Murallo".

In ill.143, it is the edges of the wall that are emphasised and the door and window surrounds. Small stones have been impressed into the clay when wet, to produce a rough texture which covers the whole dwelling except for the dark frame around the side and lower edges. The transition from interior darkness to the white of the outside wall has been achieved by using an intermediate ochre tone around door and window. Perspective is employed here to produce an effect of opened lattices.

Rather than preserving the integrity of the wall surface, it has been exploited to produce an illusion of projection in space.

In this case the painter was a Sotho by the name of Anna Toloki, born in the district.

In ill.144, a similar use has been made of a textured white wall surface, but the effect has been made less stark by placing emphasis on rounded patterns; those of the doorway have been based on plant and leaf patterns (according to the painter), which have been highly formalised.

Typical of many dwellings in this area was the use of darker colours around the doors and windows, and on the lateral extremities of the walls. The colour-areas have been separated by lines raised in relief.

In ill.145 the surface of the wall had been painted a subtle off-white. The decoration was confined to the door surround, to the corners of the wall, and to a cornice running the length of the facade. The patterns were basic geometric forms: diamonds, semi-circles, and comma-motifs, loops which curve at the top and begin to turn back on themselves. The faded pinks and blues have a delicacy which calls to mind a Persian miniature or a Venetian palazzo decorated with semi-precious stones. Part of the effect of these colours was due to their being set off, at the other end of the tonal scale by a rich, sparingly-used black.

The wall decoration in ill.146 was a characteristic example of the Sotho relief style of the Free State, yet the painter was a Xhosa woman, Alina Nokani. Richness of effect has been obtained almost purely in terms of relief. Only two earth colours are used; the differentiation between them is minimal. Occasionally a white is added for emphasis. Colour has an austerity reminiscent of Xhosa painting. Yet the overall effect is specifically Sotho, and colour has been subordinated to sculptural effect.

A frieze of stylised flowers crowns the design. Beneath this, inset stones and raised lines form triangles at each of the four corners of the façade. The inset stones are angled like leaves sprouting from a branch. Door and windows are enclosed by raised outlines, and are treated with lateral motifs, which because they resemble sculptured handles, give the effect of double doors and windows. Richness of effect is obtained with a certain economy of means; a humble door to a mud hut has been transformed into a double-gated entrance portal.

In ill.147 the basic rectangle of the house has provided a motif of variegated rectangular forms in black and white. Again one notices a tendency to confine the colours to the extremes of the tonal scale. Where the rectangles meet, the flat white areas are metamorphosed into separating lines. No extraneous form is allowed to intrude on this play of rectangles, realised with an austerity and a formal purism reminiscent of the works of de Stijl.

In this case door and window remain unemphasised; one's eye is drawn not to the apertures but to the flat wall surface. In the open position, the door or the window become simply another black rectangle on the surface.

The composition, however, remains colourful, framed as it is by the omnipresent blue sky above and the ochres of the wall and the exterior floor area below.

The rectilinear dwelling, in contrast to the circular, is frequently found among the Sotho, and in the vicinity of even small towns is the only type used. Generally, the Bantu of the interior used the perpendicular wall, with its rectilinear connotations, at an earlier date than did the coastal Bantu (Schapera, 1956, p.34).

The example in ill.148 was encountered in the northern Free State, just before Kroonstad. In this case the painter was a Zulu woman, Ellen Nontozane, who again had assimilated the common style of the area. Here richness of

effect was dependent on drawing rather than relief or colour, both of which play a subordinate role.

Relief is slight, colour is a near-monochromatic range of earth browns and reds. The rectangle of the façade is delineated by a white line whose outer edge corresponds with the extremities of the wall, and whose inner edge is formed by a pattern of segmented curves. This line is continuous except at the foot of the door. Placed assymmetrically on either side of the door are two lozenge or truncated diamond-patterns, extending the whole height of the building, again outlined in white, and containing inward pointing semi-circles midway along each of the sides.

Inside these lozenges the windows are placed off-centre, and surrounded by an interplay of straight framing lines, chevrons and segmental curves.

Crowning the doorway was a triangular pediment whose centre has been depressed into a segmental curve, and whose bottom corners have been attenuated and curled upwards into simplified scroll motifs made to resemble cattle horns. (1)

(1) G. Levy discussed the sacred symbolism of the horned entrance in primeval times, and in one instance (1963, pl. 19e) traced its influence on European imagery to the horns surmounting the church door of S. Cornely in Brittany, a motif which shows a striking similarity with the example under discussion. Motifs resembling cattle horns are also found above the entrances of Xhosa dwellings (see ill. 72).

The restless play of curve and counter-curve sets up a movement so strong that it tends to shatter the stability of the rectangle, and indicates the possibility of a derivation from decorations on curved surfaces.

The back yard of this dwelling provided several good examples of mud architecture on a reduced scale, with storage bins and chicken coops built like Bantu dwellings in miniature.

A common feature of this area, especially on secondary walls, were monumental plaster engravings, which were in effect reliefs in negative. (ills. 149, 150). Relating to the relief paintings of the main façade, they differ in that they were executed purely in monochrome on the dun ground of the plaster, the only colour-contrast being an occasional grey frame around the wall. As monochromes these works have a subtlety and reticence that are in accord with their secondary place in the overall architectural scheme. Their degree of visibility depends on available light so that they vary in subtlety according to the time of day. This is a frequent feature in tribal painting in South Africa; a geometric means, which produces a result that is organic, changing and imbued with the movement of nature.

These designs are based on flower patterns and formalised in such a way that they can be juxtaposed and interlocked with maximum decorative effect. In ill. 151, a broad-leafed plant placed in the horizontal-vertical position, is juxtaposed with a narrow-leaved plant, whose arms are at forty-five degrees to the vertical. The contrast of broad and narrow makes for variety, and the volutes at the ends of the leaves admirably fill the remaining rectangular spaces.

The tendency for curves to turn back on themselves, noticeable particularly in ill. 149 (see also ills. 145 & 146), indicates the presence of the embryonic spiral. This is a motif exclusive to the Sotho among the tribal peoples of South Africa, and is explained partly by the adoption of flower designs from European fabrics and blanket patterns.

In the area under discussion, both interior and exterior walls have a further type of decoration, that is decoration consisting of coloured line-drawings, made directly on the plaster surface of the wall. (1)

Those on the exterior tend to be larger in scale, more monumental, and tend also to the use of juxtaposed textures in contrast to the uniformly smooth textures of the interior. In ill.152 the smooth textures are confined to those areas enclosed by outlines while the resulting negative spaces have been textured with the curving parallel lines that are also an important feature of the Xhosa plastering technique. In this example the lines echo the main out-lines of the design, so that the negative spaces are compensated for by an added textural richness.

When both side walls are treated in this outline style, one frequently finds a slight variation of a single motif on either wall. In ill.153, from the wall opposite to that of the previous example, the flower and leaf patterns are made to fit into an out-line which is circular rather than quatrefoil, with a consequently greater regularity in the treatment of the negative spaces. The diagonally-aligned, diamond shaped leaves of the previous example have been done away with, and the finger-plastering textures penetrate the interiors of the positive shapes.

(1) These patterns are drawn with a finger, or sometimes with a fork (see p. 25). According to A.F. Jacquot Guillarmod, Sotho finger patterns are drawn by pressing into the clay with the inner phalange of the middle finger.

These plaster patterns are a general feature of Sotho decoration; they are known as litema because of their resemblance to a ploughed field or tema (Bruwer, 1963, p.67). However, their floral forms align them with the plant-motifs of the Xhosa. The usual arrangement is with four petals placed at right angles (ills. 154-157), and inclined at an angle of forty five degrees. This is a recurrent motif in primitive art; its treatment here is notably similar to that found in Samoan bark-cloth decoration (ill. 158).

Flower patterns in Sotho interiors tend to be more delicate in scale, more suited to the intimacy of the interior. Colours are lighter in effect, and are usually applied to a flat surface. The whites and powdery blues of ill. 159 are typical of this tendency. Because of the scale, these flowers are often rendered in greater detail, as in this example, where the depiction becomes so minute as to include the stamen of the plant. Also because of the smaller scale, and the consequently greater multiplication of units, patterns tend to be more rigorously repetitive, and for this purpose cardboard stencils are sometimes made to enable the repeat to be accomplished with maximum regularity (ill. 160).

Generally, the characteristics of the art of this area are also characteristic of Sotho art proper. The tendency to relief decoration, sometimes supplemented "with a simple mosaic of stones" (Ashton, 1952, p.23), the presence of spirals, the otherwise strong tendency to rectilinearity, all are characteristic of Sotho decoration.

Traditionally the walls of Sotho dwellings were decorated with "simple patterns and designs, either drawn by hand when the last coating of plaster is applied, or painted with washes of coloured earths, red, yellow, cream or brown." (ibid.)

CHAPTER 6 - SOUTHERN TRANSVAAL "SECOND" STYLE.

In the area around Pretoria and the Witwatersrand, in addition to the Ndebele and Sotho, a great many people from other tribes have settled. Some have become Europeanised, others have preferred to re-create the tribal environment. As we have seen, in the northern Free State where the Sotho element is dominant, a mixing of peoples has produced an art with the characteristics of the indigenous tribal art of that area. By contrast, in the area under discussion, a style has been formed which is quite different from Ndebele painting; one can in fact speak of a Second Style because very much the same colour preferences seem to prevail throughout the area, as well as a similar range of subject matter and pictorial convention (ills. 161-171). Zulu, Swazi and even Shangaan dwellings are encountered, often miles apart, which seem to have been painted according to mutually understood tenets.

A characteristic of this region is a tendency to use large areas of dark red oxide on an off-white or dun ground, and to finalise the drawing of the red forms with a delicate white outline. Flower and leaf-motifs are common, as well as designs adapted from playing cards. Forms are usually painted brown against a light background. Very often, the white or dun ground is given an outer frame of red.

Ill. 161 shows a Swazi hut near Benoni, painted on one of its lateral sides with diamond patterns, which according to the inhabitants was taken from a playing card, but which has been given an organic form in keeping with the nature of the wall structure. They rise and fall with the roofline, become irregularly truncated on the bottom edges. Both this and the opposite wall have a dado of ketting motifs, derived from Ndebele art but transformed to resemble the latticework of a verandah.

On the opposite lateral wall of the house (ill. 162), the diamond motif is interpreted more freely; the verandah-effect is strengthened by the inclusion of painted uprights "supporting" the superstructure at the corners of the wall.

Again the brown surround of the window is outlined in white, but the zig-zag running round the window in the previous illustration has been replaced by a crowning decoration of parallel diagonals in herring-bone formation.

Under the window, the ketting motif of the dado has invaded the area of the main design, and has become incorporated with it as a variation of the diamond pattern.

A further variation of the diamond pattern was used on a portion of the main façade (ill. 163), where the Ace of Diamonds has been transferred with little formal modification to the wall surface. Apart from the colour treatment, the most noticeable change is that the weight of the main diamond has been shifted downwards to stabilise it and keep the "weight" of the design to the lower part of the wall.

A similar motif and treatment was the heart design in ill. 164, from a Shangaan dwelling near Benoni, the main difference being the absence of the white outline. This results in a bulkier, less elegant effect and a cruder juxtaposition of tones. On the exterior walls of the courtyard, the heart motif is referred to again, but inverted for visual stability and cut off at the upper and lower extremities into a truncated triangle which is related to the heart form but which also recalls the large-leaf designs often used to form a dado by the Xhosa (see ill. 84).

A simplified diamond motif was used on the dwelling in ill. 165, this time by a Swazi in the same area, who obtained her colouring matter from the same deposit as the previous painter. Here the diamonds are less elegant in form; the ketting pattern re-emerges in the area immediately below the window, between two halves of a diamond which have been spread out to accommodate the window and ketting-motif.

The opposite lateral wall of the dwelling (ill. 166) was framed in brown with monumental flowers on two registers, on a grey background, the leaves being a regular alternation of red and white. The motif is similar to that found in Sotho decoration (see p. 101).

In ill. 167, two half diamonds point inwards toward the window. The central wall surface has been left free of decoration; not even the window has a surround, and is acknowledged in decorative terms only by a slight raising of the border of the painted cornice. Otherwise the scheme conforms to the centripetal type of composition of Ndebele wall painting.

This design is exceptional in the region under discussion because the normal colour prerogative has been reversed in favour of diamonds in an off-white against a brown field.

The most elegant example encountered of this "Second" Style of the Witwatersrand and surrounding region was painted by Kesa Kumalo on a Zulu dwelling complex in the Pretoria district (ills. 168-171).

The complex consisted of a group of three huts, two placed close together and bearing a definite architectural relationship to one another, in this case a major-minor relationship, and a third hut placed slightly farther away in a peripheral position.

All dwellings were decorated in the three colours of the Second Style, using plant and leaf designs. Ill. 168 shows the positions of the two main huts: a relatively long one with forecourt and gabled roof, and a smaller, flat-roofed dwelling.

On the latter, a brown frame, enclosing the entire façade, runs around the three upper sides of the wall and the vertical sides of the raised platforms.

On the main house, the façade contains monumental flowers, one on each side of the doorway, and is bisected by a white dado. On the exterior of the forecourt walls is a pattern of scattered yet formally arranged leaves in a horizontal alignment below brown and white framing lines.

Diamonds on the corners of this wall act as transitional motifs for a change in direction from frontal to lateral aspects. These resemble the diamond motifs of the previous examples, but were identified by the inhabitants as stylised leaf forms.

The leaf pattern is echoed in the brown surround of the doorway, delimited by a white line which is half-way between a zig-zag and a meander, and which is reminiscent of the "isikwens" pattern of the Xhosa (see p. 121). A more regularly segmental variation of this pattern is repeated round the doorway of the second hut, this time in white around a brown frame.

The third hut in the complex (ill. 170) was decorated with monumental triangular leaves which enclosed the walls like a plant its blossom. At the corners they run the whole height of the wall, their apex marking the change in the direction of the wall.

This inversion of scale, with leaves tall as houses, shows a typical disregard for objective scale-relationships in favour of a system of poetic or expressive proportion not unlike the gigantic lotus motifs of Egyptian architecture.

An exceptional feature in this design, vis-a-vis tribal painting generally, is that the richest decorations have been reserved for the side and back walls (ill. 171). Delicate leaves, slips of plants, are rendered with a balance between formalism and linear fluidity that is reminiscent of Xhosa painting. They intersperse and grow out of the large leaves; the window surround repeats the "isikwens" pattern round the door of the main hut, making it resemble a dark flower.

The frontal aspect of the house is more formal, separated from nature by the intervening courtyard and platforms; at the back the wall rises straight from the ground, without any transition between architecture and nature, and this more direct relation with nature is acknowledged in the decoration.

Near Witbank, the paintings on a group of Zulu dwellings (ills. 172 & 173) were marked by the use of a uniformly high tonal range; even the darks had the washed-out, faded quality of shadows washed in harsh reflected light. This use of tone values sympathetic with the environment plays an important part in tribal painting (see p. 119).

