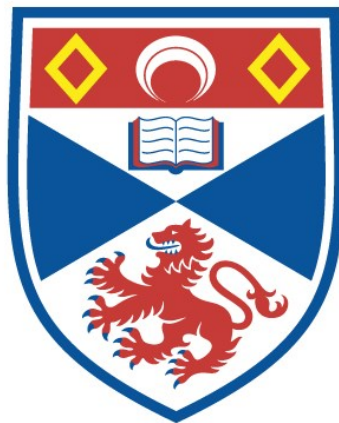


THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ZIMBABWE'S  
MUSEUMS AND MONUMENTS

Karen M. Lee

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil  
at the  
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OF ZIMBABWE'S  
MUSEUMS AND MONUMENTS.**

by

Karen M. Lee



Thesis submitted for the degree of  
Master of Philosophy,  
University of St. Andrews,  
3 November 1995.

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## ABSTRACT

The history of Zimbabwe's museums and monuments begins with the coming of British settlers to the colony of Rhodesia in 1890. By 1902 Rhodesia had one fully functional museum called the Rhodesia Museum. This museum concentrated on geology and natural history, two areas that the new colonists were anxious to explore and exploit in order to build up the country's young economy. In 1936 the Rhodesia Museum was nationalised and in the next twenty years two more museums were added to the National Museums of Southern Rhodesia organisation. Although the museums emphasised their objectivity as research and educational centres they also followed government policies that promoted white colonial culture over that of the indigenous black population. This suppression of the African heritage was more marked in the settlers' attitudes towards the country's monuments. At Great Zimbabwe and Matopos, both traditionally significant for local blacks, the white colonists supported interpretations that justified their rule over the African and rejected any involvement of the black tribes in the history of these two monuments. During the 1950s the museums and monuments conformed to the white administration's agenda and took an increasingly biased stand against the Africans, who had started to demand a greater say in the government of Rhodesia. By the time civil war broke out between black and white Rhodesians in 1966, these cultural organisations had become political tools for the colonial cause. This made their situation difficult when after fourteen years the black nationalists won the right to rule Zimbabwe. However, because of their unique ability to mirror the political, social and economic circumstances of the country the museums and monuments remain important contributors to Zimbabwe's cultural history and heritage.

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## LIST OF NAME CHANGES

### Pre-1980

Rhodesia

Salisbury

Umtali

Gwelo

Fort Victoria

Matopos

### Post-1980

Zimbabwe

Harare

Mutare

Gweru

Masvingo

Matobo

## Chapter 1

### Introduction to Zimbabwe's Museums and Monuments

The broad objectives of the national cultural policy of Zimbabwe are ...to promote the evolution of a dynamic national culture that reflects the historic realities and experiences of Zimbabwe's past, the changes that have taken place, the present and future directions.

*The National Cultural Policy of Zimbabwe*

One aspect of Zimbabwe's cultural heritage is its museums and monuments. It is easy to see the role of monuments in a country's history but the relationship between museums and the past is not so clear cut. However, Lorena San Roman contends that through "museums, each country or city can present both events that occurred recently in history, or point out past events. Many of these are the product of the political decisions of the governors and governed in the time in question"<sup>1</sup>. It is therefore beneficial to look at the development of both Zimbabwe's museums and monuments in order to trace the evolution of the country's cultural heritage and ultimately its history.

For many centuries Zimbabwe (Fig. 1) was occupied by tribes of Bantu origins. These were a pastoral and generally peaceful people organised in a loose confederacy based on tribal affiliation. The largest of the tribes were the Shona . All this changed with the arrival of two different sets of invaders in the nineteenth century. The first were the Matabele, or Ndebele, a breakaway faction from the ferocious and notorious Zulu tribe of South Africa. Under the leadership of Mzilikazi, the Matabele established a small domain in what is now southwestern Zimbabwe. Although this warlike tribe subjugated many of the other tribes in this region its rule was not as extensive as has

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<sup>1</sup> San Roman, Lorena. 'Politics and the Role of Museums in the Rescue of Identity', Museums 2000. Politics, people, professional and profit. Ed. Patrick Boylan. London, 1992: p. 25.

previously been thought. The people in northern and eastern Zimbabwe were relatively unaffected by the Matabele. However, this was not the case with the second group of newcomers to Zimbabwe, the British. In 1888 Lobengula, the Matabele king, signed the Rudd Concession. The British Government under strong pressure from Cecil John Rhodes used the Concession to claim all of Zimbabwe as a British Protectorate<sup>2</sup>.

Cecil John Rhodes' British South Africa (B.S.A.) Company administered Rhodesia until 1923 when it became the self-governing Colony of Southern Rhodesia. White rule resulted in the suppression of both the Matabele and the Shona by the small number of British settlers. In 1965 the Rhodesian Government under Ian Smith declared itself to be unilaterally independent from Britain and catapulted the country into a fifteen-year war against black nationalists trying to reclaim their right to govern. It was only in 1980 that the domination of the white minority was finally brought to an end and the modern state of Zimbabwe was created.

Although the white settlers caused much disorder and hardship for the African majority, they also introduced many progressive ideas and institutions, including the Museum. This establishment had no political agenda. It was not concerned with ruling and governing, its priorities being research, preservation and education for the benefit

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<sup>2</sup> The Rudd Concession granted Charles Rudd, Rochfort Maguire and Francis Thompson, Rhodes' agents, "the complete and exclusive charge over all the metals and minerals situated in my [Lobengula] kingdoms, principalities and dominions together with full power to do all things that they may deem necessary to win and procure the same". As a result of this agreement Cecil John Rhodes formed the British South Africa Company and through its Board of influential directors managed to obtain a Royal Charter in October 1889. The Charter allowed the BSA Company to "make treaties and promulgate laws, as well as maintain a police force and undertake public works", effectively giving it administrative control over Lobengula's kingdom. Although Lobengula tried to repudiate the Concession he was ignored and the colony of Rhodesia was formed. See Ian Phimister, An economic and social history of Zimbabwe 1890 - 1948, p. 6; also Clare Palley, The Constitutional History and Law of Southern Rhodesia 1888 - 1965, p. 29-43. A detailed account of the negotiations and the Concession can be found in Stanlake Samkange's Origins of Rhodesia, p.68-86.



of the country. However, a museum in carrying out its declared functions of preserving and displaying objects<sup>3</sup> also conveys 'broad, sometimes less obvious political and ideological' messages<sup>4</sup>. Carol Duncan elaborates on this, believing that to "control a museum means precisely to control the representations of a community and some of its highest and most authoritative truths. It also means the power to define and rank people, to declare some of having a greater share than others in the community's common heritage - in its very identity"<sup>5</sup>. A study of Zimbabwe's museums and especially its monuments displays this point quite distinctly. Their histories and growth reflect much of the political and social issues of the day - from British colonial attitudes through white extremist rule and civil war to Independence and black majority government.

Currently, Zimbabwe's museums fall under the charge of the government-run National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (formerly the National Museums and Monuments of Rhodesia), which is accountable to the Minister of Home Affairs. This organisation was formed by the amalgamation of the National Museums of Rhodesia and the Historical Monuments Commission in 1972. The National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe oversees six museums and approximately one hundred and fifty monuments scattered all over the country. A Board of Trustees appointed by the Minister of Home Affairs governs the organisation, but direct responsibility for the administration of the museums lies with the Executive Director. His primary function is to oversee the efficient and smooth running of the museums and monuments. The

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<sup>3</sup> Rhodesia Museum. Annual Report, 1909, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Duncan, Carol. 'Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship', Exhibiting Cultures. The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display. Ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, Washington, 1991: p. 90 (Hereafter, Duncan, 'Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship').

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

country is divided into five units with the museums at Harare, Bulawayo, Mutare, Gweru and Great Zimbabwe, which is categorized as a National Monument rather than a National Museum, serving as headquarters. There is a Regional Director for each unit who supervises all the museums and monuments in his/her area. The four city-based Museums (Harare, Bulawayo, Mutare and Gweru) and the National Monuments of Great Zimbabwe and Matobo are the most significant in terms of Zimbabwe's historical chronicles.

The Natural History Museum, the oldest museum in the country and the founding member of the National Museums and Monuments organisation, is located in Bulawayo. Bulawayo is the second largest city in Zimbabwe and the capital of the Matabeleland Province. During the early colonial period it was the most important centre in Rhodesia. The city began as the headquarters of the Matabele kingdom and took its name from Lobengula's Royal Kraal. This was where Lobengula signed the Rudd Concession and after the defeat of the Matabele in 1894 many of the first white colonists settled in this area. It is not surprising, therefore, that the country's first museum originated here. The Rhodesia Museum, as it was called initially, came out of a meeting between the Rhodesia Scientific Society and the Chamber of Mines in 1902. Originally situated in one room of the City Library it is now housed in a circular building (Fig. 2) constructed in 1963 as part of an important museum expansion programme - two other museum buildings were built at the same time. In 1936 the museum was nationalised and became the National Museum of Rhodesia. After Independence the National Collection of Natural History (the biggest of its kind in Southern Africa) was centralised in Bulawayo and the museum received a new name,

The Natural History Museum. The museum has enjoyed a substantial influence, in fact, the dominant influence, in the development of museums in Zimbabwe. Until the 1950s it was Rhodesia's only fully professional museum institution and it is still the largest in the country.

Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe, is home to the Museum of Human Science (Fig. 3), more popularly known as the Queen Victoria Museum, which contains the nation's ethnography, anthropology and archaeology collections. Although on paper the Queen Victoria Museum was established before The National History Museum in 1901, it did not properly function as a museum for many years. It was only in 1951 after the National Museums took it over that the Queen Victoria Museum finally employed a full-time curator. Prior to this the museum was the lesser and much maligned partner of the City Library. The Queen Victoria Memorial Museum and Library was created after the death of Britain's longest reigning monarch on the 22 January 1901. However, while the library division of the Memorial flourished and expanded over the years, it did so at the expense of the museum section. For instance, at the 1928 Triennial Meeting a subscriber to the Memorial said "he thought it was time the Museum was run as distinct from the Library. He did not care to spend money on the Museum and he would like to feel his subscription went to the Library only"<sup>6</sup>. The separation from the library in 1951 allowed the Queen Victoria Museum to grow into an important part of Harare's and also Zimbabwe's cultural scene. Its ethnographic artefacts are an essential part of Zimbabwe's history, tangible evidence of Zimbabwe's past.

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<sup>6</sup> Whyte, Ruth. 'History of the Queen Victoria Museum', *Rhodesia Science News*, Vol. 7, No. 11 (November 1973): p. 4 (Hereafter, Whyte, 'History of the Queen Victoria Museum').

The Mutare Museum (Fig. 4) situated in the eastern province of Manicaland concentrates on the history and geography of its region rather than that of the whole country. However, the history of land transport in Zimbabwe is displayed here and the museum is also home to the National Collection of Antiquities. In addition the Mutare Museum is responsible for the maintenance and development of all National Monuments in the Eastern Region. These consist mainly of sites with nationwide historical and archaeological significance: cave paintings, ancient stone structures linked to the Great Zimbabwe Ruins, and historic buildings. So in spite of its regional emphasis the Mutare Museum is a vital contributor to the country's heritage. Established in 1957 by the Umtali Museum Society, the museum joined the National Museums and Monuments organisation two years later in 1959.

The focal point of Zimbabwe's Midlands Region is the Zimbabwe Military Museum (Fig. 5) found at the city of Gweru. Like the other museological units the museum cares for all the monuments and historic buildings in its division. It is the only unit though that supervises a second museum, The Gold Mining Museum, Kwekwe. Although the Midlands Region is the smallest and newest unit in the National Museums and Monuments set up it is by no means unimportant. As its name suggests the museum at Gweru preserves and displays the country's Military artefacts. This is a particularly pertinent collection with regard to Zimbabwe's recent history: the Liberation War, 1965 - 1980. The museum, formerly called the Gwelo Museum, was conceived and erected by the Midlands Museum Society in 1972. A year later it was part of the National Museums fraternity. In the beginning the Museum was concerned mainly with its local surroundings and history. It became the Military Museum in 1980

during a planning exercise aimed at consolidating all the material of a specific discipline at a particular unit. The histories of Zimbabwe's Police, Army, Air Force and other military institutions are exhibited here along with objects concerned with civil aviation and costumes.

Despite the insight that museums give into Zimbabwe's history they cannot compete with the country's monuments for providing a direct link to the past. This is especially true of Great Zimbabwe (Fig. 6), the stone ruins from which the country takes its name and the site of an ancient capital of a powerful tribe that dominated most of Southern Africa from about AD 1100 to 1500. Although there are other similar ruins scattered throughout the country, Great Zimbabwe is the biggest of these and spreads out over a 720 hectare area. Peter Garlake, an eminent Zimbabwean archaeologist, believes that "Great Zimbabwe lies at the heart of Zimbabwe's history and culture. No other place can give a visitor a deeper insight into the path of the country's history and development. Understanding Great Zimbabwe and the interpretation of its past will help us to understand a great deal about Zimbabwe today"<sup>7</sup>. Found in the Southern Region, Great Zimbabwe is an extensive complex of drystone-walled enclosures (the word 'zimbabwe' comes from the Shona *madzimbahwe* or 'houses of stone'). These impressive granite structures have been at the centre of a controversy that has in a remarkable fashion mirrored the political evolution of Zimbabwe<sup>8</sup>. The widely differing interpretations over the origins of Great Zimbabwe have been used by both the white settlers and the black nationalists in their struggle to control the land

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<sup>7</sup> Garlake, Peter. Great Zimbabwe Described and Explained. Harare, 1992: p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.4.

positioned between the Zambezi and Limpopo Rivers, the same land once ruled by the people who resided at Great Zimbabwe.

It is generally believed that Adam Render, a German hunter, was the first white man to see the ruins in 1868. However, they were only investigated three years later by another German, Carl Mauch. For many years after this exploration Great Zimbabwe and other ruins associated with it suffered at the hands of European treasure hunters who pillaged vast quantities of gold and other historical relics. In the process they caused much damage to the stone buildings. The British South Africa Company finally recognised the importance of these historic structures and passed Ordinance 9 of 1902 to prevent further destruction of ancient monuments: "monuments were defined to cover all buildings, ruins, tombs, altars and statues estimated to date from before 1800, and to include Bushman paintings"<sup>9</sup>. From this date the B.S.A. Company took charge of Great Zimbabwe and other monuments. It passed on its caretaker's role to the new Government of Southern Rhodesia in 1923. The year 1936 heralded the birth of the Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments and Relics which under the terms of the Monuments and Relics Act was to "provide for the better preservation of ancient, historical and natural monuments, relics and other objects of aesthetic, historical, archaeological or scientific interest"<sup>10</sup>.

Besides Great Zimbabwe the new Commission was also responsible for the maintenance of an area twenty kilometres south of the city of Bulawayo known as

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<sup>9</sup> Hartridge, Digby. National Museums and the Preservation of Monuments and Relics in Southern Rhodesia, 1889 - 1966. Salisbury, 1966: p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Colony of Southern Rhodesia Government Gazette. Monuments and Relics Act, No. 8, 1936.



Matobo (or Matopos). This monument is a useful study both naturally and historically. The Matobo consists of a landscape of spectacular granite rock formations (Fig. 7) whose extraordinary shapes (Fig. 8) give this hilly countryside a spiritual and awe-inspiring character. H. Marshall Hole, the Civil Commissioner of Bulawayo in 1902, described the Matobo Hills in a letter to his father in England as "a sea of rugged fantastic boulders piled up in indescribable confusion crowned with grim stones which look like sentinels ... Nature must have been in a very wild mood when she designed the place"<sup>11</sup>. This naturally dramatic setting is a perfect backdrop for historical adventures and "nearly every incident of ... importance in Matabeleland seems to lead back to the Matopos"<sup>12</sup>. The Matobo Hills are home to the cave paintings of prehistoric man, to the shrines of traditional African gods and to the graves of some of Zimbabwe's most influential men like Mzilikazi, the founder of the Matabele nation, and Cecil John Rhodes. It is here that many of the Matabeles fled after their defeat in the Rebellions of 1896 and where the peace negotiations between them and the B.S.A. Company took place. Like Bulawayo, Matobo figured hugely in the first years of 'Rhodesia's' history and therefore must be included when analyzing Zimbabwe's social, cultural and political development.

In examining the museums and monuments of Zimbabwe within the context of the country's historical experiences one is limited to the story that commences with the coming of the European settlers. Before this Zimbabwe did not have any museums, or at least did not have anything that can be interpreted as a museum in the conventional

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<sup>11</sup> Shee, J. Charles. 'The Burial of Cecil Rhodes', *Rhodesiana*, No. 18 (July 1968): p. 41 (Hereafter, Shee, 'The Burial of Cecil Rhodes').

<sup>12</sup> Tredgold, Sir Robert. *The Matopos*. Salisbury, 1956: p. 1.

sense. The African approach to preserving and displaying artefacts is totally different to European ideas on the subject. In the black community objects gain meaning from their original context and setting. Africans learn from using these relics rather than from viewing them in a display case. Therefore, the tale of Zimbabwe's museums and monuments, in a 'western' sense, traces the country's evolution from about the turn of the century. However, these European institutions were equally concerned with discovering Zimbabwe's history before 1890 as well as documenting contemporary events. One of their primary functions was the preservation of the material evidence and remains of the past. There is no dispute with this purpose. The controversy arises with the museum's interpretation of these objects and how they use them to project a certain viewpoint: "what the museums [displays] as the community's history, beliefs and identity may represent only the interests and self-image of certain powers within the community"<sup>13</sup>. In this way museums can be regarded as a microcosm of the State and therefore an investigation of this predominantly cultural body is also an exploration of the factors affecting the government of a country. Consequently Zimbabwe's museums, and not just its monuments, are an integral part of a "dynamic national culture that reflects the historic realities and experiences of Zimbabwe's past, the changes that have taken place, the present and future directions"<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Duncan, Carol. 'Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship', p. 92.

<sup>14</sup> The National Cultural Policy of Zimbabwe. Government Papers, 1984.



## Chapter 2

### Beginnings, 1902-1936.

The colony of Rhodesia was still in its infancy at the turn of this century. It had just been ten years since Cecil John Rhodes' Pioneer Column hoisted the Union Jack at Fort Salisbury in September 1890. Though the country was primitive compared to its motherland Britain, it was quickly progressing towards a more civilized state. By 1902 the colony could boast two museums (though only one was functioning properly). Ruth Whyte believed that the "settlers, many of whom had left gracious homes and civilised living to come to Rhodesia, were beginning to feel hungry for more than bread alone"<sup>1</sup>. However, the museums were products of their environment: reflecting both the colonists' concerns with survival and the influences of Imperial Britain. Mining and farming were the two driving forces behind the colony's economy and resulted in a penetrating exploration of Rhodesia's landscape. The country's museums echoed these interests and concentrated on collecting natural history and geological specimens rather than more artistic objects. These 'scientific' museums were more practical than art galleries in terms of the needs of a growing colony. The early development of Rhodesia's monuments was also shaped by the settlers' concentration on mining and by their imperialistic attitudes.

#### **The Rhodesia Museum**

The Rhodesia Museum, formed in 1902 in the town of Bulawayo, illustrates the issues that affected the early years of European settlement in Rhodesia. It was born out of an agreement between the Rhodesia Scientific Association and the Chamber of Mines.

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<sup>1</sup> Whyte, 'History of the Queen Victoria Museum', p. 2.

The Rhodesia Scientific Association was formed in February 1899 when a meeting was held at Dr. Hans Sauer's offices for "gentlemen interested in the formation of a society for the investigation of natural history, archaeology and other cognate sciences, with their special application to Rhodesia"<sup>2</sup>. Dr. Sauer was also the first president of the Rhodesia Chamber of Mines which was established in 1895 to represent Matabeleland mining interests. It seems likely that the arrangement to form a museum between these two organisations resulted from the involvement of Dr. Sauer and not Cecil John Rhodes as one theory suggests. It claims that Rhodes was personally responsible for the foundation of the Rhodesia Museum:

During Cecil John Rhodes' last visit to Bulawayo in 1901, he was confronted with two requests ... At the meeting with the representatives of the [Rhodesia Scientific] Association it is reported that Rhodes said "... only yesterday the Chamber of Mines asked me for the services of a geologist, now you want a museum for your collections. Why not get together with the Chamber of Mines and appoint a geologist to look after it

<sup>3</sup>.