The dwelling in ill. 172 was decorated with jagged diamonds and zig-zags which corresponded with the play of light on the surrounding growth and especially the maize-plants, which surrounded all the dwellings and were visually juxtaposed with the buildings from practically every point of view. The leaves of the plants, cut into sharp triangles of light and dark, are echoed in the vertical zig-zags enclosing triangles on the wall itself. Here the inspiration of a motif has resulted in a stylised maize-plant pattern.

Colours were shop-bought distemper; ochres tended slightly toward orange, greys towards blue; and the painter has instinctively capitalised on the intensifying potential of complementary colours in juxtaposition (ill. 173). In European art this theory was put to systematic use by the Neo-Impressionists and, like Seurat the painter has seen fit to give a pointillist treatment to the window area, complete with orange spots on a blue background.

Wall painting in Zululand and the Transkei is nowhere as diversified as in those areas where the tribes have mingled to a certain extent, or where proximity to towns encourages a certain heterogeneity of inspiration.

In the Eastern Transvaal, the presence of Swazi, Shangaan, Ndebele or Zulu peoples makes for an artistic cross-fertilisation and a consequently wide and variegated source of decorative themes. Travelling through the Eastern Transvaal, towards the borders of Zululand, one notices an increasing simplicity of design until eventually the dwellings become quite devoid of painted decoration, without even a frame of whitewash round the doors or windows.

In ill. 174, from a site in the Eastern Transvaal near the Zululand border, the flower motifs round the windows and base are rendered in simple white areas against the natural clay of the wall; this achieves a richly decorative effect by the application of only one colour, and that a white applied over a restricted area. This richness is due more to poetic association than to the manual application of colour: the house rests like a flower on a base of petals; the windows themselves are flowers with black centres.

Farther east, closer to the border, the huts are unpainted clay. With the first settlements of Zululand, clay gradually gives way to structures made exclusively of wood, reeds and grass (ill. 175), structures which are unsuitable as supports for painting.

CHAPTER 7 - ZULULAND AND THE TRANSKEI

For the inhabitant of Zululand, the architecturally archaic medium of grass and reed is used for every conceivable structural need: walls, fences, roofs, chicken coops, storage bins. As with the earliest Nguni dwellings, walls are still low, the roofs are of the beehive type or else are steeply pitched cones. The decorative interest derives purely from the nature of the materials - the regularity or rhythm of placing of the supporting struts, the contrast of grass and grass.

The more architecturally archaic forms are found more frequently among the Zulu than among any of the other Nguni peoples or the Bantu of the interior. McCall Theal noted that the huts of the tribes along the south-east coast were shaped like "domes or beehives and were formed with strong frames thatched with reeds or grass." (Frazer, 1938, p. 34). This type of dwelling is still frequently found in Zululand.

This tendency continues until one reaches southern Natal, where structures of unbaked brick or wattle-and-daub are found. This day style of southern Natal is very similar to that of the peoples of the northern Transkei (ill. 176), and there is no noticeable change of style on crossing the border. Decoration is sparse, and limited to the contrast of dun and white. Generally it is the upper part of these huts that are painted white, and interest is confined to the varying of areas of grey and white. In the northern Transkei, the usual scheme is simply a white band running round the wall just below the roof line, with changes in direction only to frame a window or a door.

Farther south, the white band becomes broader until the dun ground forms a low dado round the dwelling. Occasionally it dips downwards to form a horse-shoe motif, but otherwise little variation can be seen.

The first hint of stronger decorative form appears in the Mount Frere area (ill. 177). Here the dado is confined to a narrow strip at the bottom of the wall.

The walls of the huts are painted with rectangles stepped at each of the corners so as to produce the effect of a lintel above a doorway flanked by half-columns. The centres of the rectangles have been left bare to produce monumental crosses on a white background. The effect, economical yet rich, is nevertheless little more than a repetitive convention, and as decoration is nowhere as advanced as in the Transvaal, Northern Free State or Eastern Cape.

CHAPTER 8 - THE EASTERN CAPE

The Eastern Cape is one of the oldest areas of contact between European and Bantu; Boer met Xhosa in the region of the Fish River as early as the 1770's (Schapera, 1956, p. 333); yet the irony is that less information has been gathered about Xhosa mural painting than about practically any other indigenous art form. Apart from pioneering work by Walton (1965), its existence has been virtually ignored, even in studies devoted exclusively to the Xhosa.

Aubrey Elliott (1970, p. 28) states that "the clay painted design on the hut is not a regular feature of Xhosa huts in the Ciskei", and adds that when it does occur, it is an idea "borrowed from neighbouring tribes in the Transkei." (ibid.) However, existing evidence supports the claim that the richest mural art lies west of the Ciskei. Examples of painting by the Xhosa-speaking Fingo are found east of the Fish River, that is, within the Ciskei (see ill. 103 & 104). The best Xhosa art is concentrated in the region that lies between the Fish and Bushman's Rivers in the Eastern Cape.

Both Xhosa and Ndebele painting is based largely on forms of the plant world, but while the Ndebele tends to reduce his motifs to a schematic, rectilinear formalism, the Xhosa tends to retain the lithe, organic qualities of his subject. The technique is more spontaneous, more painterly; there is a loosening of the geometric rigidity of Ndebele painting; straight lines tend to wander from the original direction, circles become irregular. In symmetrical designs (ill. 178), there is usually slight imbalance and variation on either side of an axis. Here verticals waver upward like the stalks of plants, and in their tentative ascent echo the organic process of growth. Correspondence is established between mural design and roofing material.

The brittle-pliable duality of the cane and grass is echoed in the design; straight lines bend slightly under tension, like dried grass, and have limited pliability.

In the Xhosa style there is a handmade, rough-hewn attempt at symmetric, geometric order that is touchingly human.

The plant is framed on the wall by a border of dots with small, rotationally symmetrical plants (see p. 78) at each of the corners. These help emphasise the rectilinearity of the design by emphasising its extremes. The border of dots represents seeds, and together with the plants are part of a fertility symbolism that penetrates all flower painting among the Xhosa (see p. 133).

The plant stands on what seems to be a mound of earth with roots extending downwards. If so, this would be an example of the transparent painting that one finds among the Australian Aborigines (see Kupka, 1965, p.73). However, it is characteristic of the monumental plant designs of the Xhosa that they are given anthropomorphic connotations (see Walton, 1965, p.33); they take on human scale, and the parts of the plant are laid out like parts of the body. Here there are legs meeting the main trunk in a triangle containing a seed-pattern. The arms of the tree are also the upraised arms of a man; The large circular head of the plant stands on a neck and shoulders.

The designs of the Xhosa retain this litheness, this easing of the geometric form into an organic mould even when the design is monumentalised into one or two large, simple forms (ill.179). The design on each side of the door here consists of two large red triangles, one inverted, joined vertically at their apices, with two smaller white triangles added to produce a design which is both cruciform and plant-like. The straight lines tend to soften into curves, angles are rounded out, the effect is of two large-leaved plants monumentalising a doorway supporting a painted cornice. The rectangle of the doorway is echoed in the rectangle of the frame of the design, which is indicated by a slight change in colour in the plaster ground. Each painted form is formally aligned with the rectangles of both doorway and painted frame.

Anthropomorphic connotations are again in evidence; an interpreter, Boyose Sinam observed that the designs were reminiscent of the simplified clay dolls used by Xhosa children.

A common practice in the Eastern Cape is to flank the doorway or to fill the whole height of an interior panel with representations of maize-plants (ills. 180 & 181), or tall reeds and grasses (ill. 182). The latter illustration is representative of the fine balance that is established, in the best examples of Xhosa painting, between formal and realistic considerations; the plants have a formal monumentality suitable to the architectural setting, yet the seed-pods, made up of configurations of dots (see p. 133), attain an economical and vivid realism.

Very often the plants represented are identified as particular types: that in ill. 183 was said to be a gladiola; ill. 184 a "pepperboom"; ill. 185 an aloe; ill. 186 a poppy; ill. 187 a rose-bush; ill. 188 an oak; the motif in ill. 189 was said to represent prickly-pear leaves. Those in ills. 190 & 191 were identified as orange-flowers, in the latter combined with isikwens and ifestile (see pp. 127-8; motifs. In ill. 192, plants said to be lilies were used in conjunction with step and window patterns. The plants in ills. 193 & 194 were identified as aloe and wild fig respectively, although both seem to be types of cactus. That in ill. 195 was meant to represent the euphorbia (umhlontlo), the tree of the twins; however, no symbolic relationship was involved here (see p. 56). The plant on the right-hand side of the door in ill. 196, growing on either side of a diamond-pattern, was said to be a "melkboom", that on the left a flower that resembled a feather (usiba). The plant in ill. 197 was identified simply as a flower resembling a windmill.

Thorny, spiky plants abound in the Eastern Cape, and are used frequently in the Grahamstown district as a source of decorative motifs. In ill. 198, jagged diagonals in roughly parallel formation menace a central space. A tension is created similar to the centripetal forms of certain Ndebele and Sotho influenced paintings.

The motif, as so often happens in Xhosa painting, is outlined in white, and a sense of colour is created by the economical method of restricting the application of colour to the area outside the main motif. The design has a columnar unity, and a capital has even been provided by a triple horizontal at the top of the form which encloses a kind of miniature version of the thorn motif. Evident here is an instinctive appreciation for forms which are complementary to the architecture. What started out as a plant design has become a columnar architectural feature.

That part of the wall which is painted is bordered on both sides by a chevron-pattern which has the effect of a pebbly ground-line enclosing the design.

To-day when tribal mores are being broken down, delegation of sleeping accommodation is nowhere near as formalised as it was in the past. The Xhosa of the Eastern Cape, especially those in farm communities, and in the proximity of towns, because of economic and social considerations, no longer adhere very strictly to the traditional layout of the great-hut, right-hand hut, etc., nor to the practice of a newly married bride keeping to the right-hand side in the dwelling of her parents-in-law.

There is no evidence that these conventions are acknowledged in the wall-painting of the Xhosa. However, the possibility remains that certain conclusions with regard to marital status can be inferred from the nature of the paintings. For instance, the decoration in ill.178 was made by a married woman, while, according to Boyose Sinam, that in ill.198 is similar to the design on the dress of girls who are not yet married. The former design is characterised by forms gravitating outwards, in other words by a certain fullness of expression; the plant itself is in the fullness of its maturity. By contrast the forms in ill.198 are inward-seeking, with lines not quite reaching the central axis, and thereby creating a tension around a core of emptiness.

The former expresses fulfillment, the latter expresses the possibility for fulfillment not yet attained.

However, the latter dwelling was the home of a married woman with children, but the design itself had been made by an unmarried daughter, who occupied the hut seen in ill.199, which was characterised by a marked similarity of decorative treatment. Being a smaller hut the design was less monumental, but its centripetal quality is again strongly in evidence. The colour application was restricted to a minimal yellow, brown and white border on the sides of the main facade and round the doors and windows.

It would therefore be incorrect to conclude that one can identify the marital status of the inhabitants of a Xhosa dwelling by the nature of its decoration, because very often all the huts in a dwelling complex will be decorated by young girls. Bachelors' huts, of course, frequently contain no decoration because wall-painting is a woman's occupation. When these are decorated by the female members of the family, no special design is used to indicate the bachelor status.

CHAPTER 9 - CHANGE, PERMANENCE, RECURRENCE

Wall paintings on Xhosa huts are renewed annually, in certain cases every few months, yet because the painter works within a limited range of motifs, a fine balance is retained between constancy and change. The façade in ill.200 (detail: ill.201) (I) was painted in early 1970, and was repainted in January, 1971 (ill.202) with slight differences in detail and proportion, but without any real change in the character of the forms. These works represent a more recent, semi-realistic version of the flower style, and reveal a flair for decorative placing reminiscent of Matisse. The interior of the dwelling (ill.203) was decorated with flower "arrangements" in a similar style.

The examples in ill.s.204 to 222 record the successive changes in the appearance of one dwelling complex over a period of about fifteen months. The first photographs were taken in March 1970, the last in April 1971.

The focal point for painting on the façade (ill.204) was the wall-area above the usoze. Seeming by a trick of perspective to continue this horizontal plane into the wall area itself is a white painted ledge, from which the flowers grow in a delicate, symmetrical grouping against the sky-like grey background.

(I) The notable similarity between this design and that on a Mesopotamian cylinder - seal impression in the Berlin State Museum (see Levy, 1963, pl.10c) supports the theory that the plant forms of Bantu mural painting have their origin in a sacred symbolism that was widespread in primeval times.

The dun grey of the wall-plaster is essentially a background colour, neutral and non-committal, and its colour is often equated with the sky itself (see p. 142). The vertical sides of the *usoze* were decorated with mound-like triangles in white and ochre.

The dwelling itself, originally European-built but modified over the years, comprised two large rooms, one fairly well lit by a door and windows on two walls, the other one lit by only one window, and subdivided into two compartments, the smaller of which received no direct light.

On the occasion of the first visit, all rooms were decorated (ills. 205 to 208), the two larger ones with leaf-patterns, delicate yet monumental, on a dun background. In the main room (ill. 205) were depicted long, slender plants, growing singly or in pairs out of small, triangular mounds. The leaves were coloured alternately red and white, giving the effect of a variety of planes in space.

The main feature of the larger part of the subdivided room was a flower composition (ills. 206 & 207), laid out according to the principles of radiating symmetry, which ran the whole height of the wall above one of the beds.

Growing from a framing rectangle of white dots, toward the central horizontal dividing line of coloured circular discs, alternately red and blue, and outlined in white, was a succession of flowers; from each of the corners of the rectangle, and from the middle of each of the two long sides grew a painted flower with a white stem and four-leafed heads. Also growing from the frame of the rectangle, and interspersing these flowers, were a further series, executed in a dotted style.

In spite of the formal depiction, the flowers retain a vivid particularity; some have heads with large, soft, light-coloured petals, others, in a "pointillist" manner, were like representations of dandelion flowers in seed.

The branches were aligned with the rhythmic waves formed as a result of the plastering technique.

On the wall above the bed (ills. 213 & 214), the radial flower composition had been replaced by variations of the facade motif.

Again the plants growing from the white base consisted of two symmetrical branches and were surmounted by circular heads. Again the forms were full and bulbous. A branch with heavy, pendant leaves was strung out diagonally at each of the top corners of the rectangular frame.

On the occasion of the second visit, the facade of a small store-room placed slightly behind the main dwelling (ill. 215) had been decorated in rectangular areas of red ochre, with white dado, door surround and window-motifs, one of them blank. On the occasion of the third visit, (ill. 216) a yellow dado supported large white mounds at the corners of the building. The window decoration (detail: ill. 217) now consisted of a horn-like branch, ending at one end in a circular head, and at the other in a leaf cluster, and standing on a base of pendant forms similar to those in ill. 214.

A fourth visit was paid in June, 1971. The single plant of the facade had been replaced by a similar pair of smaller plants (ill. 218), while the interior (ill. 219) had been painted with horizontal bands similar to those seen on the occasion of the second visit. The door and window of the small store-room had been decorated with white surrounds (ill. 220). The facade, including the false window, had been given over to plant motifs composed partly of areas of flat colour, and partly of configurations of dots. (details: ills. 221 & 222).

CHAPTER 10 - LIGHT AND DARK

A traditional European notion with regard to tribal painting is that it is concerned with ideogrammatic representation and two-dimensional surface-pattern to the extent of excluding considerations of depth or light values. Far from being neglected, light-values play an important role, but we fail to recognise the fact because, contrary to European habit, their practice is not to submit the objects represented on a surface to a play of light and dark; but to integrate with the work itself the actual conditions of lighting.

In this way, painted motifs and architectural features like windows or doors are positioned not only in relation to their place in the decorative scheme, but also with regard to their effect under the prevailing conditions of light and shade. In ill.223, the bottom edge of the window has been placed along a line where, given the prevailing angle of illumination, the shadow from the eaves will characteristically terminate. Consequently, the window, itself an area of light-absorption, has been located within a greater area of more or less permanent shadow.

Also, the window has been given a darker surround, so that the contrast is not simply between dark hole and light wall, or dark shadow and light wall, but has been extended to include a range of transitional tones running the whole gamut from light to dark; three tones in the shadow area, two in the light, making an interplay of five different tones all concentrated in the immediate vicinity of the window.

Also, the placing of the window within a dark painted area lends the nuance of mystery to the feature, and it is difficult to establish exactly where the window-edge terminates and the wall begins.

If the darkness of the window and the lightness of the wall had been directly juxtaposed, this tonal richness would have been lost.

Certainly there are practical considerations entailed in the high placing of the window: protection from the weather (although this is not an essential consideration), and the benefit of having a permanently shaded opening to the light, but these considerations have been integrated into a unity where the boundary line between practical and decorative ceases to exist.

The Xhosa painter works with a severely limited range of forms and colour, but lends variety to even the simplest designs and colour combinations by this incorporation of the strong lights and shadows of the environment (ills. 224 & 225). The typical colours of the Xhosa monochrome style are so non-committal, so much in the nature of background colours that their appearance is capable of radical alteration under different lightning conditions. Therefore, by subjecting them to light and shade, the number of colours and tones at the painter's disposal has been virtually doubled.

In ills. 224 & 225 these means have been used to give variety to simple, two-toned, symmetrical designs. The strength of the light causes a second design to be superimposed onto the painted scheme which breaks the symmeiry and establishes a balance that is quite independent from the balance of the actual painting.

CHAPTER II - ISIKWENS

To the primitive agriculturist, water must necessarily occupy a prime position in the hierarchy of fertility. The Egyptians thought of it as having life-giving properties (Posener, 1962, p.295), and to them it was an essential feature in the sustenance of life after death. Hence the many scenes in Egyptian tomb-paintings depicting water. In cases where the water is rendered in terms of more than the colour alone, the usual convention is a series of parallel chevron patterns which suggest eternal movement and change.

The Ndebele often indicate water by means of a parallel arrangement of diagonals, but the Xhosa use a single succession of chevrons. Not that all Xhosa painters consciously use it to denote water; sometimes it denotes rocky or mountainous ground, an association due partly to the appearance of the silhouette of a chevron pattern, and partly to the circuitous course that must be taken in traversing such terrain; to many it is simply a vestige, a purely decorative device whose original significance has been forgotten. Its use among the Xhosa and Fingo as a water pattern in mural painting was first drawn to my attention by the daughter of Nomalungelo Hoyi of Qamnyana, and this was substantiated by a study of the meaning of the convention in Xhosa beadwork. A single river is depicted as one band (see Broster, 1967, p.174 & 5), a double river by two chevron bands meeting so as to form a succession of laterally repetitive diamonds. Many rivers flowing over mountainous terrain are depicted as a lateral succession of diamonds interlocking over two registers. Xhosa painters speak of chevron-patterns and zig-zags as "isikwens", but also use the term to describe all of the curved variations of these forms: the regular undulate pattern, which often runs within parallel lines, and all forms of scalloping. All are some of the oldest of decorative forms. The formal succession of chevrons with the parallel arms equidistant from each other, is itself subject to a wide variation of form and treatment (see ill. 226-231).

Ills. 227 & 228, both showing the same façade of a dwelling near Grahamstown, also provide a clear example of the ever-present duality in Bantu painting between permanence and change. Each year the design is altered but the spirit of the form is continuous, right down to the idiosyncrasy of giving the zig-zag a sharper, more acute point where its direction changes in rhythm with the outer framing line. The pattern is used again on the interior (ill.229), but takes on plant-like associations, and is made to fill the role of a centre-piece for a motif of leafy branches.

In ill.230 the chevrons move between parallel lines: the effect is one of two interlocking registers of triangles. The lower register has the greater emphasis because it is painted in a heavier, darker colour, and because the bottom points of the chevrons are allowed to terminate before meeting the framing line, and because on the bottom register, the triangles have been truncated at their apices. The result is to give an effect of uneven terrain. Indeed, the isikwens pattern is also used as a base-line to denote rocky ground out of which plants may grow (ill.232).

In ill.233 it has been incorporated as a water-pattern into a school-taught, child-art style to depict a ship at sea.

As a regular undulate-band in its simplest form, it often flows between parallel lines, and usually incorporates a dot-pattern reminiscent of seed-symbolism (ill.234).

In ill.235 the undulate has become an irregularly pointed meander not aligned to a guiding or framing line, but rising and falling in accord with the door and window. A double-edged scallop pattern occurs near the base, running parallel to a linear dot motif.

In ill. 236, the calligraphic element has been emphasised to the extent that the motif has turned into a hasty scribble, similar in spirit to the gestural forms of Tachisme.

In ill.237 it is again tied to a guide-line, and takes the form of an enrichment to a white door surround, which

is itself framed by an irregular meander of the type sometimes identified as a leaf pattern.

The third type of pattern identified as *isikwens*, the scallop, is again used to enrich the lines of door and window surrounds (ills. 238 & 239). If used in combination with other forms, it is usually with either dot-patterns or flowers, or both (ills. 240 & 241).

Ill. 241 is also noteworthy because it reveals the extent to which a European-type brick-built wall can be made over in the traditional mould simply by applying a layer of daga-plaster over the brick to form a door surround.

Among the Xhosa, it seems, the *isikwens* pattern most often functions architecturally, as a surround for doors and windows. In ill. 242 it frames the door with ochre bands which then resolve themselves into an ifestile motif. It recurs at the corners of the building to articulate, as would a column, the transition from front to side wall. At the back of the dwelling (ill. 243), it is used as part of a blank colonnade, behind which the dark panels of the lower wall seem to recede. The effect is one of a verandah recessed under a superstructure resting on finely-spaced columns.

Among the Sotho, variations of chevron and zig-zag patterns, in keeping with the less fluid, more schematic, more brittle style of Sotho painting are most often found in more formal guise. They are frequently used for decoration surmounting doorways, or for a crowning cornice running the whole length of the façade (ill. 244).

In ill. 245, the scallop occurs as a window surround, and has again been incorporated into the cornice, this time as a secondary motif in relief.

CHAPTER 12 - THE STEP MOTIF

It can be considered as a basic tenet of primitive culture that no single element, no part of or in the culture exists per se and for its own sake, without gaining at least a degree of its identity by its contrast, connection, or other relationship with other objects. "Bantu ontology", according to Placide Tempels (1959, p.68) "is opposed to the concept of individuated things, existing in themselves, [just as] Bantu psychology cannot conceive of man as an individual, as a force existing by itself and apart from its ontological relationship with other living beings and from its connection with animals or inanimate forces around it."

"The world of forces" he believes, "is held like a spider's-web of which no single thread can be caused to vibrate without shaking the whole network... Nothing moves in this universe of forces without influencing other forces by its movement." (1959, p.41).

In this scheme of things, all elements, all parts, all manifestations of the culture have simultaneous interrelationship with other parts on the most disparate levels of association, and depend for their ontological identity on these multifold relationships.

The human animals of the art of the paleolithic and the primeval civilizations were an expression of this philosophy, as are the anthropomorphic plant and tree forms of the Bantu.

To the tribal mind, man is both against and in harmony with nature. This is a duality that finds its most elementary expression in the need for survival. The habitat, therefore, incorporates this duality on both a constructive and an expressive level, and reveals it in a tension of opposites between the organic and the geometric; the first is an admission of the omnipotence of nature, the second an attempt to order it according to the most powerful means for order possessed by man, his intellect. All tribal architecture acknowledges this duality;

among the Xhosa, it leads to two elementary decorative motifs, the tree form of the plastering technique (see p. 18), which symbolises the organic, and the "step" pattern (ill.246) which symbolises man's attempt to control the organic. These patterns are formally and symbolically complementary, and the combination of the two into a single motif is one of the basic devices of traditional Xhosa wall decoration.

In its simplest form the step-pattern is an elongated rectangle in the horizontal position, with each of its corners truncated into ascending or descending successions of right-angled steps, similar to the umraitano motifs of the Ndebele. This is a form which re-iterates the necessary harmony between man and nature; the steps are transitions from vertical to horizontal, a means of bringing them into harmony, just as the capital of a column softens the transition between the vertical of the shaft and the horizontal of the architrave.

In its traditional conformation, the Xhosa step-pattern encloses, symmetrically and harmoniously, a single tree motif, so that the symbol of nature is brought into accord with the symbol of man's control over nature.

Just as the tree motif is realised in relief, so the stepped lozenge is itself realised by a further degree of relief (ill.247) and usually entails a slight projection of the form from the wall surface.

One of the root-designs of Xhosa decoration, it leads to a fairly wide range of descendant variations (ills. 248-251), usually as developments of door and window motifs. In ill.252 the dun ground has been reduced to a series of cruciform lozenges as a result of the step-pattern used in the white door surround.

Among the Sotho, step-patterns are seldom found in lozenge-shaped conformations, but are used as cornice-motifs (ills.253-254), usually in conjunction with chevron patterns.

CHAPTER 13 - THE WINDOW

In the mural-painting of the Xhosa, richness and monumentality of effect is obtained economically, by concentrating what is sometimes a minimal decoration around the basic architectural features of doors and windows (ill.255); the dark interior, with a minimum of openings to the world is, as it were, the nucleus of life. The ritual intercourse that traditionally must take place in the new dwelling by husband and wife before the setting up of house (Schapera, 1956, p.235) is evidence of the strong association that exists between the dwelling and the creation of life; the interior stands in relation to the outside world as does the embryo to the macrocosm; the doors and windows are the orifices to the world (ill.256). It is perhaps significant that the hut (indlu) is known by the name of the woman, so that it may be thought of a female in sex.

Just as the eyes receive special attention in certain aspects of body painting, so the doors and windows are made the focal points of mural design.

In ill. 257, from a dwelling just outside Bathurst, the window is decorated on the exterior so as to reveal its interior function as a light-source, so that an actual pathway of light is indicated as falling from the window. The accuracy of the interpretation can be gauged by comparing it with ill.258.

White, as we have seen, is a colour which primitives generally associate with the spirit world, and the notion of its use to sanctify the passage to the interior is supported by a study of the historical development of the window among the Xhosa; at first, openings to the exterior were kept to a minimum. In 1901, McCall Theal observed with regard to Bantu dwellings that they "were entered by a low narrow aperture, which was the only opening in the structure." (Frazer, 1938, p.347). G.P. Lestrade observed that, typically, at night, "the doors are shut tightly and windows there are none.

Everything must be shut to keep off not only possible evil-doers, but more dangerous still, the evil spirits that go about during the night and get into the huts through any available openings to attack the defenseless inhabitants." (Schapera, 1956, p.127).

Even today, windows in Xhosa dwellings are often inordinately small in relation to the overall dimensions of the dwelling (ill.259). However, their position in the architectural scheme is finely calculated. Here the window has been used as one of a minimal number of decorative elements, and the effect has been achieved by bringing one's sense of scale into play and by contrasting large, plain areas of surface with the emphatic smallness of the window itself. This feeling for proportional contrast and subtlety is the primitive equivalent of the dramatisation of scale-relationships practised by the Romantic-Classic architects of the "Style of 1800".

The tendency to include windows in dwellings has become fairly universal in areas close to towns, so much so that even when, according to practical considerations it has been eliminable, it can still be felt as aesthetically necessary to the structure. This conforms to Haddon's notion with regard to primitive art (1895, p.76) of the replacing of "the useful by the beautiful". (1) Consequently, the framing lines around windows have become motifs of their own accord and are used even when no window occurs (ills.260-267).

(1) In the domestic buildings of the New Kingdom, the Egyptians sometimes included dummy windows and doors to retain the architectural symmetry (see Lloyd, 1963, p.35).

The motif is known as ifestile (Afrikaans-venster). In ill.268 the window has been painted on, and has even been enclosed in what resembles an area of painted shadow, formed by edging the area with a step-pattern, producing what is virtually a light-and-shade effect. This detail is from the same dwelling complex as that in ill. 257, and shows a similar tendency to the symbolic equation of white with light.

The symbolic use of painted architectural features belongs to the era of archaic civilizations. The tombs of the Etruscans sometimes contained painted doors, a notable example being the one at the back of the Tomb of the Augurs at Tarquinii (ill.269), which symbolises the barrier between the land of the living and the land of the dead. (Pallottino, 1952,p.37).

Among the Sotho of the Free State, the door motif is often realised in low relief and then painted. The maker of the door in ill. 270 (ill.271, detail) from a dwelling complex near Vanderbijlpark, was not conscious of any symbolic significance in the use of the motif, although its resemblance to the Etruscan door is noteworthy; the only reason given for its use was to give the illusion that all the huts of the complex had doors facing onto a central courtyard, and so to impart symmetry to the overall arrangement of huts. The actual entrance was placed, as usual, to escape prevailing winds, on one of the secondary sides of the dwelling, and was unaccented. We have seen how at night the Bantu, typically, close the apertures of the dwelling to prevent entry of evil spirits, and this indication of a door, painted in the closed position is like a symbolic sealing off from the outside world, just as the stone doors of Zozer's Necropolis at Sakkara are carved in the open position "to allow his Ka free entry." (Giedion, 11,1962,p.282) Here the window is in the process of being filled in with stones; presumably it will be plastered over at a later date. It illustrates a characteristic found in all ancient art: namely, the retention of an element on a decorative level after it has lost its function. Is the door a vestige of the old Sotho custom, where the dead

are carried out, not through the usual door-way, but through a new, specially made opening? (see Bruwer, 1963, p. 127).

In ill. 272, of a Xhosa dwelling near Blaaukrans Pass, white is again found in proximity to the opening of the window, this time enriched with a blue border which heightens the chromatism of the colours. Evident here is the use of devices to give grandeur to essentially unprepossessing features; in this case it is a window submitted to an heraldic, shield-like effect, achieved simply by continuing the ochre colour of the upper wall downwards by means of a V-shape penetrating the dado, and by separating it from the wall by a linear surround. Simple mathematical ratios are in evidence, as they were in Quattrocento architecture. Here the window area is a square with slightly rounded corners, and a repetition of this motif is implicit in that part of the surround above the V-shape. If one were to joint the highest parts of the diagonals of the V-shape, then the resulting form would be a square which repeats that of the window.