The veracity of this incident cannot be confirmed, but any association, especially a personal one with Rhodes, was very important to Rhodesians who were in a sense his chosen people. This link contributed to the prestige of the Museum. However, an analysis of the Rhodes connection is more pertinent to the time in which this hypothesis was put forward and so will be considered later.

What is important in the origins of the Rhodesia Museum is the involvement of the Scientific Association and the Chamber of Mines, who met in July 1901 to form a committee that would oversee the start of the new museum. The nucleus of the

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<sup>2</sup> Hartridge, National Museums and the Preservation of Monuments and Relics in Southern Rhodesia, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, Vivian J. and C. K. Cooke. 'A Short History of the National Museum, Bulawayo', Rhodesia Science News, Vol. 7, No. 10 (Oct 1973): p. 277 (Hereafter, Wilson and Cooke. 'A Short History of the National Museum, Bulawayo').

Museum's collections came from the natural history and geological specimens accumulated by the two institutions. Already the Rhodesia Museum mirrored the settlers' preoccupation in trying to determine exactly what their new country had to offer them in terms of its natural and mineral wealth. The Chamber of Mines agreed to guarantee the sum of the curator's salary for two years provided he was a geologist. The curator would serve two purposes. He was to care and maintain the museum and also to assist the prospectors and miners working in Matabeleland. This was a pragmatic and beneficial solution for a developing colony where manpower resources had to be effectively utilised. On the recommendation of Professor J.W. Judd, Dean of the Royal College of Science in London, the Museum Committee appointed F.P. Menzell, a young mineralogist, to the position of Curator.

From the beginning the Rhodesia Museum, eager to present itself as a public-spirited establishment, emphasized its importance as a place of research. In the First Annual Report for 1902 the Chairman of the Committee described the Museum as

an institution where information regarding rocks, minerals and other scientific subjects can easily be obtained. The fullest possible information and every facility for examining the collections is afforded to those studying any branch of science or endeavouring to develop the natural resources of the country<sup>4</sup>.

Roger Summers believed that the "forward-looking citizens" who were responsible for setting up the Museum "were not content merely to have objects on display but from the beginning determined that the museum should be a centre of research and scholarship"<sup>5</sup>. In the early years of its existence the Rhodesia Museum did make some important contributions to the settler community. Its Curator, F.P. Menzell,

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<sup>4</sup> Rhodesia Museum. Annual Report, 1902, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Summers, Roger. 'Museum Buildings in Bulawayo, 1900-1968', Rhodesiana, 18 (July 1968): p. 85.

undertook laboratory work to identify rock and mineral samples brought in by the public. He also was in charge of collecting and recording data on the geographical structure of the country. This information was intended for use in the compilation of the first map of Southern Rhodesia<sup>6</sup>. For many years the Museum was the only scientific organisation north of the Limpopo River. Though it provided practical assistance to the settlers it also commenced to look into the life of the Rhodesian natives.

However, this interest in the indigenous culture of Rhodesia was superficial. Though Mennell complained in the early years that the museum had a scarcity of 'native arts and manufactures' no real effort was put into acquiring suitable specimens. It seems that objects of this type were treated as curiosities and not given any serious consideration as an area of study. On top of this, the influence of mining was so dominant that the cases devoted to anthropology and archaeology contained displays titled 'Ancient Rhodesia Mining and Metallurgy'. Again, deeper insight into the ways of the native African was coloured by the white settlers' bias - the only worthwhile bit of the African lifestyle and history was the mineral element. Reports made by the highly respected museum staff reinforced rather than repudiated the European feeling that the African was a primitive savage. In one of these papers Mennell concluded that the large stone implements in the Museum's possession were "unlikely to have been used by a feeble race like the Bushmen"<sup>7</sup>. The museum continued to concentrate on geology. In 1907 Mr. E.C. Chubb, formerly of the Natural History Department at the British Museum, accepted the position of Assistant Curator. With his arrival, the

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<sup>6</sup> Rhodesia Museum. Annual Report, 1902, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Mennell, F.P. 'Some Stone Implements in the Rhodesia Museum', Annual Report, 1904, p. 6.

zoological collections began to grow and soon equalled the geology section as one of the museum's fields of specialty. Nonetheless, in 1909 the new curator, A. E. V. Zealley (also a geologist), expressed concern over the efforts to obtain ethnological items: "It is a matter of urgency, when it is remembered that the natives are rapidly changing their habits by the influence of Europeans and are declining to make such articles as implements and utensils when such may be purchased ready-made"<sup>8</sup>. Although this was a perceptive and far-sighted appeal for objects, the collecting policies towards native crafts remained passive. The museum relied on donations for these articles, which sharply contrasted with its very active attitude towards collecting zoological and geological specimens. This is not entirely surprising considering the training of both the Curator and Assistant Curator who worked during weekends and holidays collecting for their departments - geology and zoology<sup>9</sup>. The continued bias towards these two subjects demonstrates that Rhodesians were still absorbed with advancing the country economically rather than culturally.

It is not surprising therefore to find this view codified in the Rhodesia Museum's 1909 Constitution (Appendix 1). One of the main purposes of the Museum was the "investigations by the Museum staff with a view to the development of the economics of Rhodesia"<sup>10</sup>. The Constitution was the Museum's first attempt to identify what it was and describe its functions. It strongly emphasised its educational value and service to the community. There was perhaps an ulterior motive to this formalization of the Museum's aims and purposes. In the beginning the Museum sought only monetary support from the B.S.A. Company's Administration which was the

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<sup>8</sup> Rhodesia Museum. Annual Report, 1909, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Rhodesia Museum. Annual Report, 1908, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Rhodesia Museum. Annual Report, 1909, p. 18.

government of Rhodesia. However, as the Museum grew it began to see itself as the 'National Museum of Rhodesia'. Therefore, it believed that it should be maintained by the state and not rely on vagaries of private funding for its existence. In 1908, the Museum applied to the Administration

to form the Rhodesia Museum into a "State" Institution, with an income annually devoted to it from the administrative revenue of the country, but ... the Government, while acknowledging the economic and educational value of the Museum, intimated they could not accept responsibility ... This decision is to be regretted, as the practical and national character of the Museum is now greatly recognised<sup>11</sup>.

At this point the Museum was also in the process of constructing a new building and though the British South Africa Company donated the land<sup>12</sup> it was still financially insecure. The Constitution of 1909 may have been a ploy to attract both governmental and private subsidies.

Two years later, however, the Rhodesia Chamber of Mines withdrew its grant and with it the condition that the Curator be a geologist. George Arnold, an English zoologist, was chosen as the Rhodesia Museum's new Curator following the resignations of both Zealley and Chubb. The Museum Committee felt "in making this appointment, that its practice of regarding a mineralogical knowledge essential to the position of Curator (in view of the importance of such in a mining country) might be changed now that a Geographical Survey has been established"<sup>13</sup>. Arnold was a specialist in entomology and the Museum Committee hoped that his scholarship "would be of service to the sister-industry of farming"<sup>14</sup>. Now that the mining industry had its own research

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<sup>11</sup> Rhodesia Museum. Annual Report, 1908, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Cooke, C.K. 'The History of the Museums in Bulawayo, 1902-1985', Heritage Zimbabwe, No. 6 (1986): p. 63.

<sup>13</sup> Rhodesia Museum. Annual Report, 1911, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.7.



facilities the Museum turned its energies to Rhodesia's second important source of livelihood, farming. The Museum adapted itself so it could maintain its usefulness to the settler community. This was also important from a financial standpoint.

By 1914, the Museum was having serious monetary problems. The Great War was responsible for some of this economic hardship but no mention is made of it in the Annual Reports for 1914 through to 1917. George Arnold in the 1914 Report blamed this financial uncertainty on a lack of recognition for the Museum's worth by both the Administration and the Public.

Possibly this is due to the mistaken notions as to the purposes and objects of a museum. The value of museums in the scheme of education is generally recognised by all civilized communities ... but it is still a very general idea that a museum is the storehouse of curios, as assembled together for the amusement of the public, and for the satisfaction of idle curiosity<sup>15</sup>.

The Curator then went on to explain that the responsibility of a science museum was to both add to and disseminate the body of knowledge. However, he realised that the Museum had to be flexible and not limit itself to purely scientific subjects. In the same year as Arnold presented his case for the Rhodesia Museum he also made an agreement with the Commercial Branch of the B.S.A. Company to add a new Economic Department to the Museum. The end result of this arrangement was an exhibition of the economic products of the country. Not surprisingly the displays consisted of mineral and agricultural samples<sup>16</sup>.

After World War I the Rhodesia Museum seriously began to expand its ethnology and archaeology sections. The bequest of the Codrington Collection in 1921, an

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<sup>15</sup> Rhodesia Museum. Annual Report, 1914, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

impressive hoard of African artefacts assembled by Robert Codrington while he was Administrator for NE and NW Rhodesia (Malawi and Zambia respectively), greatly boosted the Museum's ethnology department. It is noteworthy that objects from the Codrington Collection included many conquest pieces: items taken when the B.S.A. Company started to occupy the land north of the Limpopo River. Indeed, the pride of the Collection was the Nine Chiefs' Ceremonial Staves which were emblems of authority "taken at [Chief] Kasembe's stronghold in 1899"<sup>17</sup>. Possibly for the first time the Museum put on a display that had direct political connotations, an exhibit that symbolically portrayed the removal of the power of the African chiefs by the B.S.A. Company. It paid tribute to white supremacy and at the same time reminded the 'natives' who visited the Museum that they were no longer in charge<sup>18</sup>.

The year 1921 also saw the start of the Museum's entrance restrictions towards the African majority. After several complaints "it was found necessary for the comfort of European visitors to limit the days of admission for natives to 3 per week"<sup>19</sup>. Dawson Munjeri believes this decision was part of a white policy which "discouraged the education of "natives" lest they eventually equate themselves with the whites"<sup>20</sup>. As Anthony Chennells explains in his article on white nationalism in Rhodesia, "Whites had always chosen to see blacks as uncivilised although, paradoxically they had always prevented as many as possible from acquiring a Western education, which whites

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<sup>17</sup> Rhodesia Museum. *Annual Report, 1922*, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Munjeri, Dawson. 'Refocusing or Reorientation? The Exhibit or the Populace: Zimbabwe on the Threshold', *Exhibiting Cultures. The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine. Washington, 1991: p. 448 (Hereafter, Munjeri, 'Refocusing or Reorientation?').

<sup>19</sup> Rhodesia Museum. *Annual Report, 1921*, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> Munjeri, 'Refocusing or Reorientation?', p. 446.



would have claimed was the only way civilization could have been achieved"<sup>21</sup>. The Rhodesia Museum liked to extoll itself as an irreproachable institution of scholarship and research that existed only for the benefit of its public. It was nonetheless a creation of the white minority and consequently subscribed to the colonial ideology that set out to glorify the 'civilised' white man while degrading the 'uncultured' black man. George Arnold in his Curator's Report of 1914 stated the "value of museums in the scheme of education is generally recognized by all civilized communities"<sup>22</sup> which implied only the refined could appreciate the educational merit of museums. The Rhodesia Museum, therefore, established itself as an instrument that enhanced the "inequality of cultural opportunity" rather than a tool that sought to remedy the "educational imbalance" created by the tenets of white colonial rule<sup>23</sup>. Throughout the 1920s the Museum continued to follow an increasingly racist course. Not only were the natives made to enter through a side door but in 1925, despite their multiplying numbers, their visiting days were reduced from three to one<sup>24</sup>.

In 1932 the Carnegie Corporation of New York sponsored a Museums Association survey of all the museums in the British Empire. Sir Henry A. Miers and S.F. Markham commissioned to visit and report on these organisations found nothing amiss with the Rhodesia Museum: "The museum is one of the most attractive we saw in Africa ... there seems no adequate reason why this institution should not at once be made a National Museum ... As a National Museum, it would, of course, have the

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<sup>21</sup> Chennells, Anthony. 'White Rhodesian Nationalism - The Mistaken Years', Turmoil and Tenacity, Zimbabwe 1890-1990. Ed. Canaan Banana. Harare, 1989: p. 136 (Hereafter, Chennells, 'White Rhodesian Nationalism').

<sup>22</sup> Rhodesia Museum. Annual Report, 1914, p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> Munjeri, 'Refocusing or Reorientation?', p. 447.

<sup>24</sup> Rhodesia Museum. Annual Report, 1925, p.5.

privilege of being the repository of certain government collections, archives, etc."<sup>25</sup>. Instead of faulting the Museum for its prejudiced views towards the African the Museums Association representatives themselves espoused ideas of white superiority. In Miers' and Markham's introduction they discussed the towns of British Africa:

Cape Town, Johannesburg, Salisbury and many other towns reach an intellectual standard comparable only with the cream of Europe or North America, whilst a few hours away from any of these towns one may come across native races no further advanced than were the ancient Britons<sup>26</sup>.

The Rhodesia Museum was not just conforming to its government's position with regard to the subordinate status of the black man but also to the views held by Imperial Britain. This belief was brought to Rhodesia with the first white settlers and by the 1930s was even more deeply entrenched among the colonists. It was the backbone of an argument used to justify the suppression of the African majority by the white minority<sup>27</sup>. Since the Rhodesia Museum practised and enforced official sentiments Miers and Markham concluded that it was fit to become a national body.

Armed with this recommendation George Arnold on behalf of the Museum Committee met with the Prime Minister in 1935 to discuss the nationalization of the museum. Although the initial impetus for this petition was the Miers/Markham Report, the catalyst was the 40th Anniversary of the occupation of Bulawayo. A historical committee was formed to collect pioneer material for this event and an exhibition was planned for 1934. The "Historical Museum as it was later called, became the show-

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<sup>25</sup> Miers, Sir Henry A. and S.F. Markham. The Museum Association Survey of Empire Museums. A Report on the Museums and Art Galleries of British Africa. Edinburgh, 1932: p. 50 (Hereafter, Miers and Markham. The Museum Association Survey of Empire Museums).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. vii.

<sup>27</sup> Bhebe, Ngwabi. 'The Nationalist Struggle, 1957-1962', Turmoil and Tenacity. Zimbabwe 1890-1990. Ed. Canaan Banana. Harare, 1989: p. 59 (Hereafter, Bhebe, 'The Nationalist Struggle, 1957-1962'). In this article Bhebe discusses how the Rhodesian Government used the term 'civilized and responsible persons' to exclude the blacks from being included in the voting franchise.

piece of the celebrations ... considerable public interest was evoked and it was felt that this enthusiasm should be built upon<sup>28</sup>. A sense of national identity was beginning to emerge. The Rhodesian Government felt it was time to start patterning an official history of the colony to reinforce these nationalistic feelings. With this in mind the Southern Rhodesian Legislature passed three acts in 1936 which created the National Archives and the Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments, and conferred national status on the Rhodesia Museum, now called the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia (Appendix 2).

### **The Queen Victoria Memorial Museum**

The National Museum Act of 1936 gave the National Museum the power to take over existing museums. In 1939 the Queen Victoria Memorial Museum in Salisbury used this provision to request that responsibility for it be taken over by the National Museum. From the beginning the Queen Victoria Museum compared unfavourably to the bigger and better organised Rhodesia Museum. Miers and Markham noted in their report that

the Salisbury Museum by contrast [to the Rhodesia Museum] has had a less fortunate development. From its inception it has been housed in part in the Queen Victoria Memorial which has primarily been used for library purposes. It has never had a separate curator, always relying upon the services of the librarian, and its accounts have never been separated from those of the library<sup>29</sup>.

Perhaps one of the reasons the Queen Victoria Museum experienced such problems during its early years was that it was not specifically created to be a Museum but rather a Memorial. On the 22 January 1901 after sixty-three years on the British throne

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<sup>28</sup> Hartridge, National Museums and the Preservation of Monuments and Relics in Southern Rhodesia, 1889-1966, p. 23.

<sup>29</sup> Miers and Markham. The Museum Association Survey of Empire Museums, p. 52.

Queen Victoria died. Her death touched many of her colonial subjects. In March 1901, a public meeting was called in Umtali, a small settler town in Rhodesia, "to take into consideration the question of perpetuating the memory of ... Queen Victoria". The assembled populace decided "that a fitting way of giving effect to this desire would be to erect a suitable memorial in the capital of Rhodesia, to which all the inhabitants of this country could contribute"<sup>30</sup>. After several other meetings in Salisbury the Memorial Committee proposed that funds be collected to erect a National Museum and Library in commemoration of the late Queen Victoria.

In July 1902, the acting Administrator of Rhodesia, Mr. J.G. Kotzee, laid the foundation stone for the two-storied Queen Victoria Memorial Museum and Library.

In his speech that followed Kotzee paid tribute to the colonists:

I also ask you to bear in mind those hardy and enterprising heroes who have wrested the possession of our Southern Continent from barbarism and made it safe for us to assemble here in the advantages of enlightened and settled government. All honour to the memory of the men who brought this about, all honour to the men who are no longer with us, who have won Rhodesia for the Empire<sup>31</sup>.

The Imperial belief that Africa was a backward, primitive place populated with savages surfaced at the Queen Victoria Museum earlier than it did at the Rhodesia Museum. It is interesting that this view did not stop the Memorial Committee from collecting funds from the African Chiefs and their people<sup>32</sup>. Less than a year after the foundation stone was laid the Queen Victoria Memorial Museum and Library was formally opened. However, the Memorial Committee which administered both the Museum and Library did not seem to have any idea of the functions of a museum: "There seems to have

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<sup>30</sup> Whyte, 'History of the Queen Victoria Museum', p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

been no system of collection during the early years. A heterogeneous collection including 'Kaffir curios and spears', animal horns and insects was donated at odd times, but there was no Curator, and the main business of the Memorial for many years was concerned with the building up of the library<sup>33</sup>. Unlike its counterpart in Bulawayo, which from the start concerned itself with collecting natural history and geological objects, the Queen Victoria Museum had no operating guidelines. The Committee found it much easier to manage the Library. The business of collecting books was simple compared to the preserving, researching and displaying that museum work involved. As a result the museum section of the Queen Victoria Memorial remained neglected and disorganised.

It was only after the First World War that the Museum was ready to receive visitors: "The Rhodesia Directory for 1919 mentions for the first time that 'a nucleus of a museum has been formed on the first floor' [of the Queen Victoria Memorial]"<sup>34</sup>. During the 1920s the Queen Victoria Museum's collections began to take shape in spite of the fact that there were still no formal policies in this regard and no Curator. In addition, the Museum's financial position "was so precarious that ... the Committee [concluded] that unless some plan was formulated for raising funds to carry on the work of the Museum it should be closed"<sup>35</sup>. By 1929 the Government was approached and asked to oversee a division of the Library and the Museum. In an already mentioned story a subscriber to the Memorial complained in 1928 that he did not want any of his money to be spent on the Museum and that it should be separated

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Hartridge, National Museums and the Preservation of Monuments and Relics in Southern Rhodesia, 1889-1966, p. 21.

<sup>35</sup> Whyte, 'The History of the Queen Victoria Museum', p. 3.

Library. At this point many people recognised that this would be a beneficial arrangement for both parts of the Memorial, but neither the Government nor the Salisbury Municipality were ready to accept responsibility for this action. The Museum and Library, therefore, remained under the control of the Memorial Committee. Four years later in 1932, Sir Henry Miers and S.F. Markham came to the conclusion that in order for the Museum to progress a scientific officer should be employed and that it disassociate itself from the Library<sup>36</sup>.