The dimensions of the window itself are repeated in the surround, so that the length and height of the window stands in relation to the large square in the approximate ratio of 1 : 3. The vertical and horizontal distance from the outer edge of the blue framing line to the edge of the window is always roughly equal to the height or breadth of the window itself. As always, however, the rigour of the geometry has been subordinated to the organic flow of the hand-drawn mark; straight lines waver as they echo the irregularities of the wall-surface, the right-angle is oriented toward the curve, and the geometric form takes on the same pliability as the clay and mud medium itself. Further illustrations of the window as heraldic device appear in ill. 273 & 274.

The ability of the Xhosa painter to capitalize on limited resources is evidenced by the manner in which the range of colour, actually very narrow, implies a wider variety than it contains; for example, the ochre colour of the upper wall in ill. 272 is essentially the same as that of the window surround.

But the areas are made to appear differentiated in colour by their respective juxtaposition to a blue or white separating line. This device makes use of the colour-altering and tone-altering effect of flat planes of juxtaposed complementaries as used in a more methodical and sophisticated manner by the optically oriented colour-field painters of the 1960's.

When the window is decorated from the interior, as in ill.275 the painter tends to relate it as a light source to an integral form of symbolic expression. Here the decoration has been used to stress the coolness of the interior by exaggerating the cavernous quality of the window. The illusion has been created that the wall is thicker than it actually is by means of various devices: firstly by placing the frame in an asymmetric relationship with the window; secondly, by the use of a hot orange-ochre on the outside of the framing line, which comes forward in the nature of warm colours, and of a blue on the inner frame which recedes in the nature of cool colours; thirdly, by the use of rhythmic, depth-creating dots which are analogous to the illusionist devices of optical art. The work is a clear example of the creation of depth by means of painted forms; it should help do away with the notion (see p. 64) that Bantu art is limited to "two dimensional decoration" (Grossert, 1969, p.195).

Ill.276, from a building on the same site as the previous example, has various features in common with it. There is the same restriction of the colour range to blue, ochre, and white, and the same tendency to use conformations of dot patterns, although here they are aligned in circles and as such are more akin to the images of Xhosa seed-symbolism (see p.134) than to the abstract space-devices of the previous example. The window and its decoration have been integrated to the structure of the wall by joining the painted frame and the cornice above by means of an inverted trapezoid whose converging lines produce a more linear, less atmospheric space-illusion than that of the previous example.

As can be seen from the detail of this window in ill.277, the edges have been moulded with a tentative varying of the planes to catch the light in differing degrees of intensity; in contrast to the harsh oppositions of light and dark found in more mechanically constructed conjunctions of walls and windows, here the effect is one of a subtle modulation from light to dark; a tension of opposites which begins with the shadow-steeped white of the outside frame, grows complex in the region of the seed-patterns, and then finally resolves itself in the white inner border, which acts as the final passage to the light. This effect would be clarified by removing the wooden window frame, which as usual is additional rather than integral to the structure, and which in fact detracts from the moulded, hand-made quality of the wall itself.

It has been suggested (by W. Battiss) that these circular conformations of dots surrounding a blue centre seem to indicate a fertility symbolism entailing the depiction of breasts; that fertility symbolism is entailed in the use of dots seems evident (see p. 133 to 135), but it is a symbolism of seeds rather than breasts. The circular conformation is itself one of the most ancient symbols of fertility. As Giedion observed (Vol. 1, 1962, p.125), "in the Gestalt of the circle, the sun and fertility become one".

As a source of light, the small, circle-oriented concentration of light that is the Xhosa window is an architectural simile for the sun. The intense glare of light falling from a small window into a dark interior has the effect of creating a halo-like penumbra around the window so that sides which are straight appear to be eroded by a circle of light (ill.278). Plant motifs often grow up the wall as if toward a source of light (see also ill.83).

Giedion observed (Vol.1, 1962, p.151) that in Egyptian art the sun is represented as a circle, itself encircled by a concentric band, and this conformation is common in Xhosa window-designs (ill.279).

The tendency to round off a rectangular window by incorporating it into a circular design is seen again in ill.280. Here the equation is between a window and a fruit-as-fertility-symbol, in this case, according to the painter Nomalungelo Hoyi, s still-life of peach and grapes, whose disc-like forms reinforce the circular motif. The fruit encloses the window like an embryo (see p.143).

The window-as-embryo appears again in ill.281 and 282. In the first case, it is again a rounded version of a rectangular form, and is a typical instance of decoration modifying structure. "Structure", observed Levi-Strauss with regard to primitive art (1968,p.260), "modifies decoration, but decoration is the final cause of structure, which must also adapt itself to the requirements of the former." In each of these examples the circular theme is echoed by a ring of seed-like dots. In ill.283 the window reigns over its dark field like a moon in a night-sky. Again it is a circle surrounded by a concentric band which is truncated by a painted cornice and turned into a cup-like form holding a nucleus of light. Seed dots again appear around the perimeter.

CHAPTER 14 - CONFIGURATIONS OF DOTS.

Configurations of dots as painted symbols occur throughout prehistory. In South Africa they are a common feature of Xhosa painting. Giedion interpreted their use in prehistory (Vol. I, 1962, p. 146) as "another version of the circular symbol", and considered them to be some of the most ancient of all primeval forms (Vol. I, 1962, p. 125).

"In the Gestalt of the circle", he says, "the sun and fertility become one. If we turn to the Egyptian hieroglyphs, we find that they indicate this fusion..." (ibid.). These hieroglyphs make use of dots and discs "as fertility symbols in agriculture. This may be the outcome of a long tradition, which has passed through a transformation process... a transformation from the fertility idol of the hunter [animals and Venus figures] to the fertility idol of the farmer." (ibid.). "They serve to augment and strengthen the appeal for increased fertility." (Giedion Vol. I 1962, p. 151 - see (1))

Several groupings of dots occur in the palaeolithic cavern of El Castillo in Spain. That reproduced in ill. 284 comprises "several rows of ascending dots" (Giedion, vol. I, 1962, p. 146), with two configurations branching out from a central stem.

(1) "Fertility," observed Eric Sharpe (Fertility, 1970, p. 931), "is the principle of life itself. Reproduction, growth, the continuance of vital force is a supreme value in man and plant. Fertility is particularly valued in the agricultural societies. Procreation and growth are the supreme values. Here life depends on earth's fructifying power. The fertility of the crops is the symbol of the fruitfulness of man himself. It's failing is his downfall".

Among the Xhosa, dots are frequently grouped in shapes representing plants. Ills.292 - 295 are from a dwelling near Swartkops (see also ill.285). The painters were three young unmarried sisters, Regina, Gertrude and Joyce Tombentsha. The dwelling consisted of three rooms on the same axis, joined by a common facade. Interspersing the doors and windows were flowers making use of groupings of dots in combination with lines.

Synthetic distemper paint was used here, but in a severely limited range of earth-colours. The lower parts of the wall were arranged in a series of high greenish dados enclosed by scalloped borders (ill.294); the plants were mostly divided into upper and lower portions which coincided with the upper and lower divisions of the wall. Colour juxtapositions were used in an economical way for the greatest possible decorative contrast. In ill.296 & 297 blue and white dots were used against an ochre background to develop a window-motif into a panel extending the whole height of the wall. Here the configuration has been used with a purely decorative intent, and as so often happens in primitive art (see p.127), the symbolic function has been superceded by a more purely formal one.

In ill. 298, even the form of the dots has been attenuated into short blue vertical strokes, varying in length, as casually and as irregularly placed as the marks in a Tachiste painting. In some groupings, fertility symbolism has been superceded by skeuomorphic considerations; on the wall of the dwelling in ill. 299, white dots are interspersed with red and pink crosses. Here they were used as part of a motif which, according to the painter, Notas Tetani, represented woven mats.

CHAPTER 15 - PLANT AND WOMAN

When Picasso was painting his "Demoiselles d'Avignon", he was formulating a style, namely Cubism, which is universally recognised today, as having been influenced by African sculpture. It was part of a movement, widespread in Europe in the early Twentieth Century, concerned with the search for the primeval sources of art.

In the work, Picasso depicted five nudes, and a still-life with grapes and other fruit. Perhaps unconsciously, perhaps in a conscious return to the origins of art, he was in effect marrying the fertility symbol of the hunter, the Venus idol, to the fertility symbol of the agriculturist, the grape of the Dionysiac wine cult, a motif that is also used as a fertility symbol in Xhosa painting (see p. 132).

Geometric symbols, as we have seen (p. 65), tend to be multivalent; Picasso's women and the flower motifs of Bantu painting have a common ability to arouse multifarious associations; throughout his career Picasso painted female portraits and nudes in association with flowers or fruit. Sometimes the formal differences in the treatment of flowers and human features become minimised. (The Flower-trimmed Hat 10th April, 1940; Private Collection, Paris). At other times the woman herself becomes flower-like; in the "Seated Woman" (6th January, 1937; Picasso Collection), fingers sprout like leaves, hair is the colour of grass, the colours are those of flowers. Again, the dual fertility symbols of woman and flower are merged in a synthesis.

As fertility symbols, the geometric plant and flower forms of Xhosa painting are invested with human connotations. In ill. 300, the tree form, identified as such by the painter, Notidile Kali, has a tenuous verticality that is anthropomorphic; it stands on shortened legs, a conventional device of Negro sculpture; it has a head, neck, thoracic region, from which sprout vestigial arms, and a pelvic region which is composed partly of two triangles, the downward-pointing triangle being dominant.

According to L.A. Stone, in prehistoric times a triangle with "the apex pointed downward signified the female" (Giedion, Vol. I. 1962, p. 99). This motif is used again between the legs as the only area which has been painted white. Within the triangle are placed seed-dots, probably signifying fertility (see p. 133).

Plant forms were used as anthropomorphic images by the Bushmen, and by the negroes as far north as Dahomey. Ill. 301 shows a wall decoration from the Palace of Agadja in Dahomey. It is thought to allegorise the king as a pineapple "against whom the lightning can do nothing." (Trowell, 1960, note to Pl. V).

In a Bushman painting from Letsoela, Lesotho (see How, 1970, p. 17), plants grow from roots attached to a common base-line. The plants have shoulders from which sprout symmetrical, leaf-like arms. The stalk of each plant is also a neck, surmounted by a head of leaves. According to How (ibid.) the painting represents "six bush children growing on a tree".

In Europe there are many beliefs connected with man-plants, most strikingly exemplified perhaps in depictions of the mandrake. Even in the "later, more accurate botanical drawings, such as those of Pierandrea Mattioli", the roots of the plant are made to resemble "the trunk and legs of a man or woman." (Huxley, 1970, p. 1717).

For the central figure of the "Demoiselles d' Avignon" Picasso made several studies on the theme of a woman with arms folded above her head (ills. 302 & 303), with the breasts and pelvic area being indicated by means of triangular or rounded forms projecting sideways from the central vertical of the body. In ill. 302, the projections are realised in the arms and breasts, while in ill. 303, Picasso used the alternative convention of projecting the buttocks and arms into triangular extensions; the breasts are still triangular, but remain enclosed within the silhouette of the trunk. Similar conventions can be seen in the plant motif of ill. 304.

The position of the arms is practically identical, and reinforces the anthropomorphic association by enclosing a heart shaped like a simplified face. Breasts and pelvic region are indicated in triangular and rounded projections respectively.

The geometric forms of the Ndebele, it would seem, may also incorporate symbols of anthropomorphised sexuality (ill.306). Prehistoric man often symbolised the female by a representation of the vulva alone. The Egyptian hieroglyphic script "regularly used the pudenda of the female for the word 'woman'." (Posener, 1962, p.260).

In a table formulated in 1958, Leroi-Gourhan categorised the various abstract symbols used through the ages for the vulva and female. One of them is the sexual triangle (Leroi-Gourhan gives examples of both upward and downward pointing triangles). Another category consists of oval forms, which represent what Giedion called the "orifice genital" (Giedion, vol.1, 1962, p. 192). At its most explicit it is an oval pointed at both ends and divided vertically into two parts. The Ndebele sometimes combine both the triangular and ovoid forms into one symbol, as in ill.305 (detail, ill.306), where the forms are again used in association with fertility - dots.

The depiction of phallic symbols was equally widespread in primeval times from the Magdalenian era onward (Giedion, Vol.1.1962, pp.193-203). On the walls of this dwelling are depicted, if not explicit phallic symbols, then at least what seem to be phallic allusions; seen as such the depictions are so specific as to include the circumcised foreskin with the head showing. In each case it is in the dominant male position above passive symbols which are either recumbent (ill. 307), or else are formed like containers with concave sides.

Among the Xhosa, containers, and especially cups, seem to have significance as female symbols. In ill, 308 the cup stands on a saucer, and is juxtaposed with that most basic of all female images, the word "mother".

The motif has been decorated with fertility dots, and shares a common base-line with depictions of trees and plants (ill.309).

The sole example of male mural painting encountered among the Xhosa was at a dwelling in a farm-complex near Bathurst (ill.310). The traditional decoration of quoin motif, cornice, door surround and low border with a surround of isikwens type pattern had been completed by the wife, Nofens Matsala. In the resulting panels, on either side of the door, her husband had drawn on one side a gun, which pointed across the doorway to a heart pierced by an arrow on the opposite side.

No attempt had been made to form a decorative relationship between the motifs and the panels. Instead of acting as monumental or architectural entities, they remain purely narrative in intent.

We have seen how the Bantu male is less conservative than the female, and the imagery employed here is a Europeanised heart-and-arrow symbol for love.

However, Giedion has shown (Vol.1, 1962, p.200) how the feathered shaft of the arrow (the symbol of penetration) was used by Magdalenean hunters to represent male procreative powers. Here it has been fired from a revolver, to the modern Bantu one of the prime symbols of dominance. The heart which the arrow pierces is decorated with fertility-dots. This exterior imagery of love fulfilled is contradicted by that of the interior (ill.311), where the husband had depicted on the back wall of the hut, a "thikoloshe" (uhili) in a similar cartoon-like style, flanked by two flowers. The remainder of the wall had been filled with a repeat-pattern based on the ears of thikoloshe. According to Elliott (1970, p.113), thikoloshe always enters the hut from the back, as he does the cattle kraal. If he is male, as he is here, he is being kept by the woman (ibid.); because of this, he can be a cause of marital strife (ibid.). However, if the husband is wary enough he can capture thikoloshe and use him for his own ends (ibid.).

The feather-motif occurs frequently in Xhosa painting, usually incorporated into a plant symbolism. In ill. 196, the left hand wall of the façade contains what the painter identified as a feather(usiba) flower. In ill. 312 to 314 the arrow and shaft is incorporated in a plant design extending over the whole façade, and has been monumentalised by framing the forms within rectangular panels that echo the lines of the architecture. The windows, the chimney-stack, the wall, all become pictorial components in a integrated architectural-pictorial totality.

The base of the chimney-stack becomes simply another coloured rectangle; a window becomes the centre of a leaf-pattern; certain panes in the windows have been painted in the lighter of the two greys used in the composition, so that there is the tendency to stress the window as a pictorial object at the expense of its function.

A similar pictorialising of architectural features was evident in the façade of a nearby dwelling (ill. 315). The window tends to become a patchwork of coloured rectangles surrounded, like the door, by isikwens patterns. On either side of the doorway, two panels in white reach from ground to cornice (ills. 316 & 317) and repeat the rectangle of the door. Each panel contains two highly simplified figures, aligned symmetrically on either side of a central feature; in one panel, a boy and girl on either side of a central flower; in the other, boy and girl confront each other on either side of a vase. The girl holds out a cup, which to the Xhosa is a symbol of female receptivity (see p. 138); into this the boy is about to place a ball-like object. Both the vase and the flower are raised on triangular blue mounds.

This heraldic type of composition, with figures facing each other on either side of a central feature (very often a sacred tree or plant), raised on a base, is a type that is frequently encountered in the ancient world. It seems first to occur in Mesopotamia, where it takes the form of a sacred tree on the primeval mound.

CHAPTER 16 - TREE AND MOUND

In the earliest representations the mound generally takes a triangular form, with the tree growing from its apex. In an Akkadian cylinder seal impression (ill.318), mythological figures are placed heraldically on either side of a sacred tree surmounting a "mountain symbol" (Piggott, 1961, p.74).

In ancient Scandanvian mythology, the sacred oshtree Yggdrasill (ill.319), is represented as standing on a triangular base which signifies the world below (Grimal, 1965, p.57), the equivalent of the primeval mound. The tree itself is a link between heaven and earth (ibid.).

In a Neo-Assyrian cylinder seal impression (ill. 320), two kings, supported by winged, eagle-headed figures, approach a sacred tree. The tree stands on a triangular base, and extends its branches toward the God Assur, shown above in a winged sun-disc (Garbini, 1966, p.45). Again the tree links heaven and earth, and this function is indicated by the circular disc at the top of the tree. In the Albany district, plants with similar features, with a triangular base and surmounted by a circular form occur frequently (ills.321, 11, 83, 232). A variation on this motif is to replace the base triangle with a larger circle, sometimes enclosing fertility dots (ills.322, 323).

A detail from the Sumerian stele of Ur-Nammu (ill. 324) shows the King making a libation before the goddess Ningal (Parrot, 1960, p.228). The sacred mound has become a vase or basin from which the plant sprouts like water from a fountain. In a plaque from Telioh (ill.325) depicting a libation before Ninkhursag (Parrot, 1960, p.133) the sacred mound has become an altar, the tree has again become a plant in a vase.

In Neo-Assyrian times, the plant tends to become more formal, more column-like. The sacred tree becomes the pillar of life (ill.326); by Mycenaean times the sacred mountain has become the altar of the Lion-Gate at Mycenae, again surmounted by a sacred column.

The transference from plant to architecture is complete. The theme of the plant subordinated to the form of a column is also a feature of Ndebele painting (ill.327).

All these variations, from tree or plant growing from the apex of a triangular base, to the column endowed with symbolic significance (ills.68 & 69) can be seen to exist in Bantu mural painting.

In ills. 328 and 329 the base is a raised triangle with a slightly rounded apex, similar in form to those used in Akkadian cylinder seals (ill.318).

In ill.330 symmetrically placed plants grow diagonally from a triangular base, the earth, into the dun grey ground which is often equated with the sky. The plants reach toward circular forms which are like moons or suns. Again, the tree is depicted here as a symbolic contact between heaven and earth.

In ill.331 the two tallest trees have triangular bases and stand tall in a sky spotted with star-like or seed-like dots. In ill.332, the triangular base is hardly differentiated from its base line. In ill.333 the tree still rests on a triangle, but has been further elevated onto a platform supported by three vertical piers forming a double arch. The tripartite base is also used by the Ndebele (ill.334, see also note to ill.413), and as such is one of a number of conventions which point toward a common origin for the two main styles of Nguni painting.

In ills. 335 - 338, the plant stands between mounds. The painter of the first example said that it represented a plant seen against the sky, growing from the ground between two stones. In ill.321, the triangular mound is part of a zig-zag motif, but is differentiated by its darker colour.

When the mound becomes inverted, the tree is shown as though growing out of a vase (ills. 339-342), representing a transference to a "still-life" style similar to that noted above in Mesopotamian art.

Abstract representations of plants growing from vases and pots are common in Ndebele painting (ills. 343 & 344). Many of the "hanging lanterns" of the Ndebele are actually plants growing from a vase (ill. 345).

The base can also take a rectangular form similar to the altars supporting columns or trees in Sumerian and Mycenaean depictions (ill. 346).

Probably connected with the tree and earth-mound theme are the depictions of flowers which are shown growing from a root-like nucleus (ills. 347 - 350). Sometimes the nucleus is isolated, and becomes a motif of its own accord. In ill. 351 it becomes egg-like in form, like an embryo enclosing a nucleus of seeds. In ills. 352 and 353 the plant is shown as it would appear when only just above ground; the nucleus produces large, triangular leaves, like butterflies' wings. Also connected with this theme are abstract representations composed of triangles or diamonds on a triangular mound (ill. 354). The simplest form that this scheme can take is that of two triangles joined vertically at their apices; in each of the examples shown in ills. 355 - 357 the forms were identified by the painters as flowers or plants.

Two further triangles added horizontally to the scheme at their apices result in the cruciform plant which, with its variations, is one of the most widely used motifs among the South-eastern Bantu (ills. 358-360, 177, 179).

These similarities that are evident in the imagery of modern Bantu and ancient art encourage speculation as to whether they are the result of actual contact in the past, or whether they are due to the power of the "collective unconscious". Are they the archetypal images, the emanations of "that part of the psyche which retains and transmits the common psychological inheritance of mankind"? (Jung, 1964, p. 107).

The interacting symbols of plant and mound, reed matting and cattle-horns are found throughout the ancient world, and have their origin in a "ritual of tillage and the pastures." (Levy, 1963, p.89). In Egypt, western Asia, Greece, Malta and Crete, these images were integrated at a very early stage with a belief in the sacred nature of the cattle-byre. The cattle horns of the ixhanti (see p. 8, ill. 2) relate to the horned gates of Egypt and Mesopotamia. The link between the horns of herd-animals and the tree of life has been clarified by G. Levy (1963, p.100). She also pointed out how "Sumerian cow-heads, like the sacred calf of Egypt, had a triangle between the horns... which afterwards stood as an upright cone or little mountain between the horns of Syrian altars." (ibid.). The plants or reed-bundles surmounting the sacred hut in Sumerian symbolism often show remarkable similarities with the motifs of Xhosa mural decoration (see Levy, pls.10 a & b). A pedestal from an altar in the temple of Hagiar Kim, Malta (see Levy, p.136), is engraved with a sacred tree consisting of a vertical trunk and symmetrically arched boughs, which is identical to one of the most commonly-found umthi-motifs in the Eastern Cape.

Furthermore, the writings of antiquity contain many references to the contact between the peoples of the ancient Near East and the Negro states to the South. The practice of circumcision was common to both Egyptians and Negroes. With regard to the practice, Herodotus noted: "As between the Egyptians and the Ethiopians, I should not like to say which learned from the other." (quoted: Davidson, 1966, p.21). According to Herodotus, the Egyptians circumnavigated Africa, and established a settlement on the coast. "The first person who proved that Libya was surrounded by sea," he says, was "Necho, King of Egypt. When he had desisted from his attempt to join by a canal the Nile with the Arabian Gulf....he dispatched some vesselsunder the conduct of Phoenicians with directions to pass by the columns of Hercules, and after penetrating the Northern Ocean to return to Egypt.

These Phoenicians, taking this course from the Red sea entered the Southern Oceanthey stopped in Libya, and in the third year of their voyage doubled the columns of Hercules and returned to Egypt." (quoted McKay, 1911, p.5).

Even since the Nineteenth Century, writers have speculated on the supposed cultural connections between the South-eastern Bantu and the people of the ancient Near East (sae Holden, 1866, p.2). Soga believed that the religion of the Xhosa "has come to him through Asiatic sources; either through the Hamites, of whom the Bantu race is an offshoot, or through Arabs who colonised the east coast of Africa from Somaliland in the north down to Sofala in the south." (Soga, 1931, p.145).

Not that there is any real evidence in Bantu culture of direct Egyptian, Phoenician or Mesopotamian influence. What Bantu mural decoration has in common with the art of the ancient Near East it also has in common with iron-age cultures and the clay cultures of the Neolithic: two-dimensionality of form, severe rectilinearity of composition, and the geometric abstraction of the motif depicted.

The description by Lloyd and Safar of the Painted Temple at Ei Uquair could be that of the decoration of a modern Bantu dwelling: "First came a band of plain colour, usually some shade of red, forming a dado about one metre high all around the room. Above this there would be a band of geometric ornament about 30 cm. high." (Giedion, vol. II, 1962, p.410).

Giedion observed that the mud-brick buildings of Mesopotamia were "often solidly decorated with rich colours, enabling the base material with which they were formed to be forgotten." (Giedion, vol. II, 1962, p.212). In the case of Bantu painting, the "base material" is not forgotten, but is incorporated as one of a number of colouristic elements.

In its own right, South Africa was the site of mature Iron Age cultures.

"Almost the whole of South Eastern Africa was enclosed with Iron-Age states formed by Bantu-speaking peoples...By at least 1400 the community of Iron-Age Ideas and structures reached from the fringes of the Sahara to the Antarctic-facing shores of Southern Africa." (Davidson, 1966, p.172).

Pottery, easy to transport, may have reached Southern Africa from archaic civilizations like the Sumerians, Phoenicians or Egyptians. In Rhodesia and the Northern Transvaal, remains have been discovered of Greek and Phoenician handicraft (McKay, 1866, p.6).

The decorations of these peoples have something in common with Bantu art, distinct from the decorative schemes of the Mincans or the Oceanians; namely, their tendency to rectilinearity. The two basic decorative motifs of archaic cultures are the rectangle and the spiral. The first signifies the static, the second implies continual flux. The first belongs to peoples of the great land masses, the second to the peoples of the islands, the ever present witnesses to the movements of the oceans.

Nevertheless, the art of all these cultures has a tendency to abstraction. According to Germain Bazin, abstract art first appears in the Mesolithic Age, and "is contemporary with the birth of the agricultural civilizations". (Bazin, 1962, p.18).

CHAPTER 17 - TRIBAL PAINTING AND THE WEST

The question has often arisen as to whether or not the Negro did in fact reach a level of culture which could be described as civilization. If the birth of civilization is co-incident with the birth of writing, then certain facts point to an affirmative answer, at least in certain instances: the Bambara had an alphabet of 264 main symbols; the Dogon had a "male alphabet of twenty-two families of twelve elements, and each covering a series of twenty-two pairs of signs." (Huyghe, 1962, p.81).

Nevertheless, less than a hundred years ago, far from being considered as manifestations of culture, the artistic works of tribal peoples were regarded as little more than ethnological curiosities, devoid of any real sensibility. "It is surprising how little artistic talent the Kaffirs show" wrote Dudley Kidd (1904, p.331), except for "the occasional attempt at drawing on the walls of some progressive Kaffir." In 1895, A.C. Haddon (p.195) expressed the belief that "primitive peoples have to be taught to see beauty in nature, and it is very doubtful if the elegance of the form of flower or leaf appeals to them." However, at more or less the same time, Gauguin, steeped in Marquesan art was painting his last works (see Goldwater, 1969, p.30); twelve years later, Picasso's "Negro" paintings inaugurated a phase in Western art which was based largely on a will to recapture something of the spirit of the primitives; with the Cubists it was African Negro and Oceanian art; with Brancusi, Cycladic art; with Moore, Aztec. Kandinsky, Larionov and Gontcharova all began as students of primitive Russian folk art.

In the second half of the Twentieth Century, geometric abstraction inherited the traditions of Mondrian and Kandinsky, but attempted to extend their limitations by an extreme refinement and attenuation of their means. Nevertheless, this movement continues to reaffirm not only its early Twentieth

Century antecedents, but also the schematic simplicity of tribal painting. "The sophisticated images of contemporary formalisation" and the "bold patterns and strong forms of tribal art", observed James Burr (1970, p.387), can be "disconcertingly" similar.

For instance, a comparison of ill. 361, 363 & 365 with ill. 362, 364 & 366 respectively will show that certain formal correspondences exist. In ill. 365 and 366 a similarity of formal theme is evident, namely the rhythmic parallelism of triangles of decreasing area but sharing a common shape and base line. Stylistic differences there are: the architectural symmetry of the first, the lack of it in the second, the hand made, rough-hewn quality of one as opposed to the mechanical treatment of the other; but there is a mutual trust in minimal geometric schemes as a sufficient vehicle for expression.

In ill. 363 and 364, the correspondences are obvious on even a superficial level because of the common choice of theme. In both, the central area is given over to a circular motif in orange and white against a dark background; in each case there is the potential infringement of contrasting rectilinear motifs peripheral to the circular form. The most important differences between the works is not their outer form, but what they stand for. In ill. 364, the circle has all the manifold associations ascribed to it by the primitive mind - the sun, fertility, the organic continuity of nature; in ill. 363 all marginal symbolic associations have been eliminated to a minimal content of nothing more than the interplay of the forms themselves. Alongside this work even a Mondrian would appear complex, both in subject and in the number of parts.

In ill. 361 and 362, the similarities are not as obvious, but the formal correspondences are, if anything, stronger.

In both instances a central yellow area is framed along the greater part of its boundary by two darker tones: red and black in one, red and dark-blue in the other. In both cases there is an inward thrust toward a central axis, and a consequent mutual modification of direction because of this thrust.

Again there is a symbolic association in the tribal work that is lacking in ill. 361, in this case an association of negative, concave forms with the female principle (see p. 138)

In ill. 361, breathing-space is given to the motif by the addition of the white that occurs before the conjunction of the forms; in ill. 362 it is given by an area of white interspersed between the yellow centre and its dark frame. In ill. 365 and 366 it is the rhythmic parallelism of decreasing triangles.

As a universal language, painting reveals correspondences between styles that are otherwise unrelated and even alien to each other. Ill. 367, a detail from a peripheral wall at the Mapoch Village near Pretoria, has a format similar to that of a medieval triptych with movable side wings in the open position. The receding blue plane in "accidental" perspective corresponds to the top of an altar slab; the flower motif above the central panel corresponds to the form and placing of the altar-crucifix. In each panel ascendant forms rise into a sky above the orb of the earth. The central panel contains as its central feature an upward-pointing arrow in white (the colour of the biblical Transfiguration), enclosed in a gothic arch, and making at least a formal correspondence with the ascension motif of Christian art.

The strong, black binding lines controlling vivid colour-areas, the schematic drawing, the formal simplicity, are all stylistic elements that recur in the search that Georges Rouault has made for the primeval origins of Christian art.

To an eye accustomed to Western space-representation, the diagonals of Ndebele painting often have the effect of receding lines as used in traditional geometric perspective (ill. 368).