By 1935 none of the Museums Association recommendations had been carried out, although there were more serious efforts made towards the separation of the Museum and Library. One of the consequences of this activity was that for the first time in thirty-four years the Queen Victoria Memorial Committee "made definite plans for the collecting, classifying and exhibiting ... of objects relating to: (1) The Prehistory of Mashonaland; (2) Medieval or Zimbabwe [Ruins] culture period of Mashonaland; (3) Birds of Rhodesia; (4) The Ethnology of Mashonaland and Manicaland; (5) The Botany of Rhodesia"<sup>37</sup>. The Museum's future started to look much brighter. In 1936 after the nationalization of the Rhodesia Museum, the Queen Victoria Museum applied to join the new National Museum Board. However, it was several more years before this appeal came to fruition. In the meantime, the Queen Victoria Museum managed to make modest improvements though it continued to suffer under the Library's shadow. It was a symbol of Rhodesia's Imperial loyalty rather than a Museum and because of this its development was retarded.

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<sup>36</sup> Miers and Markham, The Museum Association Survey of Empire Museums, p. 53.

<sup>37</sup> Whyte, 'The History of the Queen Victoria Museum', p. 5.



## The Zimbabwe Ruins

1936 was not just an important year for Rhodesia's museums. An act creating the Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments and Relics was legislated along with the National Museum Act. A number of the colony's monuments were already under government protection but none of them had national status. Besides its caretaker's role the Commission was charged with preparing "a schedule of historic sites in Southern Rhodesia"<sup>38</sup>. The first National Monument to be proclaimed was the Great Zimbabwe Ruins which even though abandoned for centuries was still heavily involved in the moulding of the colony's history: "Indeed since it became known to the outside world more than a hundred years ago the study and interpretation of the Zimbabwe culture of which the Great Zimbabwe is the most visible example, has been intrinsically related to the country's development"<sup>39</sup>.

The early history of the Ruins, after Carl Mauch revealed its existence to the world in 1871, is a story of destruction. A year after the B.S.A. Company's Pioneer Column arrived in Fort Salisbury, James Theodore Bent, a known antiquarian, was chosen by the Company, the British Association for the Advancement of Science and the Royal Geographical Society to investigate the Zimbabwe Ruins. However, Bent was only an amateur archaeologist and approached Great Zimbabwe with the preconceived notion that the Ruins were of a foreign and exotic origin<sup>40</sup>. His work has little scholarly value: "[he] kept no careful records and did not mark his finds. His excavations have

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<sup>38</sup> Cooke, C. K. 'The Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments and Relics: A History', *Rhodesiana*, 24 (1971): p. 34 (Hereafter, Cooke, 'The Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments and Relics').

<sup>39</sup> Mvenge, George. 'Managing a Politically Sensitive Cultural Heritage Centre - The Case of Great Zimbabwe', Presentation (Private Papers): p. 1 (Hereafter, Mvenge, 'Managing a Politically Sensitive Cultural Heritage Centre').

<sup>40</sup> Garlake, Peter. *Great Zimbabwe*. Great Britain, 1973: p. 66.

therefore robbed us of statigraphical evidence which would have been invaluable"<sup>41</sup>. Bent's intentions were well meaning. His accounts, however, like Carl Mauch before him, concluded that Great Zimbabwe was the "Ophir of the Ancients and the source of the riches of King Solomon"<sup>42</sup>. These claims made the Ruins a target for treasure hunters. People like Sir John Willoughby, who in 1892 received official permission to investigate the Ruins, were not interested in archaeology but in money. Willoughby ransacked the site for gold and gold-plated objects. He was not alone: "It has been said that dinner parties were held near the ruins at Zimbabwe where each female guest was presented with a necklace made of gold beads found in the ruins"<sup>43</sup>.

Once again the colony's obsession with all mineral matters was the reason for these activities. This is not surprising considering the country's foundation was based on the Rudd Concession, which was a mining treaty. Cecil John Rhodes and the B.S.A. Company lured settlers to the new colony with the idea that Rhodesia was even richer in gold and diamonds than South Africa:

'The whole country', it was said, 'was one vast gold reef' ... The B.S.A. Company, anxious to ensure that equally wondrous stories reached investors in Britain, relied on the well-connected Sir John Willoughby to publicize reports of gold reefs 'averaging four feet in thickness, bearing three or four ounces to the ton'<sup>44</sup>.

In September 1895, the British South Africa Company granted the Rhodesia Ancient Ruins Limited exclusive "right to explore and work for treasure" at all of the ruin sites in Rhodesia<sup>45</sup>. Inevitably the Ancient Ruins Company was environmentally unfriendly.

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<sup>41</sup> Hartridge, National Museums and the Preservation of Monuments and Relics in Southern Rhodesia, 1889-1966, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> Cooke, 'The Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments and Relics', p. 32.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>44</sup> Phimister, Jan. An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe, 1890-1948, p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> Garlake, Great Zimbabwe, p. 70.



When Dr. Hans Sauer and his wife visited one of the aged stone complexes near Bulawayo they found the Company "mauling the old ruin in a scandalous manner"<sup>46</sup>. Sauer complained to his friend Cecil John Rhodes. He was not the only person to fault the B.S.A. Company for allowing the destruction of the country's historic sites. When criticism of their irresponsible behaviour mounted, the Administration belatedly passed laws to prevent further exploitation of Rhodesia's ruins. In January 1901 the British South Africa Company issued a proclamation:

Notice is hereby given that the Zimbabwe Ruins and the space within a radius of one mile from the top of the Zimbabwe Hill, are reserved by the Company for archaeological and scientific purposes solely ... no ploughing or excavating for private purposes will be permitted within the above mentioned radius. Any person infringing this regulation will render himself liable to prosecution<sup>47</sup>.

Although the notice only covered Great Zimbabwe, the Ancient Monuments Ordinance passed a year later was aimed to provide protection for all of Rhodesia's ruins and relics. Ancient Monuments were defined to cover all buildings, ruins, tombs, altars, statues and Bushmen paintings estimated to date from before 1800<sup>48</sup>.

The B.S.A. Company also appointed Richard Nicklin Hall, a well-known Rhodesian journalist and amateur archaeologist, Curator of Ancient Monuments. Hall had just finished co-authoring a book entitled The Ancient Ruins of Rhodesia. His partner on this project was W.G. Neal of the Ancient Ruins Company, whose participation in the book was probably an attempt to mitigate the bad publicity he had received over his mining activities. The Ancient Ruins of Rhodesia supported Mauch's and Bent's theories that the Ruins were built by an Arabian race and not by the local Africans.

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<sup>46</sup> Hartridge, National Museums and the Preservation of Monuments and Relics in Southern Rhodesia, 1889-1966, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

Hall's tenure as Curator of the Ruins lasted two years and though it was specified that his duties were "not scientific research but the preservation of the building" he undertook several excavations<sup>49</sup>. His work devastated much of the archaeological deposits within Great Zimbabwe: "His justification for this, in his grotesquely inapposite words, 'recent and timely preservation work', was that he was only removing 'the filth and decadence of the Kaffir occupation, presumably with the intention of revealing the remains of the 'ancient' builders'"<sup>50</sup>. In spite of his flawed work methods, Hall's second book Great Zimbabwe, and its hypothesis that the ruins were built by Sabaeans from the legendary Sheba in the Middle East, gained much appeal in the local European community.

In 1905 the British Association for the Advancement of Science sent a young archaeologist, Dr. David Randall-MacIver, to examine the Ruins. MacIver was a pupil of Flinders Petrie, the man who introduced the scientific techniques that are now standard procedures in archaeological excavations. The results of MacIver's work started a heated debate known as the Zimbabwe Controversy which raged for the next seventy-five years. In his book Mediaeval Rhodesia, MacIver concluded that Great Zimbabwe was built by the local Karanga tribe and that the earliest buildings were constructed in the 14th Century and not in Biblical times as Hall believed. In addition MacIver criticised Hall's unprofessionalism: "he was so worried about Hall's lack of ability as an archaeologist that he wrote a letter to Sir Lewis Michell [B.S.A. Company Director], begging him to use his influence to prevent his being allowed to excavate

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<sup>49</sup> Garlake, Great Zimbabwe, p. 72.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

again"<sup>51</sup>. Hall, who had become something of a local worthy, replied to MacIver's condemnation in his book Prehistoric Rhodesia, basically a personal tirade against MacIver. The Zimbabwe Controversy was not just an argument between the proponents of exotic origin and high antiquity (Diffusionists) and the supporters of indigenous origin and recent date (Indigenists) but also a dispute between "antiquarianism, based on the library and the cabinet of curiosities, and scientific archaeology, based on field studies and the laboratory"<sup>52</sup>. However, a deeper analysis of the Controversy reveals that it was much more than intellectual polemics.

David Chanaiwa contends that the "Zimbabwe Controversy reflects the late nineteenth and twentieth century racist/colourist biases and pseudo-scientific theories of the Europeans regarding the 'inherent inferiority' of the Negro race"<sup>53</sup>. European pseudo-scientific racism measured culture in technological and materialistic terms and by this standard black Africans were judged to have a primitive, stone age society<sup>54</sup>. Cultural superiority was used as justification by imperialists to legitimise the conquest, colonisation and domination of races that did not conform to European ideals of civilization. The majority of the settler community in Rhodesia fully subscribed to these beliefs. As the construction of a structure as massive and complex as Great Zimbabwe could only be the product of a highly organized and sophisticated people, Bent, Hall and their colonial compatriots could not attribute its building to the local Africans: "for most settlers ... the African had not got the energy, will, organization,

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<sup>51</sup> Hartridge, National Museums and the Preservation of Monuments and Relics in Southern Rhodesia, 1889-1966, p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> Summers, Roger. Zimbabwe. A Rhodesian Mystery. Johannesburg, 1965: p. 37.

<sup>53</sup> Chanaiwa, David. The Zimbabwe Controversy: A Case of Colonial Historiography. Syracuse, 1973: p. 7 (Hereafter, Chanaiwa, The Zimbabwe Controversy).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 72. Chanaiwa recommends Philip Curtin's The Image of Africa for a more detailed discussion of pseudo-scientific racism.

foresight or skill to build these walls. Indeed, he appeared so backward that it seems that his entire race could never have accomplished the task at any period. Emotional conjecture thus took on the attributes of racial theory"<sup>55</sup>. MacIver's proposal that the Karanga tribe did have a history and culture that could construct Great Zimbabwe was "contemptuously dismissed as being based on lack of first-hand knowledge of the Negro"<sup>56</sup>. This idea attacked the basis of colonial rule in Rhodesia, "[a]dmission of the existence of a 'native' Zimbabwe Civilization would have eradicated colonial legitimacy"<sup>57</sup>.

It is no wonder then that Hall's views found favour among the non-academic public of Rhodesia and South Africa. In these two countries "Great Zimbabwe ... quickly became a symbol of the essential rightness and justice of colonization and gave the subservience of the Shona an age-old precedent if not Biblical sanction"<sup>58</sup>. The diffusionist theory of high antiquity and foreign architects became the official line of the Rhodesian Administration. It appeared in school textbooks, and by the 1930s had become such an integral part of the colonial legacy that "certain Shona nationalists were using it to claim that even in the second millennium BC this country was being exploited by non-Africans and the local people forced to undertake enormous building projects"<sup>59</sup>. MacIver generally found supporters outside of Africa and among the academic world, but until black majority rule in 1980 "anybody [in Rhodesia] who questioned the validity of Hall's (or some similar) hypothesis was met by anything from

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<sup>55</sup> Garlake, *Great Zimbabwe*, p. 12. Garlake elaborates on this point further in his chapter on 'Archaeological Excavations', p. 79.

<sup>56</sup> Chanaiwa, *The Zimbabwe Controversy*, p. 74.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>58</sup> Garlake, *Great Zimbabwe*, p. 65.

<sup>59</sup> Summers, *Zimbabwe. A Rhodesian Mystery*, p. 29.

polite incredulity to downright abuse"<sup>60</sup>. The next important contribution to the Controversy came from Gertrude Caton-Thompson, another archaeologist selected in 1929 by the British Association for the Advancement of Science to "conduct renewed investigations into the more or less dormant question of the history of the Rhodesian Ruins"<sup>61</sup>.

Caton-Thompson's work at Great Zimbabwe is considered to be one of the most complete and thorough examination of the Ruins ever conducted. She had difficulties in locating a spot at the Ruins that had not been disturbed by Hall's and MacIver's excavations and by preservation work overseen by the Southern Rhodesian Public Works Department who were in charge of the Ruins from 1909-1936. Like Hall before them the Public Works conservators "considered that many walls could only be preserved by removing the deposits resting against them and they completed this task with little thought for the archaeological evidence thus destroyed"<sup>62</sup>. However, Caton-Thompson managed to find a relatively untouched section where she was able to carry out the first and only area excavation of the Ruins<sup>63</sup>. From this work Caton-Thompson came to the following conclusion: "examination of all the existing evidence, gathered from every quarter, still [cannot] produce ... one single item that is not in accordance with the claim of Bantu origin and medieval date"<sup>64</sup>. However, Caton-Thompson like MacIver found very little acceptance of her reports in Southern Africa. Rhodesia continued to promote Hall's ideas on Great Zimbabwe's antiquity and foreign heritage.

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>61</sup> Caton-Thompson, Gertrude. *The Zimbabwe Culture. Ruins and Recreation*. Oxford, 1931: p. 1.

<sup>62</sup> Garlake, *Great Zimbabwe*, p. 13.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>64</sup> Caton-Thompson, *The Zimbabwe Culture*, p. 199.

Until Responsible Government in 1923, the Zimbabwe Ruins were managed by various departments of the B.S.A. Company. The Company's police force under orders from the Administrator's Office took charge of the Ruins from 1891 until 1909. From this date the Public Works Department was given the job of maintaining Great Zimbabwe. In 1911 a British South Africa Company policeman, St. Clare Wallace, was initially appointed as unofficial caretaker but in 1913 he formally became Curator of the Ruins. By this time responsibility for Great Zimbabwe and other monuments was passed to the Commercial Branch of the Company with the view of enhancing them as tourist attractions. However, in 1916 the monuments returned to the Administrator's office and remained in its care until 1923. With the advent of self-government the Department of the Colonial Secretary took over the duties, including those concerned with Great Zimbabwe, previously assigned to the Administrator's Office.

In 1933 the National Historical Committee, formed for the 40th Anniversary Celebrations of the occupation of Matabeleland, recommended to the Government that along with a National Museum and Archives a Commission be created for the protection and preservation of the country's monuments. The Monuments and Relics Act was passed in May 1936. One month later the Minister of Internal Affairs (formerly called the Colonial Secretary) appointed trustees for the Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments and Relics. It is interesting that the Commission members consisted of two members from the Archives Commission, one of whom was also on the Board of Trustees of the National Museum, a second Museum Trustee, a member of the Museum staff, an archaeologist and the Secretary



for Native Affairs<sup>65</sup>. This was the beginning of a close association between the Monuments Commission and the National Museum. At the Commission's first meetings most of its business centred on the Zimbabwe Ruins and sites situated at the Matopos Hills.

### **Matopos**

Although the Matopos never experienced an academic conflict like the one over Great Zimbabwe it was the site of a physical contest between native Africans and European colonists during the Rebellions of 1896. While the clash concerning the Ruins represented a symbolic attempt by the colonists to justify their authority over the local population, the struggle in the hills of Matopos was where the colonists actually secured their domination over the black people of Rhodesia. Even before the coming of the white settlers Matopos figured in a number of historical events and even had a direct link with Great Zimbabwe: "[a]ll phases of human existence are represented here"<sup>66</sup>. Though not as symbolically momentous as the Zimbabwe Ruins, "the Matopos with their caves and Bushman paintings, the holy places, the graves of the greatest Matabele and the greatest Rhodesians, the superstitions and myths and tales of the war"<sup>67</sup> has witnessed more of Zimbabwe's history than any other place in the country.

The fantastic granite shapes that make up the Matopos Hills lend a supernatural feeling to the landscape. Therefore, it is not surprising that the local Africans believe this is

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<sup>65</sup> Hartridge, National Museums and the Preservation of Monuments and relics in Southern Rhodesia, 1889-1966, p. 29.

<sup>66</sup> Ndoro, Webber. A Brief Guide to the Archaeological Heritage of Zimbabwe. Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe, 1994: p. 13.

<sup>67</sup> Tredgold, The Matopos, p. 4.



the home of their supreme god, *Mlimo* (also called *Mwari*). According to legend the *Mlimo* shrine came to the Njelele Cave at Matopos after a religious upheaval at Great Zimbabwe<sup>68</sup>. However, Matopos' importance as a historical site started thousands of years before *Mlimo* arrived at Njelele. Scattered all over Zimbabwe's countryside are rock paintings by Late Stone Age San Hunters (the ancestors of the modern Bushman) 30 000 to 1000 years ago<sup>69</sup>. Many of these prehistoric works of art are concentrated in granite caves so it is no surprise to find a large number of painted walls in the stone outcrops of Matopos. Due to Matopos' vicinity to Bulawayo the rock paintings here "have been more closely examined by prehistorians than in any other area"<sup>70</sup>. Archaeologists did not just study the paintings but also conducted excavations in the caves. This approach provided a fuller picture of the lives of prehistoric San people including their hunting methods, their ceremonies, their tools and weapons and their spiritual and magical beliefs. Much of the "prehistory of [Zimbabwe] has been written ... as a result of archaeological studies in Matopos"<sup>71</sup>. Most of the larger and more important painted caves at Matopos were discovered by staff members of the Rhodesia Museum.

F.P. Mennell, the Museum's first Curator, located the Gulubahwe Cave in 1904. Inside this domed shelter is a painting of a huge undulating snake with a number of human and animal figures on its back and on either side of it. Many experts think this is a

<sup>68</sup> Summers, Roger and J. Blake-Thompson. 'Mlimo and Mwari: Notes on a Native Religion in Southern Rhodesia', *NADA*, 33 (1956): p. 56.

<sup>69</sup> Garlake, Peter. *The Painted Caves. An Introduction to the Prehistoric Art of Zimbabwe*. Harare, 1987: p. 5 (Hereafter, Garlake, *The Painted Caves*).

<sup>70</sup> Summers, Roger and C.K. Cooke. 'The Archaeology and Prehistory of the Hills', *The Matopos* by Sir Robert Tredgold. Salisbury, 1956: p. 39. This was still the case when Peter Garlake wrote *The Painted Caves* thirty years later: 'The Matopo Hills have seen a great deal more archaeological activity, over more years, than Mashonaland', p. 84.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* p, 39.

representation of the San idea of the Spiritual World<sup>72</sup>. In 1918 George Arnold, and Neville Jones, who eventually became Secretary of the Monuments Commission and Keeper of Antiquities at the National Museum, found the Bambata Cave. Although there are a large number of paintings at Bambata the cave is noted because of the numerous excavations that have taken place within it. Bambata has seen more archaeological digging than any other cave in Zimbabwe<sup>73</sup>. Neville Jones was also involved in the discovery of another important rock art cave. While looking for the legendary Cave of the Trees in 1922 Jones was shown Nswatugi Cave (Fig. 9) by an elderly local inhabitant. The name Nswatugi means 'place of jumping' in Karanga and comes from a local myth. According to the story the deity *Mlimo* apparently once jumped from his dwelling place at Njelele to the Kalanyoni Hill over the top of Nswatugi. In addition to the paintings (Fig. 10) which are among the most varied and colourful in Matopos, the Nswatugi Cave also held the oldest human remains ever found in Zimbabwe<sup>74</sup>.

Other exceptional painted sites in Matopos are situated at Pomongwe Cave, White Rhino Shelter (Fig. 11) and Silozwane Cave. However, Pomongwe's significance is due to an attempt to preserve the prehistoric paintings in the 1920s rather than the art forms alone. By applying a covering of oil and glycerine to the rock face, misguided conservationists seriously damaged the paintings which are now barely visible. As no other preservation efforts were undertaken at Matopos, unusual outline paintings like the ones at White Rhino Shelter survived intact (Figs. 12 & 13). Silozwane Cave (Fig. 14 & 15) is remarkable for carrying the full range of subjects and themes depicted in

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>73</sup> Garlake, *The Painted Caves*, p. 86.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

the Matopos' paintings. This cave was also used for religious ceremonies connected with rainmaking but the venue for these rites changed for reasons of privacy<sup>75</sup>.