In many phases of both Oriental and Occidental art depth is indicated largely by capitalising on the contrasts of diagonals with verticals and horizontals. The diagonal, by its very nature, stands for movement, either across a surface or in depth. In Quattrocento painting, the most telling diagonal lines are those which indicate the receding side of a form.

In ill. 368, diagonals lead one's eye across the level plane of the blue foreground, and then bring one back abruptly to the picture-plane by means of the grey house-and-window motif. Flanking this on either side are two more houses, placed farther away, again approached by a level plane, each with its own separate perspective.

The sensation of the relative proximity and distance of the central and flanking forms is clearly rendered by the contrast of large and small, and by a convention, reminiscent of Egyptian art, which calls for objects which are nearer to one to be situated at a lower point in the painting than those which are farther away.

The fact that these conventions employing diagonals seem similar to those of traditional Occidental art is only co-incidental to the fact of the Bantu's awareness of the depth-creating potential of diagonal lines.

In ill. 369, the painter has used the corner of the wall to effect the image of a plant disposed three-dimensionally in space. This is a convention reminiscent to that used in Byzantine mural decoration where changes of plane in the wall-surface are utilised to create an actual space across which figures confront each other (see Demus, 1948).

Examples of foreshortening are found in Xhosa art. In traditional designs leaves grow out symmetrically from a central stem, or else are confined wholly to one side of the stem as though shown in profile. In ill. 370, however, the traditional configurations have been replaced by irregularly-placed leaves whose forms seem conditioned solely by an attempt to render an effect of leaves situated in depth. The forms of the leaves are exceptionally assymetrical. None are represented as identically formed on both sides of their axes. Forms bulge as the fullness of the plane is presented, then recede again as their planes turn away.

The best Ndebele wall decorations sometimes recall the geometric purity of Third Style Roman painting. Following on the airy, spatial illusions of the Second Style, which virtually stripped the wall surface of materiality, the painters of the Third Style saw fit to re-emphasise the wall's solidity by making it opaque again. To achieve this, they minimised the perspective effects, and in the simplest of the paintings stressed the two-dimensional rectilinearity in a way that sometimes has affinities with Ndebele wall-decoration.

Ills. 371 and 372 are respectively Roman Third Style and Ndebele, yet a sensibility pervades the works which is so similar as to seemingly negate the great racial, temporal and geographic distance which separates them. Both works achieve a purely geometric balance of rectangle against rectangle, and a play of colours, whose significance is purely visual. In both works, the cool, receding blues of the lower portions have been juxtaposed with adjacent areas of warm red-browns, which seem to advance in the manner of warm hues, but which are held back on the wall by the severe rectilinearity of their format. In both walls the central area is flanked with structural devices which, after the abstractions of the main theme, re-emphasise for the viewer the architectural context which contains them. In the first example this is achieved by the introduction of shallow perspective views opening onto an open doorway, in the second by the introduction of a brick motif which reiterates the structural process of the wall itself.

CHAPTER 18 - THE BUSHMAN INFLUENCE.

Before the Twentieth Century, the Bantu were continually made aware of the proximity of the Bushmen, and were influenced by them both racially and culturally. Although they no longer make engravings on rocks, the Bantu seem to have taken over the practice from the Bushmen, and "some of the last rock paintings and engravings" can be "confidently ascribed" to the Bantu (Clark, 1959, p. 257).

In both Bushman and Bantu painting, configurations of dots, related to what seems to be a fertility symbolism, occur in association with plant and tree forms. In a Bushman painting from the Matopo Hills in Rhodesia (water-colour copy by Frobenius, 1962, pl. 136), a tree stands above a roughly oval shape enclosing dots. A male figure strides toward it, and turns to glance at a female kneeling behind him. Her arms, raised like branches above her head, establish formal and symbolic correspondence with the limbs of the tree. Root-and-plant conformations (see Frobenius, 1962, pls. 42 and 43) are also found in Bushman art.

At several sites, engravings can be found which are similar to some of the forms in Bantu painting. Ill. 373 reproduces a detail from one of the photographs taken by Duggan-Cronin of the "Roches Moutonnées" at Driekop Eiland on the Lower Riet River. Wilman (1933, p. 114) observed that only the more recent engravings here show up to any effect, and several designs are distinguishable that are similar to those used in modern Bantu mural painting. The plant-like motif, for example at the bottom-right, with its leaves indicated only to one side of the stem (resembling the pectiforms of the Magdalenian age, see Giedeon, vol. I, 1962, p. 37), is found quite frequently among the Xhosa (ill. 83, 199). The circular form at the top right, with its centre marked by a dot, is again one of the stock decorative forms of Xhosa painting (see

ills.277, 438). (1). The grid-pattern in a rectangle at the top centre is found in Ndebele painting (ills. 131 & 132). In Natal there are sandstone engravings of Zulu kraals which are "clearly the work of Zulus" (Clark, 1959, p.277).

(1) The connection between concentric circular forms and fertility was widely recognised in the ancient world; in Crete, the ceremonial altar of the Palace of Mallia consists of a circular platform marked by two rings of concentric depressions. Placed near the outer edge of the circle and running entirely around it are thirty-four cupules, in the hollows of which "seeds or crops were probably consecrated, with prayers for continuing fertility." (Bowman, 1970, p.19). Seen from above, each cupule would appear together with its seed or seeds, as a dot or dots surrounded by a circle.

CHAPTER 19 - HUMAN AND ANIMAL FIGURES.

A basic difference between Bantu and Bushman painting is the scarcity of representations of animals or human figures in the former, and the notable dependence on them in the latter. Among modern tribal Bantu, at any rate, representations of animals and human beings are rare. Birds are sometimes depicted (ill.374), insects (ill.375), turtles, lizards and fish (ill.376); this last example was on a part of the wall adjacent to the upper doorway, and was "answered" on the opposite side by a pale green cross (ill.377). It was identified as an emblem of the church. Are these not the complementary images of primitive Christian symbolism, as evidenced in late antique and early medieval art? If so, it is a fairly obvious instance of the missionary influence in Bantu art.

According to the painter, the work in ill.378 represented a tortoise (ufudo). The diamond-shaped centre, with appropriate markings represented the shell. Instead of limbs, the head has been repeated on each of the corners, and by indicating the four cardinal directions suggests the animals capacity for free, unfettered movement about the environment.

Human figures occur seldom; frontal and profile views are used, and composite views where profile and frontal characteristics are combined. When shown frontally (ill.379) the masses have an approximate symmetry on either side of an implied central axis; features are so schematic as to recall certain conventions in early Medieval painting. Here, the hat, decorated with isikwens pattern, surrounds the head like a Byzantine halo.

In ill.380, the figure is shown in profile yet is presented as a frontal figure, with a helmet-shaped headdress giving a profile complementary to that of the features. The arm and breast weigh equally on either side of the central axis. The bottom half of the body is seen frontally. The skirt (ill.381) is decorated with the dots and discs reminiscent of fertility symbolism.

Obvious correspondences exist between this type of figure and those used in processional compositions in archaic times. Ill. 382 shows a detail from the "Warrior Vase" found at Mycenae. Again the body is shown in profile, yet has been frontally aligned by giving equal pictorial weight to front and back profiles. Again only one arm is shown. Again the skirt is decorated with configurations of dots.

A great proportion of figure-representations are made by the younger members of the family who have not yet reached maturity, and who remain, therefore, relatively unfettered by notions of traditional subject-matter or style. Their drawings tend to be sketch-like in nature (ill. 383), without formal relationship with the wall, and are virtual instances of tribal graffiti.

Traditional Bantu painting gains much of its *raison d'être* by establishing a relationship with the wall that is monumental and architectural, whereas the works in the category under discussion are notable for their lack of formal relationship with their setting. Because of the strong formal bias of adult Bantu painting, the subject is only half-way contributory toward the image. With the youth, however, the subject tends to be emphasised at the expense of formal distribution.

In ill. 384 the subject matter consisted of domestic still-life elements, complete with chair and table spread for a meal. On the top of the table and the seat of the chair are placed food bowls. The relative proportions in this work result not from the disposition of painted forms around the architectural foci of door and window, but from sentiments intrinsic and exclusive to the meaning of what is represented. The top of the table is reduced to the height of the seat of the chair, the food bowls loom inordinately large, and reveal the strong emotional reaction to the subject on the part of the painter. The chair, symbolising the active elements of desire and anticipation, contrasts with the diminished scale of the table which symbolises what is actually available. Also noteworthy is the fact that the food bowl

associated with the chair, i.e., with expectancy, is significantly more telling than those associated with the table. The work, with its emotional sense of scale, is a convenient example of how the stomach can condition the way of seeing (see Kupka, 1965, p.89).

The figure in ill. 385 was painted onto the exterior wall of a store-room in an Ndebele dwelling complex near Pretoria. By way of expressing the function of the building, it depicts an old woman (indicated by the long skirt) one hand on her hip, in the characteristic attitude of the maize-grinder.

The figure was repeated as part of a decorative scheme on the interior of the dwelling (ill.386). She stands in a landscape of trees, while a large vase with handles, shaped rather like a Greek kylix, floats in the space above. Also integrated as a pictorial element in the scheme was an oval wooden plaque, with a white painted figure of a man shown partly from the front and partly in profile. The figures in these last two examples were the work of a young boy who had learned to draw in a "school-art" style; hence the informal, improvisational disposition of forms, and the use of mixed media; white clay, wood, green enamel. The irregularities of the surface of the wall were emphasised to good effect by the glossy paint, so that the single tone of green was modulated and broken up into a variety of tones, with the light reflected from the surface in varying degrees of intensity. Here tonal variation is achieved, albeit unintentionally, not by modulation of the medium, but by capitalising on the reflective quality of enamel.

In the past, depictions of humans and animals seem to have been equally rare in Bantu painting. The walls of Sinosee's house at Kurrechane (ill.3, p.14) were painted with representations of giraffes, elephants and other animals.

Stow observed several instances of mural decoration with animal motifs among the Tswana and Sotho. "The wife of Salakutu," he says, "had decorated the walls of her house with a series of paintings, being rough representations of the

camelopard, rhinosceros, elephant, lion, tiger [sic.] and steenbok. These were done in white and black paint." (Stow, 1905, p.435).

He further observed that "these cases are unique in the several tribes, where they occur, viz. among the Batlapin, the Bahurutsi, and Bakuena of Moshesh, all widely separated from each other and whose national mode of painting, when they indulge in it, is confined to the representations of lines, spots, lozenges, curves, circles and zig-zags" (ibid.). He then speculates on whether this attempt to represent animal life "in these isolated cases" was "a spontaneous development in the artists whose handiwork they were, or whether, as was frequently the case in those days, these men had taken Bushman wives, or were half-caste descendents of Bushman mothers, and thus the hereditary talent displayed itself in their new domiciles among people of either the Bachoana or Basutu race." (Stow, 1905, pp. 435-6).

According to Walton (1965, pp.30-1), the above-mentioned peoples, the Tlapin, Hurutsi and Kuena were among the first in South Africa to make mural decorations; together with the Pedi, they constructed some of the earliest rondawel-type dwellings. "Xhosa decoration originated" says Walton (1965, p. 35), "when the use of the rondawel-type hut spread from the Sotho to the Nguni." Old-time Xhosa huts, it is true, were of grass bound to a beehive-type wooden framework (ill.387); but even these huts were plastered inside for part of their height (Duggan-Cronin, van Warmelo, Bennie, 1939, note to pl. XIV); as we have seen, Xhosa decoration is as much an interior as an exterior art; moreover, there is evidence (ill.388) to suggest that the Xhosa will decorate whatever plaster surface is available. To claim that the Xhosa practiced no mural decoration before the introduction of the rondawel hut is tantamount to claiming that before this he did not know the use of the plastered wall-surface as a ground for painting. Xhosa art is, after all, attuned to the decoration of minimal surface areas (see p. 74, ill.73 & 74), so there is little reason to suppose that mural decoration is not indigenous to the Xhosa.

Also, the best examples of decoration by Xhosa speaking peoples occur not among those in closest proximity to the Sotho, but among those at the farthest western point of Xhosa habitation, where Khoisan rather than Sotho influence would seem the greater probability.

Rather than being coincident with the adoption of the rondawel from the Sotho, as Walton claims the origin of Xhosa mural decoration lies further in the past. The similarity of certain motifs in Xhosa and Ndebele mural art suggests a common source for the two main styles of Nguni painting. Cross-cultural influences there may well have been, but the images revealed in Bantu pottery, beadwork, body-painting and mural decoration all suggest that each people carry their images within themselves, that each draw from primeval sources, perhaps from the unconscious, an imagery that preserves and propagates the living and evolving heritage of primeval man. For the tribal being, the primeval world is the world that is in the making.

NOTES TO ADDITIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS

Ill. 389. Sotho dwelling near Vanderbijlpark.

The decoration is limited to the framing of the facade and door with grey, a stepped relief in diminishing courses in black and white, and slightly raised, scalloped window surrounds which have the effect of black and white petals.

Ill. 390. Wall of a Zulu dwelling near Witbank.

Here the step patterns found in Xhosa and Ndebele decoration have been resolved into an overall pattern covering the entire wall-surface. The lower part of the wall is glazed with a transparent grey wash. The effect is reminiscent of Paul Klee's "Musical squares."

Ills. 391 & 392 Details from the wall of an Ndebele dwelling at Brakfontein, showing the typical method of effecting the transition, by means of an octagon, between the rectangular frame of the panel and the stepped motif (umraitono) of 'first phase' Ndebele decoration. The interior of the first stepped motif is decorated with a Y-shaped, tripartite leaf design similar to that found in Xhosa painting (see ill. II). It was described as a flower (libala) surmounted by a moon (inyezi).

Ill. 393 Detail from the wall of an Ndebele dwelling near Smalpoort. (see ill. 128).

Ill. 394 Detail from the courtyard wall of an Ndebele dwelling at the Mapoch Village near Pretoria; the motif was described as a pot standing on a base and covered by a lid.

Ill. 395 Ndebele dwelling near the Mapoch Village.
A further variation of the cruciform stepped motif in an octagon, which is now extended into a single panel covering the whole wall. Note the similarity between the flanking flowers and the pot of the previous illustration.

Ill. 396-399) Further variations of the simple door surrounds of Xhosa dwellings near Grahamstown.