Though the painted caves play a substantial part in Matopos' past for the first white settlers, these granite mounds were memorable for much more personal reasons. During the 1896 Matabele Rebellion a number of battles were fought near Matopos and after the Matabele were defeated they fled into the hills. The remains of the grain stores they built during this period still exist as testimony to the hardship they suffered while in hiding. When the Ndebele finally agreed to discuss terms for an armistice the Indabas (peace-talks) took place at locations in Matopos. It was here that the colonists finally sealed their control over the natives of Matabeleland. However, it was Cecil John Rhodes' death in 1902 that focused European attention and imparted a colonial reverence on the Matopos Hills. In his will Rhodes declared: "I admire the grandeur and loneliness of the Matopos in Rhodesia, and therefore I desire to be buried in the Matopos, on a hill that I used to visit and which I called the 'View of the World' in a square to be cut in the rock on the top of the hill"<sup>76</sup>. The man in charge of Rhodes' funeral H. Marshall Hole, the Civil Commissioner of Bulawayo, elaborated on Rhodes' choice of grave site in a letter to his father :

The grave is 26 miles south of Bulawayo ... situated at the summit of a bare solid hill of granite ... although not a very large hill itself, it commands a view of many miles in all directions [Fig. 16 & 17] ... But the chief peculiarity of the World's View Rock is that on its summit is a circle of huge isolated granite boulders 20 to 40 feet high, arranged in a ring like a Druidical Temple [Fig. 18], and it is within this ring that the grave has been sculptured [Fig. 19 & 20]<sup>77</sup>.

<sup>75</sup> Cooke, C.K. The Matopo Paintings. Bulawayo, 1960: p. 7.

<sup>76</sup> Tredgold, The Matopos, p. 12.

<sup>77</sup> Shee, 'The Burial of Cecil Rhodes', p. 41.

Even before Rhodes selected the View of the World as his burial place the hill was regarded as sacred by the Matabele. They called the spot *Malindidzimu* and believed it to be the dwelling place of benevolent spirits. At Rhodes' funeral ceremony the Matabele Chiefs asked that the firing party not discharge their rifles as it might disturb the spirits. Their request was granted and the Guard of Honour only "presented arms". The Chiefs responded with the Ndebele Salute "*Bayethe*" which was usually reserved for Matabele Kings and is the first and only time that a European has been given this tribute. Rhodes' Grave was the beginning of a trend that turned *Malindidzimu* into a revered place for the white colonists as well as for the Africans.

Close to the tomb of the founder of Rhodesia lie the remains of the men who made Rhodes' dream reality when they gave up their lives in 1893 fighting the 'savages' who inhabited Britain's new colony. The Allan Wilson Memorial also called the Shangani Monument (Fig. 21) was completed in 1904 with the following inscription: "Erected in the enduring memory of Allan Wilson and his men who fell in a fight against the Matabele on the Shangani River, December 4th, 1893. There was no survivor". The battle at Shangani was the result of Lobengula's retreat from Bulawayo in the face of an advancing B.S.A. Company army in November 1893. A separate force was sent out after the Matabele King with Major Allan Wilson's company on reconnaissance duty. The scouting party became trapped when the Shangani River flooded behind them and a Matabele attack was launched on their frontline. As stated on the Memorial, Allan Wilson and all his men were slain. This incident "provided the spiritual substance needed by whites for the next eighty odd years for their claim that they had sacrificed and were sacrificing for the establishment and maintenance of

Western, Christian civilised standards"<sup>78</sup>. Leander Starr Jameson, another colonial legend and Rhodes' right-hand man in Rhodesia, is also buried at World's View along with Charles Patrick John Coghlan, the first Premier of the Colony of Southern Rhodesia. The hill that is the home of the Africans' benevolent spirits was thus turned into a pilgrimage site where colonists could pay homage to the Great Men of Rhodesia.

Matopos also contains the graves of other famous men who are not directly connected to the colonial legend. During the 1896 Rebellion B.S.A. Company troops found a native tomb at Ntumbane Hill, about eight kilometres from View of the World. The tomb was a natural cave inside which was a skeleton propped up into a sitting position so that it appeared to be gazing out over the country.

On enquiring from the natives it turned out the skeleton was Moselikatze [Lobengula's father and the first King of the Matabele] ... Rhodes told [H. Marshall Hole] about this ... and said, "It is a fine idea. There is something grand about that old man sitting there and keeping guard over his country". There sits Moselikatze and there lies Rhodes too, looking out over the country he won for us - if ever a man had a suitable resting place it is this<sup>79</sup>.

Two of Mzilikazi's grandsons are buried in the vicinity and Lobengula's favourite sister is also entombed in one of the Matopos caves. It is rumoured that Lobengula's body was removed from his original grave near the Shangani River and interred with those of his father, but these stories remain unsubstantiated<sup>80</sup>. On top of acting like a gallery for prehistoric art, the Matopos Hills also behaves like a repository for the bones of some of the country's famous personages, rather like Westminster Abbey in England.

<sup>78</sup> Todd, Judith. 'White Policy and Politics, 1890-1980', *Turmoil and Tenacity. Zimbabwe 1890-1990*. Ed. Canaan Banana. Harare, 1989: p. 117. Dane Kennedy supports this theory in his book *Islands of White. Settler Society and Culture in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia* (Durham, USA, 1987): 'the retelling of such events as the massacre of the Wilson patrol ... served to inspire a sense of white settler nationalism', p. 137.

<sup>79</sup> Shee, 'The Burial of Cecil Rhodes', p. 42.

<sup>80</sup> Cooke, C.K. and Dawson Munjeri. *The Matopo Hills. A Guide*. Harare, 1992: p. 15.

Following the vandalism of the Shangani Memorial and other Matopos graves the B.S.A. Administration passed the Monuments, Vaults, Tombstones and Graves Protection Ordinance<sup>81</sup>. However, lured by reports of Mzilikazi's wealth, white treasure hunters desecrated the Ndebele Chief's tomb several times before the Historical Monuments Commission was formed to ensure that places like Matopos were protected.

Although Matopos was never really affected by mining issues, like all Rhodesia's major monuments and museums it was touched by Imperialistic ideals, perhaps more so than any other area in the country. The granite hills outside Bulawayo were the staging grounds for the realization of colonial ambitions. Great Zimbabwe, the Rhodesia Museum and the Queen Victoria Memorial Museum reflected the settlers' concerns and influences but Matopos was the action spot, the site where 'civilization' triumphed. By 1936, the colonists' culture had progressed to the point where it could claim national status and ensure that its heritage was adequately preserved. This meant the institutions that embodied this culture were becoming more and more entwined in the events that made up the country's history.

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<sup>81</sup> Hartridge, National Museums and the Preservation of Monuments and relics in Southern Rhodesia, 1889-1966, p. 8.



### Chapter 3

#### Growth and Development, 1936-1965.

After the nationalization of the Rhodesia Museum and the colony's monuments in 1936 the factors affecting the country's political development also impacted on its heritage organisations. The National Museum of Southern Rhodesia and the Historical Monuments Commission were government funded and therefore followed the agenda of the white minority. This entailed a glorification of colonial achievements and at the same time a degradation of black culture. However, the colonists did not only feel they were greater than the African but also "that they were different, and possibly superior to home-bred Britons, and whatever else they were not, they were not Africans ... even if they were of Africa ... They were a people set apart, a new nation uniquely separate from other whites of Africa or indeed the Commonwealth"<sup>1</sup>. These ideas eventually led to Rhodesia claiming an illegal independence from Britain in order that white minority rule could continue in the face of increasing resistance to its undemocratic principles both at home and abroad. As appendages of the Rhodesian Government the Museums and Monuments not only experienced but also contributed to the growing tension between black and white, as both races began to acquire separate and conflicting feelings of national identity.

#### **The National Museum of Southern Rhodesia**

For the first few years after attaining national status the Rhodesia Museum, now called the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia, was not directly influenced by the

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<sup>1</sup> Chennells, 'White Rhodesian Nationalism', p. 126.



government. The most noticeable change at the Museum was the expansion of its ethnology department. Neville Jones, the historian who discovered some of the more important cave paintings at Matopos, became Keeper of Prehistory, Ethnology and National History in 1937. In his first report Jones echoed a concern that had been voiced in 1909 by the then Curator of the Rhodesia Museum about the state of the Museum's ethnology collections: "The universal adoption of European manufactured articles is quickly resulting in the abandonment of such native crafts as were formerly practised, and the need for the collecting of objects representing the indigenous culture is a very pressing one"<sup>2</sup>. Obviously not much had been done about this problem since it was first remarked upon twenty-six years earlier, illustrating the low regard held towards 'native crafts'. However, with Neville Jones' appointment this previously neglected field began to undergo improvements. In 1942, Mr. A.E. Boyton the Additional Assistant Magistrate donated a male witchdoctor's outfit to the Museum. This donation was displayed in a case devoted to Witchcraft and Magic. What is significant about this gift is that it reveals the established European attitude towards African religion.

The witchdoctor in African culture was a traditional healer who also had the ability to communicate with the spirits. However, especially after the 1896 Rebellions the white colonists frowned upon such beliefs and practices. Many settlers blamed the uprisings on the spiritual leaders of the *Mwari* cult who according to the British South Africa Company reports fostered "a long-standing hostility based on 'superstition and

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<sup>2</sup> National Museum of Southern Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1937, p. 4.

witchcraft' towards Europeans"<sup>3</sup>. The white authorities subsequently prohibited witchdoctors from carrying out any of their customary functions and actively discouraged the African belief system. Any person caught indulging in 'witchcraft and magic' was prosecuted and jailed. The ban on traditional spiritual rites never had its desired effect and forty years on these 'magic' rituals were still an integral part of African culture. It is likely that Mr. A.E. Boyton as Assistant Magistrate obtained the witchdoctor's costume while he was overseeing the trial of a 'voodoo' man. Once in the Museum's possession the outfit was used to reinforce the misconceptions of the natives' barbaric and unchristian ways<sup>4</sup>. Instead of trying to analyse why the Africans refused to give up their traditional religion and its place in their life the National Museum staff treated the subject as a spectacle and thus supported the government's attempts to discredit the black person's culture and heritage.

In 1947 both George Arnold and Neville Jones retired, though both continued to work for the Museum on an unofficial basis. Reay Smithers and Roger Summers were the men employed respectively as Director and Keeper of Antiquities (formerly Prehistory, Ethnology and National History). Both were recruited from England which meant that Rhodesia's National Museum would be up-to-date with all the latest scholarly theories and techniques. However, this did not mean that the Museum's approach to the African was going to change. The European visitor count for the whole of 1948 was 34 821 while the estimated number for native attendance was 33 000. No definite

<sup>3</sup> British South Africa Company. The British South Africa Company Reports on the Native Disturbances in Rhodesia, 1896-7. The 96' Rebellions. Salisbury, 1975: p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Munjeri, 'Refocusing or Reorientation?', p. 448. Ivan Karp believes that the image of the witchdoctor implies that the natives "are savages, controlled by emotions and unable to calculate rationally", in 'Other Cultures in Museum Perspective', Exhibiting Cultures. The Poetics and Politics of Display. Ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine. Washington, 1991: p. 374 (Hereafter, Karp, 'Other Cultures').

figures for native visitors could be obtained because Africans were still required to enter the Museum by a side door. Although the numbers of Europeans and Africans seem comparable, the Museum was only open to natives one day a week. Roger Summers the new Keeper of Antiquities suggested that there was a need for more historical background on the African, but not to provide a better understanding and perhaps greater tolerance of native culture. He believed that because "Archaeologists are 'pure' scientists guided solely for a passion for facts ... their findings in Africa interpreted in the light of research in other parts of the world ... will ultimately provide a scientific basis and justification for Native Policy"<sup>5</sup>.

Instead of bringing a fresh perspective to the National Museum the new staff fell in line with the established guidelines and even fortified official arguments. In 1949 the Government placed the Museum's scientific officers on the Civil Service List, binding them even closer to the white administration. The Museum Director, Reay Smithers, however, decided to give the Museum a more solicitous and useful image. He was "anxious that the National Museum play a more important role in educational work in Southern Rhodesia"<sup>6</sup> and in 1949 successfully experimented "in conducting a party of educated Africans from the Location round the exhibition galleries"<sup>7</sup>. In addition, the Museum also now permitted Africans to come in for study purposes at any time besides the regular Tuesday hours. Though these were progressive measures the Museum's displays still celebrated white colonial achievements. In 1953 a special Rhodes Centenary exhibition entitled the "Court of Rhodes" was incorporated into the

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<sup>5</sup> Summers, Roger. 'The Present State of Archaeological and Ethnographical Research in Southern Rhodesia and Some Suggestions for Future Work', in the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia Annual Report, 1948, Supplement, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> National Museum of Southern Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1947, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> National Museum of Southern Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1949, p.12.

Museum's galleries in order to "illustrate the history of Rhodesia from the times of the Portuguese Pioneers, thus presenting a picture which should be invaluable to the public especially children, in gaining insight into the history of Rhodesia"<sup>8</sup>. This was also the year in which native admission restrictions were lifted. In the 1954 Annual Report Reay Smithers reported on the results of the new entrance policies:

Although school teachers, evangelists and other educated Africans are visiting the Museum in increasing numbers and are paying careful attention to the descriptive labels, many Africans appear to take little notice of them: usually, however, these visitors come in groups and one, better educated than the rest will explain things to them<sup>9</sup>.

The National Museum recognized that it was no longer feasible to depend solely on European patronage and accordingly adapted to accommodate more African visitors. Paul Matedza, a black school teacher, was employed as a guide and gallery assistant for the Africans. Throughout the 1950s native attendance continued to increase and the Museum became more involved in the African educational program. Talks and lectures for black school teachers were organised and museum cases and films sent out to African schools. Perhaps part of the museums' push to develop their educational role was brought about by the establishment of the University of Southern Rhodesia and the Rhodes Centenary Gallery in 1953. With the setting up of the University the museums lost their position as the foremost research centre in the country. Moreover, the Rhodes Centenary Gallery, which was created under the terms of the National Gallery Act of 1953, was receiving much praise for its encouragement of African arts. Frank McEwan, the Gallery's Director, stated the organisation's "long-term policy [was] to promote African art as a whole and specialize in art to be created locally by a

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<sup>8</sup> National Museums of Southern Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1953, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> National Museums of Southern Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1954, p. 5.

mixed population"<sup>10</sup>. The museums now had to compete for both funding and patrons and could no longer rely on their previous capacity as the only research and cultural institutions in the country. Their plans to play a wider part in the lives of the local black population, however, did not win universal support.

There was criticism from the white community over the Museum's new procedures and in 1959 Roger Summers, now Curator of the National Museum, had to defend the Museum's unrestricted entry policy: "While European attendances have remained fairly steady around the 40 000 mark, African attendances have increased by leaps and bounds now numbering at least 160 000 ... many come here in search of information and for the widening of their mental horizons ... using the Museum as it is intended to be used - for pleasurable instruction"<sup>11</sup>. To the European public this was very liberal, almost radical behaviour but in reality the Museum was still very much influenced by colonial ideology. As Dawson Munjeri explains: "the Africans who had, under adverse circumstances acquired a museumgoing tradition were compelled to look at exhibitions portraying white culture. Museums used this as a tool to dehumanize Africans and force them to accept white domination"<sup>12</sup>. This was particularly true for the National Museum's associates, the Queen Victoria Museum in Salisbury and the Umtali Museum, Umtali.

The Queen Victoria Memorial Museum applied to the Trustees of the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia in 1939 to take over the museum. However, with the

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<sup>10</sup> McEwan, Frank. 'Art Promotes Racial Understanding', Museum News, Vol. 39, No. 10 (1961): p. 37.

<sup>11</sup> National Museums of Southern Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1959, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Munjeri, 'Refocusing of Reorientation?', p. 452.

event of World War Two the issue was put aside. In the interim, the Queen Victoria Museum made modest but steady progress. By 1949, the Museum had a part-time Curator as well as two Honorary Keepers in Botany and Oology. The Curator, Mrs. Elizabeth Goodall, was an extremely learned scholar from Germany who had worked as a research assistant for Professor Leo Frobenius, an internationally renowned expert on African cultures and prehistoric art. She originally came to Rhodesia to examine rock paintings. From 1942 she held the position of Honorary Keeper of Prehistory at the Queen Victoria Memorial Museum and was made Curator in 1945. Though Goodall did some important work for the museum and rock painting, in general the Queen Victoria continued to languish. In 1951 the Museum finally broke away from the Library, and became the responsibility of the National Museums Board of Southern Rhodesia.

At this point the Queen Victoria Museum was in desperate need of new accommodation and a proper Curator. Kenneth Chapman, a zoologist from South Africa, successfully applied for the Curatorship of the Museum. He, however, resigned after three years without managing to overcome the Museum's numerous problems. His successor, Dr. J. F. Holleman, an energetic anthropologist made more headway: "reorganizing the galleries and [creating], with advanced techniques, an 'African Room' using the finest examples of the arts of the indigenous people of Mashonaland"<sup>13</sup>. At the same time, Elizabeth Goodall, who had been kept on as Keeper of Prehistory, was taking advantage of a donation scheme at the British Museum. Both in 1950 and 1953 Goodall had the good fortune to be in London at the

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<sup>13</sup> Whyte, 'The History of the Queen Victoria Museum', p. 6.



time when the British Museum was distributing its surplus ethnographic material to museums within the Empire. On her first trip she obtained 270 African objects and during her second visit she "applied for and received permission to choose a number of objects for the Queen Victoria Museum. This collection ... consist[ed] entirely of African weapons, and includes quivers and arrows, knives, clubs, throwing knives and ceremonial axes"<sup>14</sup>. Dr. Holleman incorporated these objects into the Wellcome Collection which was one of the five main exhibits at the Queen Victoria. This ethnographic display was basically composed of artefacts that Britain acquired through its colonisation campaigns and served to highlight white preeminence: "the material culture that was brought out of Africa, as a result of the 'civilising mission' of the white colonists is usually understood in most historical accounts as being relegated solely to the demeaning category of 'trophy' or 'curiosity'"<sup>15</sup>.

In 1956 Lieutenant Colonel H.L. Boulton, formerly with the Army Museum at the Sandhurst Royal Military Academy, was selected to head the Queen Victoria Museum. With his military background Boulton had interests mainly in things historical. Boulton and W.S. Rees, his Assistant Curator from Sandhurst who followed the Lieutenant Colonel to Salisbury, began collecting objects for a 'Pioneer Historical Exhibition': "there was no Historical Collection in the Museum and one of the main purposes of this exhibition was to stimulate interest in this type of material and bring together a nucleus on which a permanent collection could be built up"<sup>16</sup>. This display

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<sup>14</sup> National Museums of Southern Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1954, p. 17.

<sup>15</sup> Coombes, Annie E. Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England. New Haven, 1994: p. 2 (Hereafter, Coombes, Reinventing Africa).

<sup>16</sup> National Museums of Southern Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1957, p. 23.



proved to be very popular with the white public. However, the Ethnography Collection was sacrificed to make way for the new Historical Exhibition:

the part of the Museum formerly used for the purpose of displaying ethnographical and archaeological material had to be converted in order to make more room for the *Historic Exhibitions*; the inability to exhibit more of the life and arts of the indigenous people of the country is much regretted and regarded by the keeper of this section [Goodall] as a serious drawback<sup>17</sup>.

Even after the Queen Victoria Museum moved to bigger but temporary quarters in 1958 the focus remained on building up a History Department that celebrated Pioneer achievements and specialised in Rhodesiana.

This predilection for collecting 'historical' items was also seen at the Umtali Museum, which joined the National Museums in 1959. At this point the National Museums Board of Trustees designated Reay Smithers Director of Museums and charged him with the general administration of the three national museums (Roger Summers became Curator of the Bulawayo Museum). The Umtali Museum originated at a 1953 meeting of the Manicaland Branch of the Southern Rhodesia Hunters and Game Preservation Association. A year later the Umtali Museum Society was formed and by 1959 had established a small museum with Captain E.F. Boulton (not to be confused with Lieutenant Colonel H.L. Boulton of the Queen Victoria Museum, who by this time was no longer in the employ of the Museum) as Honorary Curator. Like his namesake in Salisbury, E.F. Boulton's interests strongly influenced the Umtali Museum's exhibits<sup>18</sup>. When the Museum was taken over by the National Museums Board it possessed an outstanding firearm collection and had "made a speciality of

<sup>17</sup> National Museums of Southern Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1957, p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> Broadley, Donald G. 'History of the Umtali Museum', Rhodesia Science News, Vol. 8, No. 5 (May 1974): p. 125.

collecting objects of ... early settlers"<sup>19</sup>. Unlike the Queen Victoria the Umtali Museum also concentrated on ethnographical items, especially those connected with the Eastern district. Though this was a favourable reflection on the Umtali Museum, the pride of its ethnographic display was that of the witchdoctor (the Queen Victoria also had a witchdoctor exhibit). Twenty years after the National Museum in Bulawayo had treated the same subject there was no change in white perceptions of native religion. For all their claims of being places of "pure research" Rhodesian museums had done nothing to advance a deeper awareness and appreciation of African culture and continued to support outdated colonial ideas.

In keeping with contemporary trends the National Museums of Southern Rhodesia shifted towards a more radical version of colonialism. Throughout the 1950s the number of blacks receiving some sort of formal education increased, as shown in Museum attendance figures. In 1951 25 000 Africans visited the museums and by 1954 this total had risen to 100 000<sup>20</sup>. The Director of Museums noted "there [was] a marked increase in the number of African teacher classes and Mission schools visiting"<sup>21</sup>. These educated Africans were now able to challenge the injustices of white rule using European-style arguments and tactics. In reality Rhodesian blacks were now equal to the whites in terms of education and civilization. 'White Man's Burden' was no longer a feasible excuse for the perpetuation of white domination and "ideologies about Empire began to become less and less tenable in Europe"<sup>22</sup>. Britain faced with several nationalist uprisings in its African colonies started to listen to African demands

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<sup>19</sup> National Museums of Southern Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1959, p. 20.

<sup>20</sup> National Museums of Southern Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1955, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> National Museums of Southern Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1952, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Chennells, 'White Rhodesian Nationalism', p. 134.

for a say in the government of their countries. White Rhodesians found this situation intolerable and began to move away from their motherland. In order to strengthen their position and retain control of the colony, they created a more complex and dogmatic colonial philosophy in which they accentuated their unique Rhodesian origins.

The National Museums did their 'bit' for the white nationalist cause by expanding their History Departments: "History in Rhodesia [was] normally considered to begin with the arrival of the Pioneer Column in 1890"<sup>23</sup>. Objects connected to Cecil John Rhodes, the founder of Rhodesia, were highly prized along with items belonging to other Rhodesian 'heroes'. The Umtali Museum proudly displayed Rhodes' medicine chest, clock, hunting crop and rifle, and his brother's shotgun, while the National Museum's most important accession of 1961 was a saddle used by Rhodes<sup>24</sup>. In 1962 the Queen Victoria Museum appointed Colonel A.S. Hickman Honorary Keeper of Pioneer History. By 1963, Hickman had gathered an impressive collection of Pioneer relics that included "a note written by C.D. Rudd when he thought he was dying of thirst in Bechaunaland in November 1888 whilst on his way to hand Lobengula's Concession to Cecil Rhodes ... If Rudd had not survived there might well have been no Rhodesia"<sup>25</sup>. There was also a special exhibit of the medals posthumously awarded to Major Allan Wilson and the Shangani Patrol and in another case a display that honoured Dr. Leander Starr Jameson<sup>26</sup>. Besides inspiring white patriotism with their

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<sup>23</sup> Huffiman, T.N. 'Department of Antiquities', Rhodesia Science News, Vol. 7, No. 11 (Nov 1973): p. 14.

<sup>24</sup> National Museums of Southern Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1961, p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> National Museums of Southern Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1963, p. 15.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

'historical' exhibitions the National Museums also indirectly documented the growing animosity between Rhodesia and Great Britain.

By the late 1950s all three national museums were severely handicapped by lack of space and often unsuitable accommodation conditions. The museums' collections had expanded beyond geology and ethnography to now include mammalogy, entomology, ornithology, ichthyology, herpetology, palaeontology, archaeology, medals, transport, weapons, Victoriana and stamps<sup>27</sup>. In 1959 the Government approved designs for three new museum buildings. At Salisbury and Umtali the authorities allocated land for the museums at the site of their planned Civic Centres. The buildings were completed in 1964. All of them were of modern design which is an interesting comment on Rhodesian society when Carol Duncan's and Allan Wallach's ideas on museum architecture are applied to the new museum structures. In their article "The Universal Survey Museum" Duncan and Wallach put forward the theory that

in common with ancient ceremonial monuments, museums embody and make visible the idea of the state. They do so in part through the use of Roman derived architectural rhetoric. This rhetoric has been used in public buildings since the Renaissance to symbolize state authority. By employing such forms as the Greco-Roman temple front, the dome of the Pantheon, or coffered ceilings, the museum, along with other public buildings, asserts its descent from the ideological, historical and political reality of imperial Rome<sup>28</sup>

All of Britain's major national museums and galleries, like the British Museum and the National Gallery (Figs. 22 & 23), followed this form of architecture and it was the favoured style in their colonies. These monumental buildings became powerful

<sup>27</sup> Bell-Cross, G. 'Editorial: The Queen Victoria Museum', *Rhodesia Science News*, Vol. 7, No. 11 (Nov 1973): p. 1 (Hereafter, Bell-Cross, 'Editorial: The Queen Victoria Museum'). Interestingly, ethnography, where African artefacts were classed, is not mentioned.

<sup>28</sup> Duncan, Carol and Alan Wallach. 'The Universal Museum Survey', *Art History* 3, No. 4 (Dec 1980): p. 450.

symbols of the British Imperial might. Also tied in with these neo-classical edifices was the notion of civilisation which "became identified with the history of high culture, and high culture was taken as tangible evidence of virtuous government"<sup>29</sup>.

By the 1960s, Britain's Rhodesian subjects believed the Imperial government was not 'virtuous' enough to rule them. The new museum buildings seem to reflect the colonists' disenchantment with their mother country. When comparing the old structures with the new, a definite break away from the neo-classical mould can be seen. While the National Museum's former premises (Fig. 24) would not be out of place next to the British Museum, its new home (Fig. 2) had no ties to traditional Imperial architecture. The Queen Victoria Memorial Building (Fig. 25) was a tribute by the first settlers to their British roots but the Queen Victoria Museum (Fig. 3) built sixty years later bore absolutely no resemblance to its predecessor. One of the main reasons given by the National Museums for new quarters was the increasing number of African visitors. However, when the museums moved to their bigger and more modern facilities African attendance did not carry on growing as it had in the past and in fact started to fall<sup>30</sup>. This had nothing to do with the architectural message that the museums advertised but was directly related to the political situation.

As the Rhodesian minority government became more determined to retain control, African nationalists stepped up their efforts to oppose white domination. The National Democratic Party (NDP), successor of a long line of political organisations that had fought for black rights, frustrated at their attempts so far to win black rights, began to

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 462.

<sup>30</sup> National Museums of Southern Rhodesia. *Annual Report, 1965*, p. 14.

espouse more revolutionary doctrines. In 1961 Enos Nkala, one of the NDP's leaders, indicated that one of the party's aims was "to destroy this so-called Western civilization"<sup>31</sup>.

On a cultural level the party, on Robert Mugabe's [now President of Zimbabwe] initiative, tried to inspire the spirit of 'self-sacrifice' which was marked by a rejection of European luxuries and habits and by emphasis of African culture in attire, music, diet, drinks and religion. This was supposed to inspire pride in African culture ... A culturally independent and proud people, it was thought, was likely to produce resolute fighters for political freedom<sup>32</sup>.

With this attitude fewer Africans were willing to go to a place that venerated colonialism.

However, white Rhodesians were becoming more supportive of the Museums and in 1965 they donated a record number of 'historical' accessions to these bastions of Rhodesian culture<sup>33</sup>. On the 11th November 1965, Ian Smith, the Rhodesian Prime Minister, signed the 'Unilateral Declaration of Independence' (UDI). In trying to lend some sort of legality to this action the breakaway Rhodesians claimed that they were still loyal to the Queen, and were forced to act because Britain's Labour Party Government was undermining their endeavours "to preserve Western 'standards' and 'Christian civilization' against black 'barbarism'"<sup>34</sup>. UDI had a tremendous impact on Rhodesia, the most traumatic and tragic result being the commencement of an armed struggle between white and black. The National Museums like all Rhodesian institutions were profoundly affected. All their decisions after 1965 were governed by the political situation.

<sup>31</sup> Bhebe, 'The Nationalist Struggle, 1957-1962', p. 95.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>33</sup> Whyte, 'The History of the Queen Victoria Museum', p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> *Zimbabwe Epic*. Ed. R.G.S. Douglas. Harare, 1984: p. 228.



### **Great Zimbabwe, Matopos and the Historical Monuments Commission.**

Rhodesia's monuments were more directly influenced by the Unilateral Declaration of Independence and the consequent civil war that ensued. Both Great Zimbabwe and Matopos were important symbols for the African nationalists. Great Zimbabwe represented the past glory of Rhodesia's indigenous blacks while Matopos was the site of the first *Chimurenga* (war of liberation) against white rule in 1896. The Rhodesian Government tried to dilute the ties between the nationalists and the monuments by imbuing the monuments with colonial attributes. From 1936 Great Zimbabwe and Matopos had come under the protection of the Commission for the Preservation of Historical Monuments and Relics. Besides administering the monuments the Commission also encouraged research especially in the field of archaeology:

A country which has no written records earlier than 1890 relies entirely on archaeological research for an objective view of its history and when the vast majority of a country's population consists of people unable to give any reason for their belief beyond "our fathers did it like this" then a knowledge of history is vital in comprehending their outlook ... the Commission's archaeological work ...[provides] the raw material for a more sober and realistic evaluation of Rhodesia's past<sup>35</sup>.

However, even with this attitude the Commission was unable to resolve the Zimbabwe Controversy and actually only added more fuel to the flames.

Great Zimbabwe had always been the Jewel in the Crown as far as the Monuments Commission was concerned. It was the only National Monument that had a full-time Curator and two African constables to protect it from vandalism. The Commission was eager to promote the Ruins as a tourist attraction and established a camping ground there in 1938. It was not until the 1950s, after the National Parks Trust came

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<sup>35</sup> Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments and Relics. Annual Report, 1955, p. 4.



into being and took over the tourist business, that the Historical Commission started to undertake serious archaeological work at Great Zimbabwe. By this time almost all of the National Museum staff was involved with the Commission: Neville Jones was its Chairman; Roger Summers the Secretary; and Reay Smithers a Trustee. In 1958 the Zimbabwe Ruins saw a great deal of activity. A site museum under the patronage of the National Museums of Southern Rhodesia was under construction and Roger Summers and K.S.R. Robinson, the Inspector of Monuments since 1946, conducted what was essentially the last complete archaeological excavation at Great Zimbabwe.

Summers and Robinson hoped that this work would put to rest the Controversy and produce indisputable evidence for one of the arguments. Although they did irrevocably prove that Great Zimbabwe was of a recent date and that its builders were the ancestors of the local Karanga tribe, they only provoked a more severe response from the diffusionists. The irrefutable proof came from carbon dating wood found within the wall structures of the Ruins. This was not the only data that indicated Great Zimbabwe was a local and not so ancient marvel. Pottery shards, beads and *daga* (mud cement) hut floors also contributed to Summer's and Robinson's findings but their conclusions did not sit well with many white Rhodesians including the Government. It is interesting to note that in 1953 Summers was "confirmed in [his] opinion that Zimbabwe and other Rhodesian ruins owe much to the Arab cultures in the Indian Ocean"<sup>36</sup>. However, in his and Robinson's book, Zimbabwe Excavations: 1958, which was published in 1961 he was of the complete opposite opinion. Two

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<sup>36</sup> National Museums of Southern Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1953, p. 11.

years later he confirmed himself as an indigenist in a second book Zimbabwe, a Rhodesian Mystery.

As was the norm there was a diffusionist response. Lieutenant Colonel H.L. Boulton (former Curator of the Queen Victoria Museum) entered the fray with his article "Zimbabwe and Solomon's Gold". Just before his contract at the Queen Victoria Museum had ended, Boulton had supervised an excavation of what he believed was a prehistoric burial site near Salisbury. Boulton concluded from the pottery found in the graves and the manner in which the skeletons were laid up that they were "not of the same race as the Africans today"<sup>37</sup>, and it was his "firm belief that it was the people buried in these places ... who built Zimbabwe"<sup>38</sup>. His was not the only reply to Summers and Robinson; A.J. Bruwer in his 1965 book Zimbabwe: Rhodesia's Ancient Greatness accused Summers of trying to undermine colonialism in Rhodesia. He believed "there was a movement afoot in Southern Rhodesia led by some politico-archaeologists 'to restore' Zimbabwe to what it is supposed to have looked like when the famous ancient builders and miners lived there, 'with a view to improving race relations'<sup>39</sup>. Far from settling the debate over Great Zimbabwe, Summers and Robinson merely stirred it up further, and with the volatile political situation in Rhodesia at the time the Controversy became more controversial.

As usual Matopos suffered more directly than Great Zimbabwe when the antagonism between African and European escalated. In 1965 the "caves on Shotshe Hill in the

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<sup>37</sup> Boulton, H.L. 'Zimbabwe and Solomon's Gold', Africa Calls, No. 4 (Nov/Dec 1960): p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>39</sup> Chanaiwa, The Zimbabwe Controversy, p. 126.

Matopo Hills have had a large number of political slogans written in them, fortunately with charcoal which is easily removed. It was from this hill that the Police recovered arms and ammunition hidden in the caves<sup>40</sup>. Matopos never enjoyed the same protection that was given to Great Zimbabwe. Since the Commission took over its administration in 1936 Matopos had always been a problem area for vandalism. In 1944, after repeated incidents of theft and destruction Mzilikazi's Grave at Entumbani was closed up. The Commission had to work on this site again in 1962 after vandals tried to break down the protective wall to remove relics. The year 1953 was a particularly bad one for Matopos: a number of the cave paintings were defaced and Cecil John Rhodes' grave was damaged (by white visitors) in spite of the presence of a native custodian.

This behaviour was part of the reason why Sir Robert Tredgold did not reveal the location of *Mlimo* shrine at Njelele Hill in his popular guide The Matopos. However, there was a description of the Njelele Cave given in the book that is intriguing in terms of the African concept of a museum:

Mlimo cave ... forms part of what is natural amphitheatre ... There are three entrances all well concealed and straight upwards of 100 feet. The space is swept out with an assortment of skulls and horns of big game, all more or less decayed, but of every sort and variety including two rhino horns and a small ivory tusk. In an adjoining chamber lie about 100 hoes, pots containing water, piles of tobacco, an odd pot containing cloth, beads and bangles and a few native-made hatchets, assegais and spears, all apparently votive offerings to propitiate the presiding deity<sup>41</sup>.

It is to the credit of the Historical Monuments Commission that they did not interfere with the shrine. It also did not try to procure the relics for display in a conventional

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<sup>40</sup> Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments and Relics. Annual Report, 1965, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Tredgold, The Matopos, p. 83.

museum, where once removed from their context the artefacts would lose their significance for the African.

In general, the Historical Monuments Commission was a more open-minded and forward-looking organisation than the National Museums. For instance from 1961 the Commission adopted a policy of training and appointing African Monuments Inspectors. Although the Senior Inspectorate were all European, the Commission's Secretary C.K. Cooke outlined the new plan in the 1961 Annual Report:

It is visualized that African personnel will, after training, be able to take over senior posts in the Inspectorate ... Under this system it will be possible for an African, once he has the desired qualifications and training to rise, on the same rates of pay, to a senior position ... This part of the report was agreed to but it was felt the implementation of it would present many difficulties under the present system of administration<sup>42</sup>.

However, because it was a government institution the Monuments Commission had to follow the official line. At Matopos the Commission while acting admirably in the case of the Njelele shrine remained a passive by-stander in the struggle between the policies of the white administration and the African traditions regarding the area.

Much of the trouble began in 1945 when Charles Murray, unofficial warden of the Matopos Park, ordered a survey of the land:

To Murray the importance of the land was not cultural or historical or even primarily scenic; the Matopos were important as the source of the rivers which fed the ranching country of southern Matabeleland, and in his view African occupation of the hills threatened these rivers through cultivation of the vleis and sponges and through over-grazing. African occupation should be ended, or at least greatly restricted<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments and Relics. Annual Report, p. 8-11.

<sup>43</sup> Ranger, Terence. 'Whose Heritage? The Case of the Matobo National Park', Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Jan 1989): p. 225 (Hereafter, Ranger, 'Whose Heritage?').

Murray's beliefs led to the eviction of thousands of Africans from the Matopos area. Though this does not seem to be connected with the work of the Historical Monuments Commission, the loss of the natives meant a loss of their culture which had been part of Matopos since the Late Iron Age and the San Hunters. The *Mlimo/Mwari* cult was particularly affected: "Until 1950 [Silozwane] Cave was used as a shrine of Mwari and a full moon ceremony was seen by Europeans about 1942. The increase in visitors and the removal of the Natives from the National Park has led to the decay of the shrine and its use appears to have been discontinued"<sup>44</sup>. Many other sacred places in Matopos succumbed to the fate of Silozwane but the Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments and Relics did nothing to save these African museums. The enlightened attitude the Commission displayed towards the Njelele shrine, which managed to remain intact during this period, gave way to sentiments that conformed with government policies that "unequivocally placed the interests of natural resources squarely above those of people"<sup>45</sup>. As the agenda of the Rhodesian government dominated everything including the Commission the country's monuments were coloured with interpretations that fit in with white colonial ambitions. Consequently, black nationalists targeted monuments like those at Matopos.

In October 1962, "Rhodes' grave was petrol bombed 'and a hole drilled through the plate"<sup>46</sup>. Matopos had become the focus of African nationalism in Matabeleland. This was the culmination of a growing bitterness that had started with the resettlement of the Matopos Africans in the 1950s:

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<sup>44</sup> Tredgold, *The Matopos*, p. 49.

<sup>45</sup> Ranger, 'Whose Heritage?', p. 232.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245 and in the Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments and Relics' *Annual Report, 1962*, p. 2.

The early 1960s saw the spread of nationalist party branches into the rural areas of Matabeleland and their ... increasingly violent resistance to government land 'reform'. The African 'permit-holders' left in the [Matopos] Park after the evictions of the 1950s were in the van of this movement towards violence. Determined to resist ... they moved from rumour and passive resistance to petrol bombs <sup>47</sup>.

In 1965 the incident at Shotshe Hill (where the political slogans and ammunition were discovered) served to spotlight the expanding animosity between the African nationalists and the white minority government as the latter adopted an increasingly inflexible stand against black aspirations for majority rule. Instead of disseminating knowledge objectively and aiming to encourage understanding between the different races, the Museums and Monuments added to the tension by expounding bias and racist theories, in the witchdoctor displays and the Zimbabwe Controversy for instance. The work of these two heritage organisations "should have been an emphasis on the truth about the country and all its peoples. Part of that truth was that the country was multiracial and its cultural wealth lay in the diversity of cultures, none of which was inferior to the others"<sup>48</sup>. However, the museums' and monuments' ties to the white government made them tools that were used to further distance the white and black people of Rhodesia rather than bring them closer together and in 1965 the tension between the two races led to civil war.

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<sup>47</sup> Ranger, 'Whose Heritage?', p. 244.

<sup>48</sup> Munjeri, 'Refocusing or Reorientation?', p. 454.

## Chapter 4

### UDI and the Liberation War, 1966-1980.

The impact of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence on the development of Rhodesia was immense. Not only did it isolate the country from the international community but the effects of the resultant war between the African and European devastated both society and industry. As Britain was no longer providing resources to its renegade colony and with United Nations trade sanctions in force Rhodesia's economy stumbled to a standstill. This, however, was not enough to stop Ian Smith's government from pouring almost all of the country's resources into a futile conflict against African freedom fighters. The struggle lasted fifteen years, even though the odds were always heavily stacked against the white minority. In order to maintain morale and create an illusion that all was still well the Rhodesian government imposed strict security and censorship regulations on all public organisations, including the Museums and Monuments. They became propaganda instruments that the administration used to broadcast ideas and theories that flattered colonial rule and condemned the black 'terrorists': "museums took a militaristic stance on the side of the oppressor"<sup>1</sup>.