- Ill.400 Xhosa store-room near Blaaukranz Pass.
- Ills.401-403. Raised entrance platforms of Xhosa dwellings, probably derived from the custom of placing mats at the doorway.
- Ill.404 Band of diamond motifs ringing a dwelling near Assegai Bush.
- Ills.405-407 Details of interior near Shaw Park, decorated in a Europeanised, school-art version of the flower style.
- Ill.408. Detail of an interior near Martindale; the weakly formed embryonic spirals of the upper part of the wall indicate the Xhosa painter's lack of familiarity with this motif.
- Ill.409. Xhosa wall-decorations at Nonibe Bantu Village near Kingwilliamstown.
- Among the "school" people, wall-painting tends to be paler, less earthy, more artificial. Shop-bought powder colours result in pale tones without real contrast.
- Ill.410. Xhosa: detail of the side wall of the structure shown in ill.312-4. The restriction of colour to the main facade and the monochrome treatment of the lateral walls are reminiscent of Ndebele procedures.
- Ill.411. Xhosa: ifestile motif from the interior of a dwelling near Blaaukranz Bridge.
- Ill.412. Xhosa: pointille design from a dwelling near Manley Flats, of a type that articulates the transition from frontal to side walls.
- Ill.413. Ndebele: detail from a dwelling at Smalpoort, showing a further example of the plant on a tripartite base and an ifestile motif surmounted by a pediment. The strong similarity between the tree on the left and that in ill.333 seems to leave little doubt as to the common origin of Xhosa and Ndebele mural decoration.

- Ill.414. Xhosa: detail from a dwelling near Coega.
Another example of a plant on a rectangular base (see p. 143).
- Ill.415 Xhosa: detail from a dwelling near Uitenhage, showing variations of the plant and mound theme (see p. 141). Some plants grow from mounds, others from the base line; the mounds themselves are decorated with foliage.
- Ill.416 Xhosa dwelling near Blaaukranz Pass: another variation of the plant growing from a triangular mound (see pp. 141 - 2).
- Ills. 417 & 418 Xhosa: details from an interior near Blaaukranz Bridge. Each plant grows from a base which is an inverted triangle (see p. 142).
- Ills. 419 & 420 Xhosa: further details from the same interior, showing plants growing from rectangular bases.
- Ill.421 Xhosa: Interior of a dwelling near Langholm; variations on the theme of a plant on a triangular base. A segmental ifestile-motif replaces the completed circle of ill. 321 , but at the same time alludes to the circular window as a source of light, i.e. as a symbol of the sun (see. p. 131) A characteristic feature of Xhosa interiors is that the upper parts of the poles supporting the roof are painted to harmonise with the mural decoration.
- Ills. 422-4 Xhosa: Windows from dwellings in the Albany district.
- Ill.425 Xhosa: façade of a hut in Belmont Valley.
- Ill.426 Xhosa: interior near Bathurst, with ifestile-motif, V-shaped transitional motif articulating the change from one wall to another. Integrated into the scheme is a collage-panel of photographic images.
- Ills.427 & 428 Xhosa: façades of dwellings in the Albany district, providing further examples of decoration confined to echoing the lines of the basic architectural features (see p. 70).

- III.429 Xhosa: detail from interior at Etheldene rose-bush motif (see also ill.187).
- III.430. Xhosa: detail of a dwelling at Etheldene; flower shaped like a windmill (see p. 112).
- III.431. Xhosa: detail of a dwelling near Swartkops; plant motif.
- III.432 Xhosa: interior of a dwelling near Shaw Park.
 The main decoration is confined to a panel across the wall. A central division, perhaps an allusion to a pathway of light (see p. 126), acknowledges the placing of the window. The isikwens pattern at extreme right was identified as a flower. The small rectangular panels flanking the central division were identified as ifestile-motifs.
- III.433 Xhosa: detail of the same interior near Shaw Park, utilising the convention of mirror-images on either sides of both axes (see p. 66).
- III.434 Xhosa: from a dwelling-complex near Coega; cross and heart patterns, described as flowers with dots "like seeds".
- III.435 Xhosa: from a dwelling-complex near Coega.
- III.436 Xhosa: near Blaaukranz Pass; variations on the maize-plant and mound themes (see p.143);
 most mural decoration is done at Christmas time.
- III.437 Xhosa: from a dwelling near Peddie.
- III.438 Xhosa: detail from the interior of a dwelling near Manley Flats.
- III.439 Xhosa: detail from the same dwelling; a circular head with headdress.
- III.440 Xhosa: near Assegai Bush: sketches on ground of the type made prior to painting.
- III.441 Ndebele: detail from a dwelling near Smalpoort, a tree form of the type similar to that of the Xhosa plastering technique (see ill.14), a comparison that supports the claim for the common origin of Xhosa and Ndebele decoration.

III.442 Xhosa: interior at Kitale Farm, near Blaaukranz Pass. Walton (1956, pp. 142-3) has shown how in recent times, because of European influence, the Bantu rondawel has undergone several variations; in this case the hut was built on a half cone-on-cylinder frame which formed the terminating room of a complex, the remaining rooms of which were on rectangular ground plans. These latter were left to decay when the inhabitants moved to another farm, thus revealing a partial section of the remaining half rondawel (for original appearance of complex see ill. 80). This section reveals how the central hearth (iziko) of the old beehive-type hut, originally placed between twin supporting poles (iintsika), is in the rondawel placed slightly to the right (the man's side) of the now central support (see Walton, 1956, p. 130). The section also reveals the typical disposition of painted decoration on a Xhosa interior (see also ill. 352-3): a panel outlined in white, extends the entire circumference, and reaches from just above the floor to the level of the window. Here, the plant-motifs are placed in a roughly symmetrical grouping on either side of the window, thus reaffirming the normal disposition of decorative form on the facade.

III.443 Xhosa: abandoned dwelling at Kitale Farm near Blaaukranz Pass. The circular forms on either side of the entrance (see also ill. 351), are variations of the root-like nucleus on the inner wall.

III.444 Xhosa: Umthi motif from a dwelling at Kitale Farm, near Blaaukranz Pass. (see also ill. 12-15, p. 19).

GLOSSARY OF BANTU TERMS

- (X) : Xhosa; (N) : Ndebele; (S) : Sotho; (Z) : Zulu.
- isi-beshu : skirt of the umkwetha, made from grass, but increasingly today from cloth or sacking. (X).
- izi-bhaco : Short skirt worn by an unmarried girl at the feast of the umkwetha. (X).
- i-bhoma : see itontho.
- isi-bindi : a brown clay sometimes used by the ikrwala as a substitute for imbholo. (X).
- bodeni : see emtangaleni.
- um-bukuzo : fine white clay used by the umkwetha to colour the face. (X).
- u-bushwa : a leaf the extract of which is rubbed on the skin to aid the healing of wounds. (X).
- i-ceya : game played by Xhosa youths, where small sticks or stones are hidden between the fingers. (X).
- isi-chwe : leaf used to bind the wound of the umkwetha (X).
- u-cumse : red-ochre used for wall-painting. (X).
- u-daka : wall-plaster made from mud and dung to which shredded grass or clay can be added. (X).
- um-dlezana : woman with child at the breast. (X).
- i-dywati : Fine thatching-grass; (*Panicum maximum*) (X).
- i-festile : window motif in Xhosa wall painting. (X).
- u-fudo : tortoise. (X).
- ama-futha okuthambisa : butter without salt, used in the umkwetha ceremony. (X).
- isi-futho : shrub burned to repel evil spirits. (X).
- isi-gqoko : headdress of the umkwetha, previously made of grass; today a variety of often fanciful headdresses are worn. (X).
- i-gubu : metal drum over which cowhide is stretched. (X).
- u-hili : see u-thikiloshe.
- hlonipha : ceremonial avoidance of words resembling respected named. (X).

- um-hlonthlo : euphorbia; the symbolic plant of the twins. (X).
- um-hlope : white. (X).
- ama-hloze : the spirits of the dead. (Z).
- i-kalika : white made from chalk (Afrikaans: kalk).
- keketsa : yellow ochre used for mural painting. (S).
- ketting : chain-pattern used as a cornice - motif in Ndebele painting. (N).
- um-khonto : knife used by the ingcibi at the circumcision ceremony. (Xhosa: 'spear'.)
- u-khuko : grass mat laid down for the umkwetha and his inqalathi (X).
- i-krwala : youth who has passed the initiation period and is entitled to wear imbhola. (X).
- isi-kwans : chevrons, scallop patterns, undulate patterns and their variations in Xhosa wall-painting.
- um-kwetha : youth passing through the initiation phase. (X; Ndebele -umketwa)
- libala : flower. (N).
- litema : the low-relief patterns in parallel ridges of Sotho mural painting. (tema - ploughed field.) (S).
- izi-Limela : the great Northern Constellation, Pleiades. (X).
- i-luhlaza : blue, green (also sky or grass) (X).
- mashala : the colour black as used in Sotho mural decoration; today often derived synthetically.
- i-imbhola : red stone ground for pigment. Used in both mural and body-painting. (Afrikaans - rooiklip). (X).
- e-mnyango : entrance to an Ndebele dwelling.
- e-mtangaleni : decoration on the walls (as opposed to the floor) of an Ndebele dwelling.
- u-mzi : dwelling complex, including huts and kraal. (X).
- i-ncaluka : coarse thatching-grass (*Bobartia indica*; Afrikaans: biesroei.) (X).

- i-ndlu : house, hut. (X).
- i-ngca : green, grass. (X).
- i-ngceke : white clay used to smear the body of the umkwetha. (X).
- i-ngcibi : specialist in the art of circumcision. (X).
- i-ngqongqo : ceremonial drum used at the return of the umkwetha from the bush. (X).
- u-ngqu-phantsi : (literally, bang-down) early form of Xhosa beehive hut.
- i-nkobe : dry, uncrushed maize. (X).
- ama-nqalathi : uncircumcised attendants of the umkwetha. (X).
- um-nqayi : ritual staff of the umkwetha. (X).
- ii-ntsika : supporting poles of a Xhosa dwelling.
- um-ntu : the term for a man; common, with slight variations to all Bantu languages. (X).
- i-nwele : bush used to re-inforce the underside of the roof-overlap in a Xhosa dwelling.
- i-nyezi : moon.(N).
- phantsi : literally, down; floor decoration in Ndebele dwelling.
- i-phewula : large-leafed evergreen plant; (*Crassula portulacæa*). (X).
- um-phokoqo namasi : maize meal with sour milk.(X).
- i-qhiya emnyama : black headdress worn by the ikwala.(X).
- um-qumbothi : beer made from maize and kaffir-corn. (X).
- um-raitono : stepped lozenge-pattern of Ndebele decoration.
- u-rontawuli : cone on cylinder hut (Afrikaans: rondawel).(X).
- e-sangweni : entrance to Ndebele courtyard.
- u-siba : literally, feather; a motif sometimes found in Xhosa mural painting.
- i-sidla : penis-sheath of the umkwetha; previously made from leather; today a tobacco-pouch is often used. (X).
- u-soze : see isi-tulo sodaka.
- i-tembiso : transitional-type Xhosa dwelling, with beehive roof and vertical walls.

- um-thi : literally, tree; the tree-motif of the Xhosa plastering technique. (X).
- u-thikološhe : mischievous, hairy dwarf living in rivers; a potential cause of marital strife. (X).
- um-thoba : yellow ochre used in mural painting. (X).
- u-toliwa : white blanket, worn by the umkwetha. (X).
- i-tontho : umkwetha hut. (X).
- um-tshilo : dance of the umkwetha. (X).
- isi-tulo sodaka : literally, chair of mud; mud platform outside the entrance of a Xhosa dwelling; also known as u-soze. (X).
- i-tyeba : looped leather belt used as a penis-support by the umkwetha. (X).
- um-vambo : series of horizontal cuts on stomach; a raised mark on the skin; a general term for scarification. (X).
- um-veto : the application of white or coloured clay on the facade of a hut; derived from the Afrikaans "wit" (information V. Gitywa). (X).
- i-xhanti : centre-post of Xhosa kraal, also the forked post of a kraal gate.
- cma-xhwele : herbalists. (X).
- um-yeyezelo : song sung at the conclusion of the umkwetha's stay in the bush. (X).
- i-ziko : central hearth of Xhosa dwelling.

HLONIPA TERMS USED BY THE ABAKWETHA

<u>HLONIPA TERM.</u>	<u>USUAL TERM.</u>	<u>ENGLISH TRANSLATION</u>
ama-com	ama-nzi	water
isi-fombo	i-nkuku	fowl
i-fozu	i-cuba	tobacco
i-krali	i-ntanga	stick
um-ndoga	um-kwetha	newly circumcised youth
i-ngceke	i-futha	white clay
i-ngema	i-ntombi	girl
i-ngora	i-cepe	spoon
i-nqalathi	i-nkwenkwe	boy
e-sixhoseni	e-lokishini	visit to home (old male relative)

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

(painter's name when known given last.)

1. Ndebele: near Pretoria.
2. Xhosa: Yarrow Farm near Assegai Bush.
3. Hurutsi: Kurrechane: house of Sinosee.
- 4-5 Xhosa: near Blaaukranz Pass.
6. Xhosa: near Tharfield.
7. Xhosa: Yarrow Farm near Assegai Bush.
8. Xhosa: near Grahamstown.
9. Xhosa: near Ecca Pass: Jane Teki.
10. Hausa: Northern Nigeria.
11. Xhosa: detail of ill. 9.
- 12-13 Xhosa: Kitale Farm near Blaaukranz Pass.
14. Xhosa: Thorn Farm, Belmont Valley.
15. Xhosa: near Blaaukranz Pass
16. Sotho: near Vanderbijlpark.
17. Sotho: near Bloemfontein.
18. Zulu: near Witbank.
19. Ndebele: near Witbank.
20. Xhosa: near Blaaukranz Pass.
21. Ndebele: near Benoni.
22. European: near Pretoria.
23. Xhosa: Coega; Mavis Mtati.
24. Ndebele: Mapoch Village, near Pretoria.
25. Fingo: Qamnyana.
- 26-28. Xhosa: Manley Flats.
- 29 Xhosa: Yarrow Farm near Assegai Bush.
- 30-31 Xhosa: Manley Flats.
- 32-4 Xhosa: Makana's Kop, Grahamstown.
35. Xhosa: Transkei.
36. Xhosa: near Brook's Nek.
37. Xhosa: Qamnyana.
38. Xhosa: Makana's Kop.
39. Hausa: Northern Nigeria.