With these limitations imposed on them the Museums and Monuments began to lose sight of their research functions. On top of this the conditions brought about by the war severely restricted the heritage industry from progressing. Though they performed a public-relations role for the government the Museums and Monuments were low on

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<sup>1</sup> Munjeri, 'Refocusing or Reorientation?', p. 452.



the list of priorities when it came to allocating scarce resources. Money was not the only problem; manpower and mechanical assets were also under serious strain. In the National Museums Annual Report for 1966, however, the situation was still reasonably 'normal'. There were only three politically related comments. They dealt with the reduction in the numbers of overseas visitors, the four and a half month military leave taken by the Keeper of Zoology at the National Museum and the implications of international disapproval of Rhodesia. Both the National Museums' Director and Curator of the National Museum, Bulawayo, considered this condemnation to be petty and unjust. G.L. Guy of the National Museum was unhappy because he "was invited to join the annual tour of U.S. Museums but the U.S. State Department confused science and politics and withdrew the invitation"<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, Reay Smithers from the National Museums of Rhodesia found it "unfortunate that certain international organisations who supported [the Museum] in the past in [its] research programme ... mixed politics and science and withdrew from the Rhodesian sphere"<sup>3</sup>. As if to show the outside world that it was wrong in isolating Rhodesia's scientific and cultural establishments Smithers introduced the 1966 Report with an in-depth commentary on the Museums' educational and research programmes. He especially emphasized the new African Guide/Lecturer service which did "much to increase the educational value of [the Museums'] exhibits to parties of African school children and to the casual African visitor.

In the following years the Museums' circumstances steadily grew worse. The Chairman of the National Museums Board of Trustees voiced concerns as early as

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<sup>2</sup> National Museums of Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1966, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

1967 over mounting staff problems: "the efficiency of the Museums will ... inevitably suffer unless funds are made available to enable additional professional staff to be engaged. This is even more necessary as senior members reach retirement date and no young men are at present being trained to take their places"<sup>4</sup>. In addition staff members were now being called up for military service on a regular basis. The acting Curator of the Queen Victoria Museum went on military duty at least twice a year from 1966 onwards. Field work was extremely constricted by petrol rationing and by the actual fighting which took place in the countryside. At the same time the Department of Internal Affairs, the National Museums' government supervisor, began to pay routine visits to the various museums<sup>5</sup>, probably to boost spirits and check that the country's cultural sector was performing its duty. If so the government could not complain, its museums were doing an exemplary job of promoting their cause.

The Queen Victoria Museum in 1966 put on a display of Gold Coins "which had been issued to commemorate the first anniversary of Independence"<sup>6</sup> and its Pioneer History Department made a number of loans to the Rhodesian Army for lecture purposes<sup>7</sup>. This Department saw increasing loan activity in subsequent years. In 1969, material was borrowed by the Ministry of Information for a Pioneer Display at the Salisbury Agricultural Show; the Rhodesian Light Infantry who needed historical weapons for their stand at the Trade Fair; and the Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation who used pioneer relics for a documentary on the 1890 Pioneer Column<sup>8</sup>. The Umtali Museum in the same year held a successful exhibition of terrorist weapons and accoutrements

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<sup>4</sup> National Museums of Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1967, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> National Museums of Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1968, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> National Museums of Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1966, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> National Museums of Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1969, p. 24.

over the very traditionally colonial 'Rhodes and Founders' holiday. In 1970 it was the National Museum's turn to assist with a film on the Shangani Patrol. The next year the Brady Barracks Army Museum bestowed a collection of historical items on the Museum. Rhodesia's museums were now fully fledged proponents of the colonial legacy. It is no wonder that by 1970 there was "a rather alarming decline in African visitors"<sup>9</sup>. The museums' stand for white ideals made them unappealing to the black population who were locked in armed conflict against these very principles. In view of this sentiment it is surprising that the museums did not experience more incidents like the one in 1969 when "a Rhodesian flag was pulled down, rolled up and thrown behind a case"<sup>10</sup> at the National Museum. Also, around the same period there was a theft of an unservicable firearm from one the Museum's display cases<sup>11</sup>.

Generally though the Museums fared much better than the Monuments in terms of being directly affected by the war. After the Shotshe Hill incident there were very few reports of political vandalism on Monuments. The most common offence was the scribbling of nationalistic slogans with charcoal on rock paintings<sup>12</sup>. These, however, did not cause any damage unlike the "two cases of paintings being coated with oil, probably by the same Europeans"<sup>13</sup>. For the sake of increasing the clarity of the paintings for photographic reasons these thoughtless vandals destroyed the protective layer that had preserved the art for thousands of years. If there were other occurrences of Monument defacement the Commission remained ignorant of them. The Annual Reports of the Commission after 1966 dealt mainly with monuments in the Matopos

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<sup>9</sup> National Museums of Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1970, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> National Museums of Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1969, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments. Annual Report, 1969, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

area. Some mention is made of petrol rationing and special permits for trips outside the city restricting tourists from visiting many of the Monuments. The Commission makes no comment on how these factors influenced them but it is obvious that they had to curtail many of their activities for the same reasons.

In addition the civil war "brought the conflict between white and black ideals for the Matopos to its sharpest point. White conservationists emphasised yet more stridently the unique natural heritage of the Park; the guerillas and their supporters emphasised black cultural rights to it"<sup>14</sup>. The Matopos residents were known to be staunch collaborators with the African freedom fighters though this was only mentioned in classified Federal Intelligence papers and not in the Monuments Commission reports<sup>15</sup>. Like the National Museums, the Commission was careful not to discuss events that could be politically sensitive.

The Zimbabwe Ruins, which had always heavily featured in the Commission's yearly accounts, were given very little coverage during this time. With the exception of the opening of a reconstructed nineteenth century Karanga Village in 1966, the Commission was not very forthcoming with regard to Great Zimbabwe. This was probably due to the Rhodesian government's censorship of all the fresh research that had been conducted on the Ruins. More accurate carbon dates verifying the indigenists' time estimations were obtained in the late 1960s but the "government not only refused to permit them to be [published] but ordered the removal of all dates from

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<sup>14</sup> Ranger, 'Whose Heritage', p. 245.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245.

the Zimbabwe displays in museums"<sup>16</sup>. The Commission's professional staff found the suppression of scientific data disturbing. In 1970 Peter Garlake quit his position as Senior Inspector and left the country<sup>17</sup>

after the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Smith regime, as a culmination of many attempts to diminish Zimbabwe's cultural heritage, "intimated" to the Historical Monuments Commission that "no irrefutable evidence is available as to the origins of the (Great Zimbabwe) ruins and that it would be wrong to allow particularly visitors of this country to be influenced unduly by one train of thought (that Great Zimbabwe was Zimbabwean)"<sup>18</sup>.

The Commission's reticence on Great Zimbabwe indicates the resolve of the Rhodesian authorities to prevent the black nationalists from using the monument as a symbol "of what local Africans could achieve with political unity and independence"<sup>19</sup>. However, the nationalists already saw Great Zimbabwe as material evidence of their proud and glorious cultural heritage: "From 1959 a majority of the African political parties carried Zimbabwe as part of their nomenclature"<sup>20</sup>.

In the meantime the white administration had successfully manipulated the diffusionist theory so that it had "become a national mythology of the Rhodesian colonialist society and the belief in it was part and parcel of the colonial psyche"<sup>21</sup>. Ian Smith, the Rhodesian Prime Minister, "repeatedly reiterated the diffusionist theory that the Africans had no civilization before the arrival of the British colonists"<sup>22</sup>. The Commission's 1971 Guide to the Zimbabwe Ruins written by its Director, C.K. Cooke,

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<sup>16</sup> Hanlon, Joseph. 'The Politics of African Archaeology', Nature, Vol. 285, No. 5759 (May 1980): p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.5, and in Garlake, Great Zimbabwe Described and Explained, p. 64.

<sup>18</sup> Garlake, Peter. 'Museums Remain Rooted in the Past', Moto (July 1982): p. 31 (Hereafter, Garlake, 'Museums Remain Rooted in the Past').

<sup>19</sup> Mvenge, 'Managing a Politically Sensitive Cultural Heritage Centre', p.1.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Chanaiwa, The Zimbabwe Controversy, p. 112.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

actually supported the indigenist argument. However, Cooke mitigated this rather revolutionary step by downplaying Great Zimbabwe's worth: "The building of Zimbabwe was a magnificent achievement but it is not the remnant of a past and wonderful civilisation. The crude building techniques, lack of bonding and the absence of any architectural plan all point towards a very unsophisticated approach"<sup>23</sup>. Even this critical version was unacceptable to the government and in 1975 the Commission issued another more neutral guide book. Although the indigenist view was represented there was a bias towards the diffusionist belief: "The theory that Great Zimbabwe (and other ruins like it) was Phoenician in origin was widely accepted by historians and other eminent scholars, and indeed it was the only respectable theory for more than 300 years"<sup>24</sup>.

In 1971 the government decided to merge the National Museums of Rhodesia and the Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments. This may have been done to streamline operations with the intent of saving scarce resources. For instance the Queen Victoria Museum advertised for a Keeper of Antiquities in 1971 but "no suitable candidate was available"<sup>25</sup>. When the Museums and Monuments amalgamated in October 1972 the Inspectors of Monuments became the Keepers/Inspectors of Antiquities, which solved the Queen Victoria Museum's staff shortage. The National Museums and Monuments of Rhodesia Act (Appendix 3) also allowed the government to make sure all of its heritage organisations followed the same guidelines and therefore presented a consistent colonial image. Staff from the

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<sup>23</sup> Cooke, C.K. Guide to the Zimbabwe Ruins. Bulawayo, 1971: p. 54.

<sup>24</sup> Huffman, T.N. A Guide to the Great Zimbabwe Ruins. Salisbury, 1976: p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> National Museums of Rhodesia. Annual Report, p. 3



Historical Monuments Commission now answered to the Curators of the National Museums, which had better track records in promoting white settler ideology.

The National Museums and Monuments Annual Report for 1972-1973 (the year covered in the Report now ran from June to May and not January to December as previously) touched upon the issues that were to dominate this organisation's affairs for the next eight years. First was the "problem of reconciling national interest with safe guarding the scientific future" of Great Zimbabwe. The 1975 guide book of the Ruins illustrates the National Museums and Monuments choice of national over scientific concerns. Secondly, the war was starting to seriously hinder the Museums' and Monuments' basic administration: Peter Locke, the National Museum's geologist, "was required to report for one year's peace-time training"<sup>26</sup>; and N. Walker, Keeper/Inspector of Antiquities "was absent on military service and leave for almost two months"<sup>27</sup>. The situation was not about to improve. However, there were some bright spots. In 1973 the Rhodesia Science News, a popular local journal, dedicated three of its issues to the three national museums. "A Short History of the National Museum", written by its curator, V.J. Wilson, was the article that tried to claim Cecil Rhodes was personally involved in the creation of the museum (see page 12). This alleged connection with the man who founded Rhodesia was appropriate in a time when Rhodes' chosen people were under threat. The claim also strengthened perceptions of the museum as a stalwart colonial institution. However, the other Rhodesia Science News essays concentrated on emphasizing the museums' public services.

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<sup>26</sup> National Museums and Monuments of Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1972-1973, p. 10.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 13.



In the editorial of the edition dedicated to the National Museum, Bulawayo, the Director of the National Museums and Monuments, Reay Smithers, gave a detailed description of the museums' purposes, based on the definition given by Miers and Markham in 1932:

1. to store and collect objects of cultural and educational value in such a manner as to render them of interest and educational value to the general public, to children and adults seeking instruction, and to advanced students and investigators,
2. to carry out research by their staffs on collections available and on material collected from the region which the Museum serves,
3. to aid the educational service of the territory in which the museum is situated<sup>28</sup>.

The museum staff seemed keen to present their organisation in an altruistic light. G. Bell-Cross, the curator of the Queen Victoria Museum, wrote: "We are here primarily for your enjoyment and edification and our only regret is that we sometimes feel that our facility, which has so much to offer to the public, is insufficiently utilised"<sup>29</sup>. Besides being the year of the big publicity boost, 1973 saw the Midlands Museum Society approach the Trustees of the National Museums and Monuments. The Society wanted the National Museums and Monuments to assume responsibility for the museum they had established in Gwelo. A year later Rhodesia had four national museums. The satisfaction of this development, though, was short-lived in the face of the mounting intensity and ferocity of the Liberation War.

The 1973-1974 Annual Report continued in the same vein as the previous year. Again military call-up and leave seriously curtailed the museums' activities and "security operations in the North East have also precluded proper attention to the monuments in

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<sup>28</sup> Smithers, Reay. 'Editorial: The National Museum, Bulawayo', *Rhodesia Science News*, Vol. 7, No. 10 (Oct 1973): p. 275.

<sup>29</sup> Bell-Cross, 'Editorial: The Queen Victoria Museum', p. 1.

this area"<sup>30</sup>. Security considerations also affected field work in the Umtali region: "With the exception of a short trip to Gonarezhou Game Reserve, all fieldwork was carried out within Manicaland, in fact well over half of it was conducted within the Umtali Municipal Area"<sup>31</sup>. From 1974 to 1977 the National Museums and Monuments Annual Reports were produced only for internal circulation. In them the Chairman of the Board of Trustees and the new Executive Director, M.A. Raath who took over when Reay Smithers resigned after thirty years service, gave an in-depth and frank portrayal of the museums' and monuments' plight. Some of the "difficulties besetting the Organisation includ[ed] financial stricture, military commitments, difficulty gaining access to work in security-sensitive regions"<sup>32</sup>. The Zimbabwe Ruins saw a drastic drop in visitors that impacted on its income, while other monuments could not be inspected because of fighting in those areas<sup>33</sup>. The highlight of this Report was the success of plans for the new Boulton Gallery at the Umtali Museum that would house the display 'Rhodesians at War', a chronicle of "the wars in which Rhodesians have served throughout history, including the current anti-terrorist operations"<sup>34</sup>. This exhibition was blatantly political: "The fact that white museum personnel, directors downward, were in active military service through the call-up system may explain this militaristic tendency"<sup>35</sup>.

In the next year, 1976-1977, military call-ups for the museum staff intensified as Rhodesia's armed struggle entered its tenth year. The Chairman of the Board of

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<sup>30</sup> National Museums and Monuments of Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1973-1974, p. 13.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>32</sup> National Museums and Monuments of Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1975-1976, p. 8.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 13..

<sup>35</sup> Munjeri, 'Refocusing or Reorientation?', p. 452.

Trustees for the National Museums and Monuments indicated that this was becoming a serious problem: "While it is conceded that this is a problem which faces the whole country ... it is my duty to make the point that the specialist staff whom we employ are not readily replaced"<sup>36</sup>. He also mentioned growing anxiety among museum employees over the future and security of their jobs in view of the discouraging political state of affairs. Although very little field work was undertaken the National Museums and Monuments encouraged staff to tackle research 'backlogs'. However, even this attempt to keep up morale and make the best of a bad situation succumbed to the conditions imposed by the war. The large numbers of finished research papers that resulted from work on the backlogs were withheld from publication because of monetary constraints<sup>37</sup>. It is no surprise then that the National Museums and Monuments experienced a high turnover of scientific and technical staff. The post of archaeologist at Great Zimbabwe was frozen: "the security situation in the South East Lowveld made it unlikely that a replacement archaeologist could be recruited at the time the vacancy occurred, and, even if one had been, the possibilities of work in the field would have been severely restricted"<sup>38</sup>. A year later the Executive Director, the Deputy Executive Director and the Inspector/Keeper of Antiquities for Mashonaland all resigned from the National Museums and Monuments of Rhodesia to take up more secure and rewarding positions at universities in South Africa.

As the Annual Reports were once again open to public scrutiny the Chairman and outgoing Executive Director touched on these issues briefly in their 1977-1978

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<sup>36</sup> National Museums and Monuments of Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1976-1977, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

reviews. The previous Internal Annual Reports indicated exactly how badly the National Museums and Monuments were faring and indeed how the country as a whole was doing. In public however, the government wanted to keep up an appearance of normality and so the 1977-1978 reports contained as little discouraging information as possible. However, they could not avoid painting a depressing picture even though "the brighter side of achievement in the Organisation [was] emphasised"<sup>39</sup>.

Besides the flurry of resignations "it was a year characterised by financial difficulty and by frustrations for staff affected by frequent call ups, and inability to get into the field to pursue research projects"<sup>40</sup>. A majority of the new staff members at the National Museums and Monuments were women, which was perhaps a sign that the war was not going well for the Rhodesian government. It was losing more and more men to the army and to other countries. Things reached a peak in the 1978-1979 period. Developments at the Zimbabwe Ruins hinted at the direction of the war: "At Great Zimbabwe visitor figures dwindled steadily throughout the year to an all time low of 40 in June. The Ruins were closed to the public at the end of June and the Director and staff were moved to Fort Victoria"<sup>41</sup>. A few months later several of the buildings on the Great Zimbabwe estate came under, in the words of the new Executive Director, "terrorist or terrorist-inspired" action and were burnt down. However, none of the ruin structures were touched. As this incident illustrates, the Rhodesians were not doing well in the fight for the maintenance of white rule. By the end of 1979 Ian Smith agreed to peace negotiations with the African freedom fighters. The two parties met at

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<sup>39</sup> National Museums and Monuments of Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1977-1978, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>41</sup> National Museums and Monuments of Rhodesia. Annual Report, 1978-1979, p. 3.

Lancaster House in England and under the mediation of the British Government "decided on a process that would involve a cease-fire, the ending of the war, the holding of election, the ending of sanctions and the formalising of Zimbabwe's Independence by Britain - all within a period of less than six months"<sup>42</sup>. By April 1980, Rhodesia was no longer. Instead Zimbabwe now had a black majority government and was preparing to celebrate its official independence from Britain.

For the National Museums and Monuments there was renewed optimism. Field work and inspection of the monuments recommenced, though there were still travel restrictions and a shortage of funds. The two main issues on the National Museums and Monuments agenda for 1979-1980 were the restoration of Great Zimbabwe and the centralisation of the national collections at particular museums. The damage suffered by Great Zimbabwe was not too serious and by February 1980 the National Monument was ready for visitors, who came in dramatic numbers. In 1979-1980 Great Zimbabwe attracted only 6,676 patrons but in the following year, 1980-1981, this number shot up to 38,455<sup>43</sup>. As a result of a forward-planning exercise the National Museums and Monuments decided to consolidate the major national collections at different museums. Under this scheme "all natural history collection [were] consolidated at the National Museum in Bulawayo, archaeology and ethnography at the Queen Victoria Museum, Salisbury, militaria at the Midlands Museum, Gwelo and all other antiquities at the Umtali Museum"<sup>44</sup>. Though at the time

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<sup>42</sup> Zimbabwe Epic, Ed. R.G.S. Douglas, p. 253.

<sup>43</sup> National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe. Annual Report, 1979-1980, p. 12.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

this seemed like a progressive move, Dawson Munjeri contends that the centralization of 1979 had

disastrous effects on research and on collections. The *raison d'être* of centralization was the establishment of ludicrous "centers of learning". The dictates of the natural sciences and a xenophobia about indigenous cultures led to the eradication in one fell swoop of research on ethnographic and anthropological topics in Bulawayo, Mutare [Umtali] and Masvingo [Fort Victoria, Great Zimbabwe]. By some strange criterion, cultural material of white origin was first classified as historical and then as antiquarian, thereby finding its way to the Mutare Museum, where in the words of P.J. Ucko, it would be proper to set up a white-culture house<sup>45</sup>.

Unfortunately for the National Museums and Monuments the cessation of hostilities did not mean an end to their problems. In reality this was the beginning of a painful and challenging period of change. The colonial state was defeated and in its place stood a free but inexperienced black nation. As with many of the new country's institutions the National Museums and Monuments was a product of the white settler regime, and for eighty years it had glorified that regime at the expense of the black population. For the last fifteen years the organisation had been at war against what was now its government. The staff of the National Museums and Monuments were in for a shock. They and many other 'Rhodesians' would have to throw out everything they had believed in and embrace the ideology of Zimbabwe.

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<sup>45</sup> Munjeri, 'Refocusing or Reorientation?', p. 450.

## Chapter 5

### After Independence, 1980-1990.

With the advent of black majority rule in 1980 the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (hereafter NMMZ) faced a new era of change and challenge. The still all- white museum administration, however, did not seem to realise how fundamental and difficult these changes would have to be in order for the NMMZ to fulfil a useful function in Zimbabwean society: "Many of those entrenched in power in Zimbabwe prior to Independence do not readily accept the desirability or necessity for change; nor can they envisage a role for the museum different to their colonial role"<sup>1</sup>. What the NMMZ staff had to realise was that the culture they had ignored and degraded from 1902 on now demanded full recognition and respect. By following the colonial system the museums and monuments had denied white Rhodesians the "opportunity of learning about the real life and culture of their black counterparts"<sup>2</sup>. Instead they gained a reputation as Eurocentric and racist institutions. It is not surprising, therefore, that the majority black population "had no reason then or in the 1980s to share in the aims and activities of the NMMZ"<sup>3</sup> and that some believed that "the whole service should be disbanded on the grounds that the museums were a European concept"<sup>4</sup>. On top of these obstacles the National Museums and Monuments were also subject, as they always had been, to the political and social currents shaping the

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<sup>1</sup> Ucko, Peter J. 'Museums and Sites: Cultures of the Past within Education - Zimbabwe Some Ten Years On', in *The Presented Past. Heritage, Museums and Education*. Ed. Peter G. Stone and Brian L. Molyneaux. London, 1994: p. 240. (Hereafter, Ucko, 'Museums and Sites')

<sup>2</sup> Munjeri, 'Refocusing or Reorientation?', p. 453.

<sup>3</sup> Ucko, 'Museums and Sites', p. 241.

<sup>4</sup> Munjeri, 'Refocusing or Reorientation', p. 454. Peter Ucko also discusses this opposition to the NMMZ in 'Museums and Sites', p. 239.



country. The victory of the black nationalists did not magically solve Zimbabwe's troubles and in fact Independence brought with it a whole new range of problems.

For the NMMZ, however, the first few years after 1980 seemed very hopeful. Its grant from the government increased by 38 percent and "the organisation return[ed] to something approaching its pre-war level of operations, with staff going out into the field again on collecting expeditions and also travelling abroad to conferences and workshops"<sup>5</sup>. National monuments could again be inspected and visitor numbers had increased, particularly at Great Zimbabwe where there was a tremendous rise in attendance<sup>6</sup>. This National Monument's site museum was restored and proudly displayed "the Zimbabwe Birds that had been brought together again from Cape Town, Bulawayo and Salisbury for the first time in almost a century"<sup>7</sup>. In a slightly contentious move, the NMMZ exchanged the country's national collection of Hymenoptera for five of the Birds from the South African Museum, Cape Town. This action was in keeping with the "determined politically motivated programs to find the Great Zimbabwe its rightful place in the national consciousness"<sup>8</sup> by the country's political leaders.

The Great Zimbabwe National Monument's interpretation as a symbol of African power led it back to the centre of controversy. The 'Zimbabwe Controversy' was largely laid to rest by the new black government, but inevitably its eagerness to make this historical site the focus of the nationalistic and patriotic feeling introduced a host

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<sup>5</sup> National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ). Annual Report, 1980-1981, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>8</sup> Mvenge, 'Managing a Politically Sensitive Cultural Heritage Centre', p. 2.

fresh debates and arguments. A case involving a spirit medium practising at Great Zimbabwe in 1980 depicts some issues that affected the National Monument after Independence. According to C.K. Cooke, the acting Regional Director for the Southern Region,

Sophia, a false self-proclaimed reincarnation of the Spirit Medium, Mbuya Nehanda, was the cause of a great deal of unnecessary damage and repair work in the Great Zimbabwe area. She not only instigated the removal of barriers and notices, but the safety of the Conical Tower was endangered by her operations. After a number of complaints and two double murders, the Minister of Home Affairs at a meeting of Chiefs and Headmen at Great Zimbabwe, ordered her apprehension ... she was arrested. Before doing this, some of her minions were shot or injured by Police who returned their fire<sup>9</sup>.

This NMMZ account of the 'Sophia' incident makes it out to be a serious and threatening instance of vandalism. The Ministry of Home Affairs, the NMMZ's governing body, seemed perfectly justified in calling for her arrest.

However, Peter Ucko points out that during the Liberation War Great Zimbabwe was "host to local *n'angass* [traditional healers and diviners or the colonial witchdoctor] and to major spirit mediums, as well as being the focus against the colonial regime in its last years"<sup>10</sup>. Sophia was "a spirit medium of extreme importance to the revolutionary anti-imperialist movement who was based (from 1974) within the 'archaeological' site of Great Zimbabwe"<sup>11</sup>. Ucko believes that by arresting Sophia the NMMZ chose to "support the view of the nationally symbolic site of Great Zimbabwe as an impressive static mass of cemented and reconstructed walls" and alienated the local community rather than admit that "the living focus of local attention is Great

<sup>9</sup> NMMZ. Annual Report, 1980-1981, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup> Ucko, 'Museums and Sites', p. 274.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 274.

Zimbabwe's sacred caves"<sup>12</sup>. The NMMZ faced a similar quandary when trying to deal with baboons who from 1979 on were "an ever present source of danger to the Ruins. They turn[ed] over stones in their search for food and as a result often dislodge[d] parts of the walling"<sup>13</sup>. Measures by the NMMZ and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management to exterminate the baboons were frowned upon by the locals,

who [took] such wall collapses to be the 'spirits destroying their own sites with the intention of making a shift of their home ... these spirits may use anybody or wild animals to do it'. Simply to recognize baboons as one of the exogenous causes of Great Zimbabwe's ... wall collapses and imposing various western solutions (including shooting) to prevent them from continuing to do so may be culturally counter-productive"<sup>14</sup>.

Whether to observe traditional African beliefs or ignore these customs like the colonists had done previously in the interests of nationalistic pride was one of the key challenges of the NMMZ after 1980.

The solutions advanced by the NMMZ in the early 1980s, however, did not really address the problem of the people's wishes versus country's needs. H. D. Jackson, the NMMZ's Executive Director, proudly pointed out that "over the past three years the proportion of Africans in the Officer grades has risen from 6% to 38%"<sup>15</sup>. This was in line with the Zimbabwe government's policy of 'Indigenisation' which was aimed at equalising the racial imbalance in the workplace, where a majority of the senior and managerial posts were held by whites. With more Africans holding positions like S.T. Nduku, the female Curator of Ethnography at the Queen Victoria Museum, the NMMZ believed that it was on its way to a deeper understanding with its new black

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

<sup>13</sup> NMMZ. *Annual Report, 1979-1980*, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> Ucko, 'Museums and Sites', p. 272.

<sup>15</sup> NMMZ. *Annual Report, 1980-1981*, p. 7

audience. In addition, Nduku was researching the ethno-history of the Zimbabwe people<sup>16</sup>. She went on field trips to visit chiefs and tribal elders to record their oral traditions and collect ethnographical material from different regions. Under her supervision the Queen Victoria Museum with the assistance of local women began reconstructing a Shona Village for one of its display galleries. All these activities were intended to bring the NMMZ closer to the indigenous population, as was the Mobile Museums project. This was an experiment calculated to "take the museum to the people" in remote rural areas by deploying trailer trucks carrying samples and materials prepared by the museums' Education Officers<sup>17</sup>. However, due to lack of funds there were only ever two Mobile Museums in operation.

The year 1982-1983 saw further efforts by the NMMZ to implement the Presidential Directive of Indigenisation. H.D. Jackson voluntarily stood down from his position as Executive Director to become a Regional Director and Dr. F.P. Matipano took up the directorship of the NMMZ. S.T. Nduku was made Regional Director of the Northern Region while the newly introduced Deputy Regional Director posts were all filled by black Zimbabweans<sup>18</sup>. Also, in accordance with the socialist policies of the Zimbabwe government Workers' Committees and Works Councils were formed to represent the concerns of the non-administrative staff<sup>19</sup>. The appointment of an African Assistant Public Relations Officer "allowed a more ready contact with the indigenous population groups"<sup>20</sup> and indicated the NMMZ was attempting to make the organisation a meaningful part of the black community. In spite of all the staff advancements the

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<sup>16</sup> NMMZ. Annual Report, 1980-1981, p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> NMMZ. Annual Report, 1981-1982, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> NMMZ. Annual Report, 1982-1983, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

NMMZ suffered under the two negative influences that were affecting the country at the time. The world recession impacted on visitor numbers as fewer foreign tourists came to Zimbabwe<sup>21</sup> but the more serious results of the depressed economy were the money and petrol shortages it brought about. This meant a reduction in field trips and monument inspections and also the failure of the Mobile Museums project.

However, also during this period was the internal fighting between the rival Matabele and Shona political factions. The government conducted a heavily censored armed campaign against Matabele 'dissidents' who were unhappy with the Shona dominated administration. Most Zimbabweans outside Matabeleland had little idea of the seriousness of the situation because of the government-imposed press blackout. The only reference to the trouble in the NMMZ's Annual Report was a comment that travel restrictions had affected the Monuments in the Western Region. There was also mention of travel restrictions and the closure of several monuments in the Eastern Region. The reason given for the closures was vandalism, but at that time Mozambiquean rebel guerrillas were known to be operating in the area. Accounts by the NMMZ, however, did not intimate the gravity of the circumstances causing the travel restrictions.

At the Queen Victoria Museum these events were of little consequence. George Mvenge, the new Curator of Ethnography, and S.T. Nduku, the Regional Director, both made several trips to purchase ethnographic items from several different provinces. At all the places they visited they gave talks "on the concept of museums

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

and what type of artefacts [were] required"<sup>22</sup>. Again these were attempts to bring the NMMZ nearer to the people. At the Midlands Museum (formerly the Gwelo Museum), Gweru, plans were "on hand to provide a more representative view of the Liberation struggle within the museum's exhibitions"<sup>23</sup> in a bid to bring the museum in line with Zimbabwe's new history. The most far-reaching efforts by the NMMZ to make the organisation more relevant to the lives of the Zimbabwean public took place at Great Zimbabwe following the appointment of Dr. Kenneth Mufuka in May 1982.

Mufuka was a Zimbabwean scholar, who before taking up the position of Director at Great Zimbabwe had been a lecturer in African History at an American University. He arrived at the National Monument determined to "fix on the conscience of the black Zimbabweans the historical significance of Great Zimbabwe"<sup>24</sup>. In order to correct the diffusionist interpretations that had dominated Great Zimbabwe during the colonial years Mufuka decided to concentrate research on oral evidence. His book Dzimbabwe Life and Politics in the Golden Age, published in 1983, "introduced a new genre of racist writing ... It reject[ed] all archaeological and historical research as 'intellectual imperialism'"<sup>25</sup>. Moreover, he was reluctant to "submit his material to normal processes of analysis and criticism" and defended his work "on the basis that it was correct because it was written by an African"<sup>26</sup>. It was, however, Mufuka's achievements in the preservation of Great Zimbabwe that made the biggest impression.

He literally translated the ruling party's slogan "to rebuild' Zimbabwe and sought to make his contributions by proceeding to rebuild the collapsed walls without reference to internationally recommended procedures for reconstructing archaeological sites such as Great Zimbabwe ... It must be

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>25</sup> Garlake, Great Zimbabwe Described and Explained, p. 63.

<sup>26</sup> Mvenge, 'Managing a Politically Sensitive Cultural Heritage Centre', p. 3.



noted that while Mufuka's efforts were criticised by colleagues in the conservation profession his efforts were quietly praised by politicians who saw the continued existence of the ruins an embarrassment that Mufuka was rightly correcting. Mufuka left in 1985, but he had managed to rekindle the need to develop an appropriate restoration policy for Great Zimbabwe<sup>27</sup>.

Although Mufuka, in trying to encourage an African interpretation of the Zimbabwe Monument, seemed to sympathise with the traditions of the local people he fostered the belief in official circles that reconstructing the walls was the way forward.

The government realised there was a need for preservation to show the Zimbabwean people "that they had a glorious past .... [and] that the maintenance of a site like Great Zimbabwe [was] necessary to the Zimbabwean identity"<sup>28</sup>. This prompted the government to look for outside funding and assistance to ensure the National Monument received the most advanced and scientific conservation treatments. Local expertise from people like the Vengai brothers, whose father had worked on the Great Zimbabwe walls in the 1930s and who had helped Mufuka in his rebuilding projects<sup>29</sup>, were ignored in favour of help from UNESCO and other foreign agencies<sup>30</sup>. The NMMZ now regarded the squatter families in the Great Zimbabwe area and the neighbouring communal farmers as threats to the natural vegetation and wildlife in the 100 hectare Estate<sup>31</sup>. As the government became more involved in Great Zimbabwe's affairs, it increasingly alienated the local community. Associated with the government's push to preserve Great Zimbabwe were NMMZ plans to generate funds from foreign tourism. The tourist market necessitated changes in the presentation of

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3-4.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> NMMZ. *Annual Report, 1981-1982*, p. 23.

<sup>30</sup> Mvenge, 'Managing a Politically Sensitive Cultural Heritage Centre', p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> NMMZ. *Annual Report, 1981-1982*, p. 21, and *Annual Report, 1983-1984*, p. 27.



the site with the need "to put up 'standard signs' and maintain a 'clean' environment in the true western sense of the word"<sup>32</sup>. In later years the tourist factor would have an even greater influence not only at Great Zimbabwe but also at Matopos.

In the meantime the museum staff of the NMMZ were working hard to attract local visitors with displays they hoped would be pertinent and educational and with continued ethnographic research into the customs of the Zimbabwe people. The Queen Victoria Museum completed its Shona Village exhibition with a display case that interpreted the activities of the Village: "it cover[ed] construction and materials used, economy, ie. hunting and cultivation, arts and crafts of both men and women and also beer brewing"<sup>33</sup>. The Curator of Ethnology, George Mvenge, investigated rain-making ceremonies, funeral rites, chieftainships and aspects of African technology before he left to do a Masters degree in anthropology at George Washington University in the USA<sup>34</sup>. In 1984-1985, Dr. Oscar Simela the Deputy Regional Director at the National Museum, Bulawayo, conducted "extensive research into the life of Lobengula as a prerequisite to planning major changes in the Hall of Chiefs, where a better display balance between Rhodes and the traditional leaders is desirable"<sup>35</sup>. At the Mutare Museum "there was an increase in the number of secondary school classes visiting to supplement their lessons, particularly for aspects of Shona and African culture"<sup>36</sup>. However, the monument sections of certain regions were not faring so well. The continued factional hostilities in Matabeleland still

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<sup>32</sup> Mvenge, 'Managing a Politically Sensitive Cultural Heritage Centre', p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> NMMZ. Annual Report, 1983-1984, p. 22.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>35</sup> NMMZ. Annual Report, 1984-1985, p. 20.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

restricted monument inspections in the Western Region<sup>37</sup>. The work carried out was at Matopos: "much time was devoted ... by the National Archaeological Survey to confirm known sites ... and to find previously unrecorded ones. A continuous period of 21 days was spent on this in the Matopos National Park and surrounding areas, mostly in the company of armed Parks patrols"<sup>38</sup>. At Great Zimbabwe Kenneth Mufuka resigned and Dawson Munjeri took over from him. Munjeri, possibly with the view to improving relations with the locals, launched an

exercise code-named 'Chapungu' ... to re-establish official presence in many of the remote monuments in the Region. This involved an active awareness programme for the populace in areas around the various monuments. To this end ... meetings [were] held with local political and civil authorities. District Administrators, et al. were fully briefed on the aims of the exercise and it is heartening to report that their co-operation was absolute<sup>39</sup>.

By the year 1985-1986 it looked as if the monuments' situation had greatly improved. A new policy of taking the museums to the people resulted in the opening of Site Interpretive Centres at the some of the more popular monuments like the Tsundi Ruins and Domboshawa Caves in the Northern Region and Nswatugi Cave, Matopos (Fig. 26). Great Zimbabwe "underwent a similar interpretive overhaul that brought it into line with standards advocated by the Congress of Heritage, Interpretation and Preservation"<sup>40</sup>. The NMMZ also appointed two expatriate archaeologists, Gwilym Hughes from Southampton University and David Collett of Cambridge University, to implement the new Restoration and Preservation Programme at Great Zimbabwe.

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<sup>37</sup> The Matabele 'dissidents' were quieted in 1985 by a ferocious operation conducted by the Zimbabwe National Army's elite Fifth Brigade. However, the fighting did not formally finish until the signing of the Unity Accord in December 1987 between Robert Mugabe, the Shona Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, and Joshua Nkomo, his Matabele rival.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>40</sup> NMMZ. Annual Report, 1985-1986, p. 3.

Although the Site Interpretative Museums at the various monuments and the Preservation Programme at Great Zimbabwe looked to benefit the 'people', it seems the 'people' were not the locals but the tourists.

At Nswatugi Cave 2,564 (or 57.3%) of the 4,820 visitors to the site "were from outside Zimbabwe showing that international interest in rock paintings is not waning and that tourism in general is picking up"<sup>41</sup>. The success of the Nswatugi Site Museum encouraged the NMMZ "to consider a more comprehensive interpretation of the San way of life in the Matobo Hills. Pomongwe Cave, centrally situated and significant archaeologically, was selected as the site for a museum to house the displays which will depict Pomongwe Cave as it might have been when inhabited by Bushmen"<sup>42</sup>. At Great Zimbabwe too the NMMZ seemed to have chosen to cater for a non-indigenous public especially in view of the Eighth Non-Aligned Summit Conference that was to be held in Harare in October 1986: "The Conical Tower in the Great Enclosure of the Great Zimbabwe holds the central position of the Conference's logo. This honour and the fact that a number of delegates would want to see the Monument after which the host country was named, all necessitated thorough preparations"<sup>43</sup>.

At this point it seems that the NMMZ had decided to develop the monuments according to an 'archaeology-based' tourism. This reduced sites like Matopos "to 'prehistory' and totally disregard[ed] the complex attitudes of the majority population

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

towards the whole area and its rock shelters"<sup>44</sup>. Towards the end of the Liberation War the white administration adopted a more cultural rather than natural attitude to Matopos. In 1979 C.R. Saunders, Chairman of the Rhodes Matopos Committee, put forward the idea that Matopos could provide "an ideal opportunity to re-create and maintain an authentic working model of a traditional Ndbele village, as it was prior to the influence of civilisation"<sup>45</sup>. However, the new black Zimbabwean government took a conservationist line as shown when Stephen Nkomo, a Member of Parliament, asked in 1980 if Matopos could be returned to the community for grazing and farming in times of severe drought. The reply by Nkomo's colleague, Joseph Msika, revealed how Zimbabwe's monuments were influenced by outside considerations: "It would discredit Zimbabwe internationally were we to embark upon a programme of reducing our parks and wildlife estate"<sup>46</sup>. In this case the country's needs took precedence over the people's wants.

The Queen Victoria Museum was the only part of the NMMZ organisation that was doing any significant work with regard to the African population, mainly because it had been designated the ethnography and archaeology collections during the 1979-1981 centralisation process. Its staff had a busy year in 1985-1986:

Dr. Jijide (Deputy Regional Director) conducted oral research among the vaDema in the Dande area in the Zambezi Valley ... They are basically hunter/gatherers who have not been greatly affected by modern civilisation...Mrs. Mahonde [Assistant Curator of Ethnology] and her assistant went on a field trip in the Buhera and Mt. Darwin areas. The purpose of the trip was to record oral traditions and purchase artefacts for the museum. During her stay in the Mt. Darwin area she witnessed a rain-making ceremony and took some photographs ... Mr. Nyambara [Archaeology Officer]... went on a field trip to Ndanga, Chipinge, Chiredzi

<sup>44</sup> Ucko, 'Museums and Sites', p. 263.

<sup>45</sup> Ranger, 'Whose Heritage', p. 246.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

and Mwenezi districts to conduct oral interviews among the Hlengwe people as well as collect artefacts<sup>47</sup>.