40. Northern Nigeria.
41. Ndebele: Smalpoort; Maria Msise.
- 42-43 Xhosa: Yarrow Farm near Assegai Bush.
44. Xhosa: Yarrow Farm near Assegai Bush. Welekazi Kiswa.
- 45-46 Xhosa: near Frazers Camp.
47. Xhosa: Coega; Ellen Mayinji.
48. Xhosa: near Blaaukranz Bridge; Nomfazi Mgqogqa.
49. Xhosa: near Grahamstown; Nesign Snooks.
50. Ibibio: Nigeria.
51. Tamiu Islands: New Guinea.
52. Bangba: Northern Congo.
53. Ndebele: Smalpoort; Maria Msise.
54. Ndebele: Brakfontein.
55. Xhosa: Thorn Farm, Belmont Valley.
56. Xhosa: Manley Flats; Maria Brintjies.
57. Ndebele: Mapoch Village, near Pretoria.
58. Xhosa: near Frazer's Camp.
59. Xhosa: Kitale Farm, near Blaaukranz Pass.
- 60-61 Xhosa: Belmont Farm, Belmont Valley.
62. Hausa: Kano, Northern Nigeria.
- 63-64 Xhosa: Honeykop Halt.
65. Xhosa: Belmont Farm, Belmont Valley.
66. Xhosa: Kitale Farm, near Blaaukranz Pass.
67. Sotho: Honeykop Halt. Nowelile Ncese.
- 68-9 Xhosa: Honeykop Halt.
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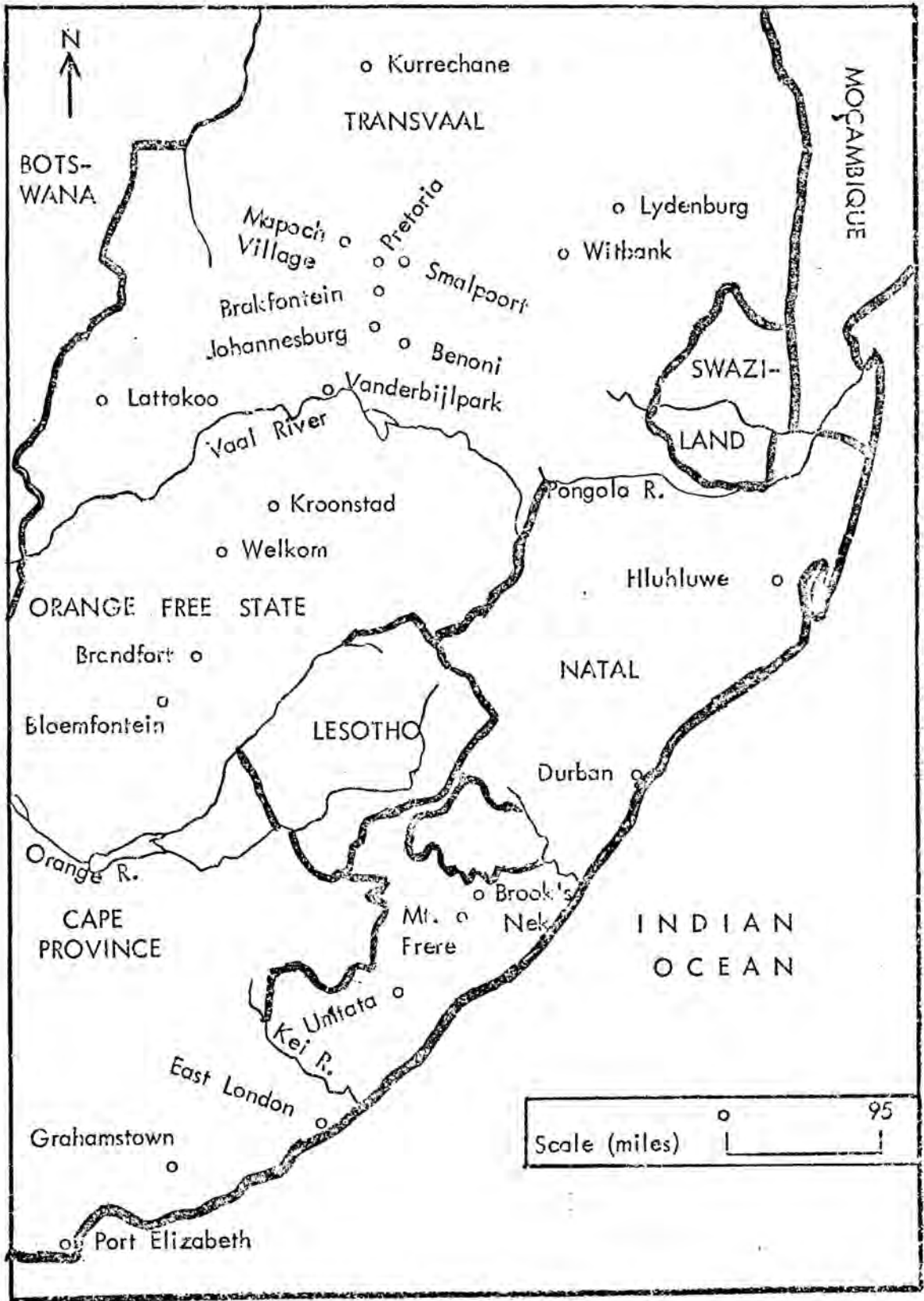
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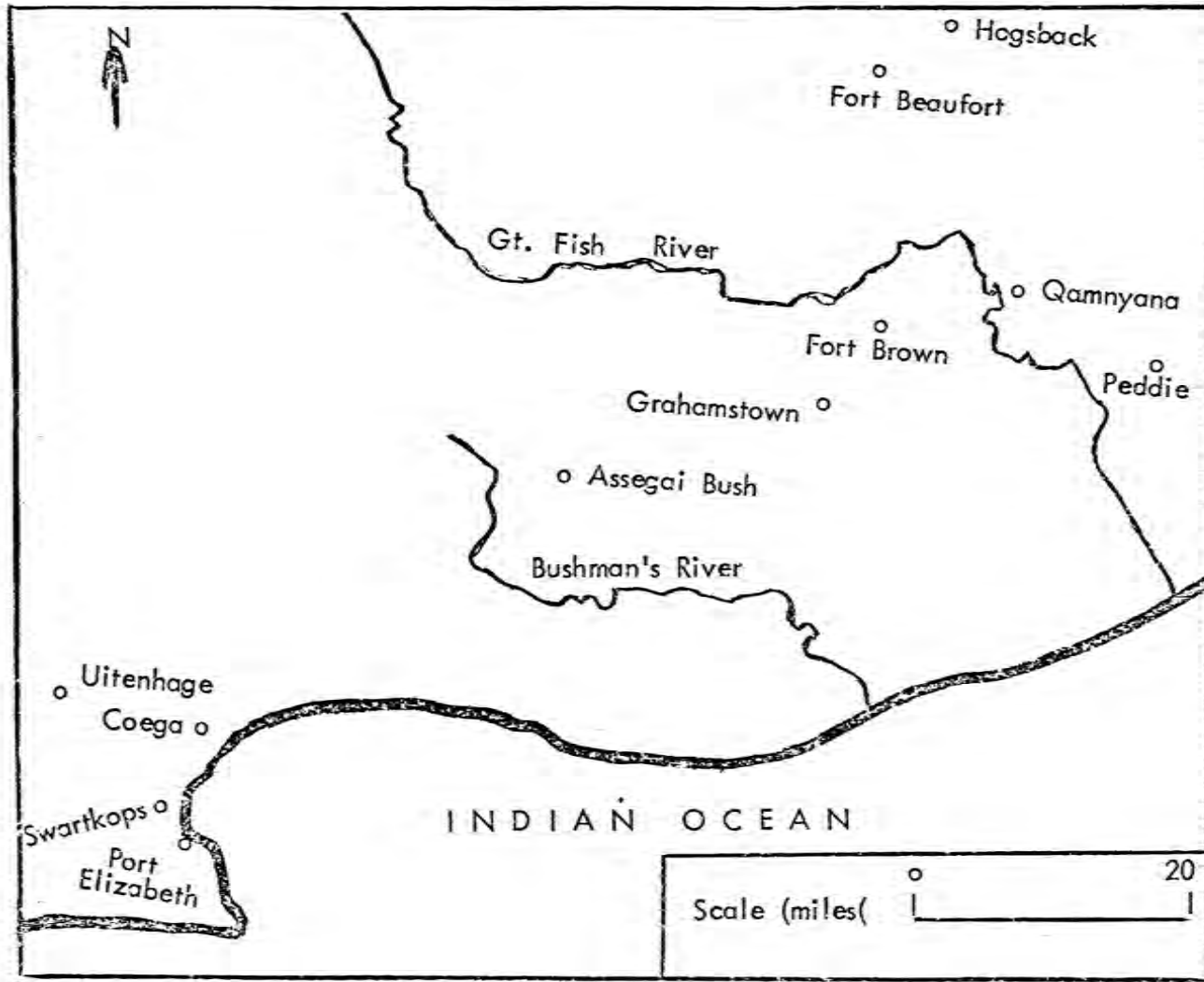
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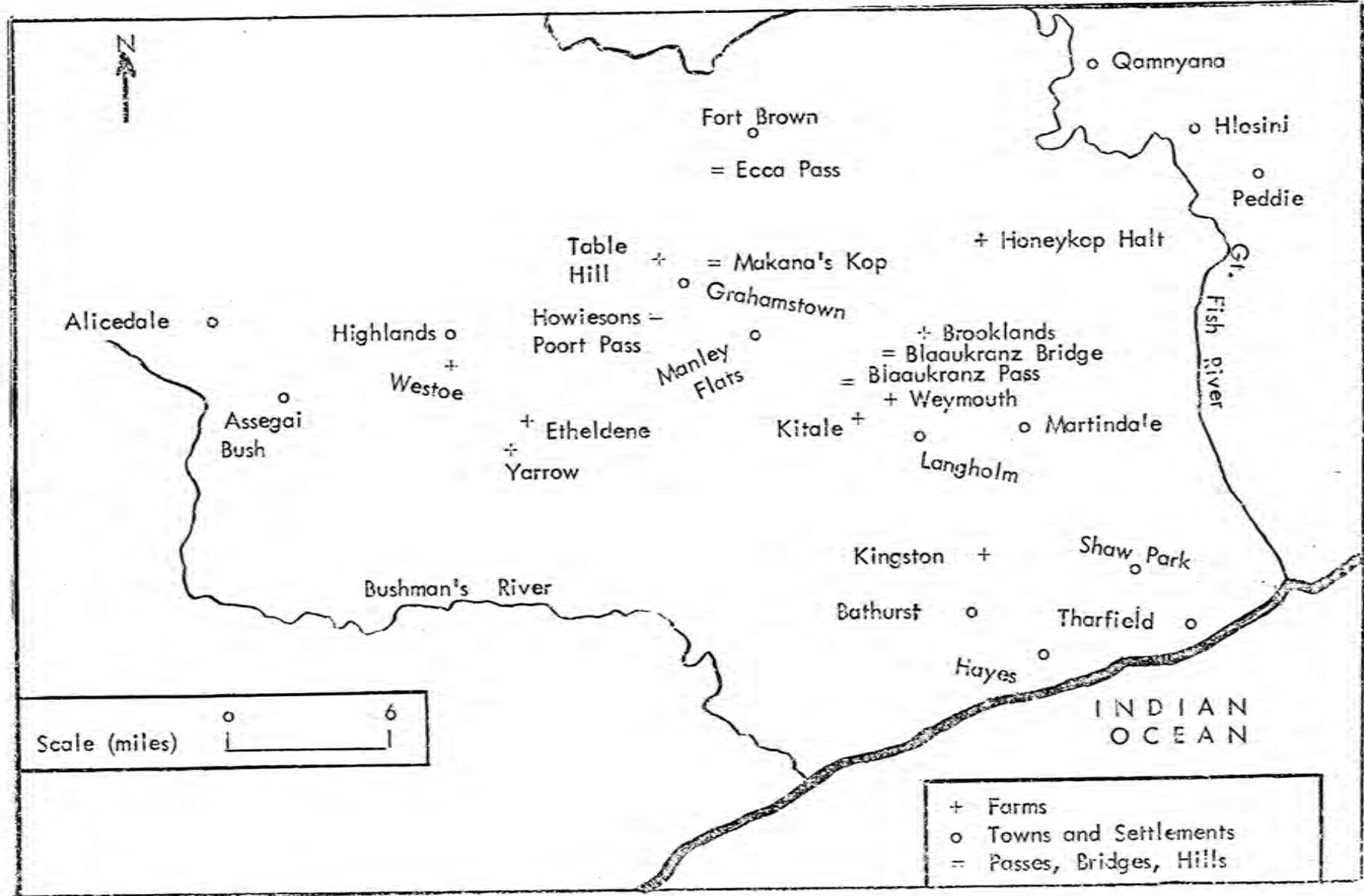
MAP 1 : 25°E - 34°E ; 24°20'S - 34°20'S



MAP II : EASTERN CAPE : $25^{\circ}\text{E} - 27^{\circ}30'\text{E}$.
 $32^{\circ}50'\text{S} - 34^{\circ}10'\text{S}$.



MAP III : THE EASTERN CAPE $33^{\circ}10'S - 33^{\circ}45'S$
 $25^{\circ}55'E - 27^{\circ}15'E$



COLOUR REGISTER

LIGHT DUN



DARK DUN



RED OCHRE



ORANGE OCHRE



YELLOW OCHRE



WASHING BLUE



T. H. MATTHEWS.

SUMMARY - Tribal Painting in South Africa, with Particular Reference to Xhosa Painting.

Bantu traditions persist over long periods of time, yet the materials of the culture are transient. Mural paintings are renewed annually, sometimes more often, yet utilise ancient pictorial conventions. This dichotomy between permanence and change is related to the ahistorical world-view of the tribal mind. Techniques are simple, colours and tools are procured from the immediate environment. Wall-painting is collective rather than individualistic. Training consists in watching and imitating. The forms of wall-painting are related to architecture, and are conditioned by the techniques of wall-construction.

Bantu veneration for the plant-world borders on the religious; plants, trees and flowers figure prominently in wall-painting. The forms of tribal decoration tend to be geometric, and a direct relationship exists between geometric form and plurality of meaning. Symmetry prevails - bilateral, shifting, radial. Among the Xhosa it is strict in the old style, and becomes attenuated in the later style. Nevertheless, symmetry remains as a basic principle of organisation.

Ndebele polychrome style, and the archaic monochrome style with its skeuomorphic implications, are each restricted to specific wall surfaces. The three phases of Ndebele painting each have a characteristic treatment and subject-matter.

Mural painting in the Free State, a localised version of Sotho art, is characterised by the use of relief, mosaic and *litema*-patterns.

Zulu, Swazi and Shangaan mural-decoration in the southern and eastern Transvaal conforms to a "second style", distinct from Sotho and Ndebele styles of that area.

Xhosa mural-painting is most diverse between the Fish and Bushman's Rivers. Doors and windows are given symbolic emphasis by means of painted form.

Doorways are flanked by architectural or plant motifs. Some plant-depictions represent particular types, others are composite or anthropomorphic. Common motifs are isikwens, steps-patterns and iifestile motifs. Contrary to previous opinion (e.g. Walton), it seems that Xhosa mural decoration derives not from the Sotho, but from an autochthonous Nguni style.

Configurations of dots, depictions of anthropomorphic plants, cups, feathers and arrows in Bantu wall-decoration indicate a fertility symbolism, connected either with seeds and plants or with phallic and vulvate allusions.

The heraldic figure-compositions of Xhosa wall-decoration, the theme of tree-and-mound and its development into secondary themes, relate to conventions in Mesopotamian art. Certain motifs are similar to those in Bushman art. Formal correspondences also exist between Bantu and modern European and American painting. Space-representation, foreshortening and values of light and shade occur.

Body painting is based on a belief in the magical significance of colour applied to the human form. Like the wearing of masks, it serves the dual purpose of disguise and transfiguration. Body-painting among the Xhosa stands at the extreme of predetermined ritual gesture, and finds its most important manifestation in the male initiation ceremony. The ritual of the abakwetha, the part played by the Ingcibi, ukojiswa, the symbolic opposition of the "white" and "red" stages, all are related to initiation ceremonies performed throughout the primitive world.