The Museum also experienced a baboon problem at the newly opened Tsundi Ruins Site Museum. At first the monument's staff enlisted the help of the neighbouring farmers but their attempt to reduce the baboon numbers with poison failed. The custodian of the Ruins was convinced the spirits of the area needed to be appeased so a delegation was sent to ask the local people to perform the necessary rituals. At the same time the Department of National Parks and Wildlife came in to assist with the dispersal of the baboons. This was a good example of how the NMMZ was able to work with the community. However, even this museum had succumbed to the tourist influence: "The Queen Victoria Museum is also on the list of special areas of interest for the tourist companies in Harare"<sup>48</sup>.

In 1986-1987 the NMMZ was hampered by severe economic constraints. The government put most of its financial resources into relieving the devastating effects of one of the worst droughts in Zimbabwe's history. A government directive "was issued to all museums to curtail 50% of their activities. Worse still was the freeze on promotions, accelerated increments and vacant posts"<sup>49</sup>. This was also the year that saw a new dimension added to Zimbabwe's cultural scene with the opening of the Murewa Culture House. The Culture House was the product of an initiative by the Ministry of Education and Culture. In 1981 Peter Ucko presented a "Report on a proposal to initiate 'Culture Houses' in Zimbabwe" at the request of the Zimbabwe Government. Ucko believed that

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<sup>47</sup> NMMZ. Annual Report, 1985-1986, p. 38-39.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>49</sup> NMMZ. Annual Report, 1986-1987, p. 3.

the idea of culture houses may have been a response to the perceived deficiencies of existing nationally run museums: under local control there would surely be a respect for secret and sacred materials, 'elders' would be given respect and would be recognised as appropriate teachers for all kinds of knowledge, 'natural history' would be displayed and explained according to non-western perception and, above all such centres would be both genuine and alive<sup>50</sup>.

Indeed the culture house fitted in perfectly with the African concept of museums. However, due to political and bureaucratic influences the NMMZ did not think the culture house scheme fell within its guidelines and, therefore, regarded the Murewa House as a competitive rather than a complementary service. Peter Ucko also attributes this hostile point of view to the NMMZ's increasing shift toward a 'static' approach to the museums and its prioritising "the preservation of monuments and sites of the past for cultural tourism"<sup>51</sup>.

The NMMZ could see no fault with its policies. As far as it was concerned it was having a positive impact on the local populace especially in view of successes like the Great Zimbabwe Stand at a Provincial Show in 1986. The display highlighted "archaeology as a discipline and its relevance to society. It was also meant to increase public involvement in the location and preservation of archaeological sites ... it was awarded the trophy for the '*Best Public Service Stand*', Dr. Collett and his team deserved the victory"<sup>52</sup>. The NMMZ's financial problems eased slightly in 1987-1988. The treasury allocated enough funds to keep operations and services at a reasonable level, though the non-availability of foreign currency (which had been used to purchase

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<sup>50</sup> Ucko, 'Museums and Sites', p. 245.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263.

<sup>52</sup> NMMZ. *Annual Report, 1986-1987*, p. 6.



food during the drought) affected the NMMZ's 'cadet curatorship' programme<sup>53</sup>.

Under this system

the organisation embarked on academic and professional training programmes for staff, particularly young University graduates. Taken on as cadet curators these were inducted in various museological disciplines and subsequently undertook academic courses at the University of Zimbabwe and other overseas institutions. In this way, archaeologists, anthropologists and natural history professionals are being produced<sup>54</sup>.

The NMMZ hoped that by staffing its institutions with indigenous staff it would no longer be considered a colonial establishment. On top of this the increased visitor numbers to Matopos convinced the NMMZ that it needed more site museums and interpretive centres: "with the generous grant from the Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD) this programme will ensure, not only development of such a site, but will also bring the museums to the rural population"<sup>55</sup>.

However, the NMMZ's

heritage tourism development strategy ... contain[ed] considerable inherent dangers ... its "disadvantages are obvious: inevitable commercialization of an at present miraculously preserved natural environment; pressure of visitor numbers leading to conservation problems, the anti-social effects on the community of mass tourism; and a tendency for outside interests to cream off the benefits"<sup>56</sup>.

At Great Zimbabwe the country's President, Robert Mugabe, opened a model traditional village designed to recapture "the traditional way of life and enable the visitor to observe precolonial life in a meaningful and fulfilling way"<sup>57</sup>. In a way this was the NMMZ's attempt at the culture house approach. The village named Musha

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<sup>53</sup> NMMZ. Annual Report, 1987-1988, p. 3-4.

<sup>54</sup> NMMZ. Annual Report, 1986-1987, p. 4.

<sup>55</sup> NMMZ. Annual Report, 1988-1989, p. 4.

<sup>56</sup> Ucko, 'Museums and Sites', p. 243.

<sup>57</sup> Mvenge, George. 'New Lease of Life for Africa's Heritage', in Africa Calls, No. 175 (1989): p. 23. (Hereafter, Mvenge, 'New Lease of Life').



wechi Nyakare succeeded the Karanga Village constructed by the Rhodesian Monuments Commission in 1966 but gutted by fire during the Liberation struggle. According to the then Curator of Great Zimbabwe, Lilian Hodges,

[t]he Karanga Village was built with the help of local old people and prisoners and guards from the local gaol. Everyone joined in with the enjoyment ... The museums services paid two full-time salaries, for a female potter and for a well-respected *n'anga* (in this case a diviner and herbalist) ... Tourists would thus be able to see the two at work, and also buy their wares. At this stage the village became significant to the local population since, when the tourists were not present, the two 'employees' lived in traditional ways, and local people began to use the village, carrying out certain rituals, and before entering, making the right obeisances<sup>58</sup>.

However, Musha wechi Nyakare was not built to be a living village but a nineteenth century reconstruction. Though the 1988 village contained a *n'anga* and three potters they were there mainly for the benefit of tourists. The *n'anga's* main function was to "inform the visitor that the traditional doctors' role was not just to attend physical illness. He had a multiple role. He was a marriage counsellor, a psychiatrist ... and generally a social advisor. He was not just a witch hunter"<sup>59</sup>. In addition plans for the site were "explicitly designed to create a theme park - whose emphasis should be on profitability - and thereby [destroying] any relevance to the concept of a living heritage. In its place, a nineteenth century frozen act would be created ... with 'actors' accordingly dressed in long-abandoned forms of clothing"<sup>60</sup>.

The years after 1988 saw the NMMZ maintain the policies it developed in the early 1980s. In July 1992 it held a "Donors' Conference to recommend and endorse a Master Plan 'for the development of Zimbabwe's archaeological and historical

<sup>58</sup> Ucko, 'Museums and Sites', p. 276.

<sup>59</sup> Mvenge, 'New Lease of Life', p. 23.

<sup>60</sup> Ucko, 'Museums and Sites', p. 276.

heritage"<sup>61</sup>. This indicated that Zimbabwe's national monuments were headed for a tourist-based role rather than becoming integrated into the local community. The Queen Victoria Museum remained the only part of the NMMZ that had any substantial dealings with the indigenous populace. In spite of the fact that by 1990 the organisation was almost fully indigenised, the NMMZ still has not fully resolved its colonial heritage:

The former Assistant Director-General of Unesco for Culture once described museums as immature transplants from the elitist cultural milieu of nineteenth-century Europe. He went on to note that, 'despite the fact that the museums are already staffed by indigenist specialists, the attitude of the latter is largely that of their European mentors of yesterday, a closed professional group, elitist in the sense that the museum exists mainly for their own scholarly pursuits'<sup>62</sup>.

However, after Independence Zimbabwe had ahead of it many obstacles. First, there was the process of reconciliation between black and white, then the struggle for unity between black and black. In addition to this the country's economy took several hard blows with the World Recession in 1982 and the drought of 1986. All these events took a toll on the NMMZ which was struggling to find a balance between the government's socialist agenda and its national interests and thus discover a meaningful place in Zimbabwe's society.

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.

## Chapter 6

### Commentary and Conclusion.

#### Museums, Identity and Culture: European versus African Ideals.

The two hundred white men who made up the Pioneer Column of 1890 did not come to Rhodesia with only their hopes of 'striking it rich' in the gold fields of Mashonaland, they also brought with them the belief and ideologies of their British homeland. These men and other European settlers who followed them to the colony were products of nineteenth century Imperialist sensibilities that gauged the advancement of societies in "technological and materialistic terms"<sup>1</sup>. For the British, Africa had been built up as a "land of darkness ... peopled with savages of an inherently inferior order both intellectually and morally, to the white coloniser"<sup>2</sup>. The British Colonial Office's

driving concern to rationalize and legitimize colonialism ... produced large volumes of literature to "prove" and glamourize the inherent inferiority of the Africans. Cultural (thus racial) superiority was persistently invoked by the enthusiastic imperialists in order to rationalize and justify the conquest, colonization and exploitation of the indigenous Africans<sup>3</sup>.

When the European settlers arrived in Rhodesia they found nothing that challenged this image. They considered the Mashona and Matabele tribes that populated the colony to be backward and savage, obviously not fit to control the land between the Zambezi and Limpopo Rivers:

The occupation of Mashonaland in 1890, [and] the invasion of Matabeleland 1893 ... are often in novels and amateur histories about the period made to run unto a single heroic action where Rhodesians defined themselves and what the Company claimed to be their civilised mission, in

<sup>1</sup> Chanaiwa, *The Zimbabwe Controversy*, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, p. 2

<sup>3</sup> Chanaiwa, *The Zimbabwe Controversy*, p. 77.

a continuous battle against the forces of cruel disorders appropriate to the heart of Africa<sup>4</sup>.

Thus when the colonists set up museums they did so with the full scope of nineteenth century thought and conviction behind them. An analysis of the museums of the Victorian age reveals that "their central message was to materialize the power of the ruling classes (through the collections of imperialist plunder which found their way to the Victoria and Albert Museum, for example) in the interest of promoting a general acceptance of ruling-class authority"<sup>5</sup>. In addition, a "model of time as 'progress' or 'evolution' from lower to higher forms, underpins the philosophy of the late Victorian Museum and its spatial organization. Moreover, imperialism, nationalism, and the ideas of a confident dominant class gave direction and purpose to the institutions"<sup>6</sup>.

Colonial museums embraced these ideals. Scattered throughout the world these museums developed along similar lines, following the British example as closely as possible but also having to consider certain colonial circumstances. The Rhodesia Museum's early scientific bias with its emphasis on geology and natural history was not surprising in view of the colony's youth. Its settlers, still trying to build up the country's economy, were busy investigating the land for financial opportunity. The Rhodesians were not the only colonists indulging in these activities. In the British West Indies the imperial government "encouraged the collection and exhibition of scientific specimens and ethnological artifacts, usually under the auspices of local agricultural and commercial societies. These two types of collections were clearly

<sup>4</sup> Chennells, 'White Rhodesian Nationalism', p. 124.

<sup>5</sup> Bennett, Tony. 'Museums and "the People"', The Museum Time Machine. Putting Cultures on Display. Ed. Robert Lumley. London, 1988: p. 64 (Hereafter, Bennett, 'Museums and "the People"').

<sup>6</sup> Lumley, Robert. 'Introduction', The Museum Time Machine. Putting Cultures on Display. Ed. Robert Lumley. London, 1988: p. 6 (Hereafter, Lumley, 'Introduction').

representative of the wealth of natural characteristic of the colony that were available for industrial exploitation"<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, the Caribbean museums were set up in a similar fashion to their Rhodesian counterpart:

they were all private organisations, they were developed to meet the needs of the colonies' commercial and agricultural interests, and they operated with little more than token patronage from their governments. While their formation occasioned the expression of lofty ideals of education for the masses and of development of science, the primary catalyst for these activities was enlightened self interest. Museums were principally regarded as an invaluable means of informing visitors about the resources of the colony<sup>8</sup>.

Museums in Australia also demonstrated this lean to natural history:

worldwide fascination for "Antipodean Curiosities" encouraged the development of museums in Australia and ensured that active collecting of native flora and fauna specimens would take place. No such interest developed in the material culture of the Australian Aborigines. Nor did Australia's infant museums show much interest in exploring their customs and beliefs<sup>9</sup>.

The Australian attitude to the culture of its indigenous population was not uncommon. Though the staff of the Rhodesia Museum complained in 1909 and 1937 that the most pressing concern at the museum "has been in examples of native arts and manufactures, of which scarcely a single specimen has been presented"<sup>10</sup> nothing was done to rectify the situation. When colonial museums received local ethnographic material they used it "to support the hierarchical theories of race"<sup>11</sup>. In this respect the colonies modelled themselves after the example of Great Britain where ethnographers promoted the

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<sup>7</sup> Cummins, Alissandra. 'The "Caribbeanization" of the West Indies: The Museum's Role in the Development of National Identity', Museums and the Making of "Ourselves". The Role of Objects in National Identity. Ed. Flora E.S. Kaplan. Leicester, 1994: p. 196 (Hereafter, Cummins, "The "Caribbeanization" of the West Indies").

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>9</sup> Anderson, Margaret and Andrew Reeves. 'Contested Identities: Museums and the Nation in Australia', Museums and the Making of "Ourselves". The Role of Objects in National Identity. Ed. Flora E.S. Kaplan. Leicester, 1994: p. 196 (Hereafter, Anderson and Reeves. 'Contested Identities').

<sup>10</sup> Rhodesia Museum. Annual Report, 1902, p. 2, and the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia, Annual Report, 1937, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Anderson and Reeves. 'Contested Identities', p. 88.

material culture of the Empire's subject races as "fodder for purportedly disinterested scientific and comparative study of culture as 'proof' of racial inferiority (and therefore as justification of colonial intervention) but also in their capacity as objects of exotic delectation; aesthetic pleasure and, more frequently in the case of Africa, as spectacle"<sup>12</sup>.

The British, both at home and in the colonies, were not interested in learning about the different peoples they ruled in an academic sense. They conducted studies of various subject races with the intent of using the knowledge gained to better control the people they conquered. In 1922, Sir James G. Frazer introduced C.W. Hobley's book Bantu Beliefs and Magic as an indispensable guide for British colonial administrators:

The result is a monograph replete with information of great variety and of the highest interest for the student of savage thought and institutions ... Placed in the hands of British officials engaged in the maintenance of order and the administration of justice among the natives, it must prove of real service to them in their task of affording them an insight into the habits and ideas of the people and thus greatly facilitating the task of government. Indeed without some such knowledge of the native's point of view it is impossible to govern him wisely and well<sup>13</sup>.

Frazer, a member of the intelligentsia and an expert on 'primitive' races, after years of study still regarded the African as a savage<sup>14</sup>. In 1947, Roger Summers of the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia echoed the same sentiment when he proposed that more research on the African was needed to "provide a scientific basis and justification for Native Policy"<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, it is not surprising that museums in Rhodesia and the Empire continued to display ethnographic objects in a way that degraded native

<sup>12</sup> Coombes, Reinventing Africa, p. 44.

<sup>13</sup> Frazer, James G. 'Introduction', in C.W. Hobley's Bantu Beliefs and Magic. London, 1922: p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> In 1907 Frazer published a book titled Questions on the Customs, Beliefs and Languages of Savages.

<sup>15</sup> Summers, 'The Present State of Archaeological and Ethnographical Research', p. 1.



culture: "Where the ethnographers chose to collect indigenous artifacts it was either because they dealt with subjects such as "witchcraft", implying that Africans were backwards and superstitious, or because the objects reinforced the subjugation of Africans"<sup>16</sup>. On top of this the museum staff never made any attempts to find out what indigenous Rhodesians thought of the traditional western museum nor did they investigate if and how the Africans preserved and displayed relics. Instead they complained when "no African brought in any ethnographic material during the year"<sup>17</sup>.

These colonial museum officers needed to pay more attention to the culture of the local black people to understand that their concept of a museum was contrary to the European ideal. One of the main and basic differences was found in attitudes towards objects and relics. The Europeans believe in an approach that places artefacts in display cases with labels explaining the object. Many of these exhibits are organised according to contemporary 'scientific' theories and interpretations: "in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, evolutionary theory was applied to society as well as to the natural world and was the basis for arranging museum displays"<sup>18</sup>. In contrast, Africans have a much more personal affinity with the objects that they preserve and display. These relics are usually closely tied in with the religious and spiritual beliefs of black culture. Many of the important artefacts have special associations with African spirits and deities and play an important part in the African ancestral philosophy, one of the keystones of native life: "The Shona-speaking people are monotheists and their religion is complex. It is complicated by the fact that

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<sup>16</sup> Munjeri, 'Refocusing or Reorientation?', p. 448.

<sup>17</sup> National Museums and Monuments of Rhodesia. *Annual Report, 1965*, p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Durrans, Brian. 'The Future of the Other: Changing Cultures on Display in Ethnographic Museums', *The Museum Time Machine. Putting Cultures on Display*. Ed. Robert Lumley. London, 1988: p. 154 (Hereafter, Durrans, "The Future of the Other").



although they believe in God (*Mwari*), they also believe that their lives are controlled by their ancestral spirits"<sup>19</sup>.

At home Africans venerate and display certain items belonging to deceased members of the family. However, these relics are not just exhibited to be studied and looked at, they are also meant to be used by the households. For example, when the grandmother of a family dies her son may inherit a bowl or mat from her. He is then obliged to utilize the bowl or mat in his everyday life and also during any rituals connected with his grandmother and other ancestors. These beliefs are practised on a wider scale by whole villages and ultimately by priests at shrines dedicated to certain African gods. The most important shrine is the one dedicated to *Mlimo* (or *Mwari*) at Njelele Hill in Matopos. The description of this sacred place in Sir Robert Tredgold's book on Matopos (see page 57) depicts the African way of preserving and displaying objects. However, if the artefacts are removed from the shrine they lose their meaning and significance for the African. These customs show that black culture endorses a 'living' museum concept, where people learn from relics by handling them and seeing them in operation rather than by viewing them in a labelled display case<sup>20</sup>.

Nineteenth century and to an extent modern Western museum theory in its attitudes to preservation favours exhibitions that cause the least amount of damage to specimens and therefore fundamentally contradicts African beliefs on the subject. Alissandra

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<sup>19</sup> Zvarevashe, Ignatius M. "Shona Religion", *Shona Customs*. Ed. Clive and Peggy Kileff. Gweru, 1992: p.44. The Ndebele people adopted many aspects of the local religion when they arrived in Zimbabwe in the nineteenth century. They also worship *Mlimo/Mwari* and venerate ancestral spirits.

<sup>20</sup> Much of this information on the African idea of a museum came from conversations with Mr. Stephen Chifunyise, formerly the Secretary of Culture at the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Cummins in her article on museums in the Caribbean maintains that "it was the inaccessibility of the European concept of "museum" to the African cultural sensibility that proved the greatest barrier of all ... these early island museums were, for the most part, incomprehensible to the majority of the population"<sup>21</sup>. However, the British colonists did not care to understand any more of African culture than what they needed to know to govern the blacks and they definitely did not think that the African museum had any relevance in white society. They were content with the European museum model as it was an ideal vehicle for advertising the Imperialist message. With this sort of institution the settlers celebrated white civilization at the expense of black culture.

Conquest trophies, like the Nine Chiefs' Ceremonial Staves taken from Chief Kasembe and displayed as the jewel of the Codrington Collection at the Rhodesia Museum, served to extol and justify colonial domination of the primitive savages who inhabited Britain's newly acquired territories. In addition when the museum's scientific staff exhibited less prestigious African artefacts they classified them with natural history items,

because they exemplified an array of systematic categories: food, clothing, building materials, agricultural tools, weapons ... and so forth ... By the end of the [nineteenth] century evolutionism had come to dominate arrangements of exotic artefacts ... The value of exotic objects was their ability to testify to the concrete reality of an earlier stage of human Culture, a common past confirming Europe's triumphant present<sup>22</sup>.

Ivan Karp believes museums like the Smithsonian still

unintentionally but palpably, maintains a nineteenth century evolutionist distinction between those cultures that are best known and exhibited as part of nature, primarily Native Americans and peoples of the Third World, and Americans [and Europeans], whose primary defining feature was

<sup>21</sup> Cummins, "The "Caribbeanization" of the West Indies", p. 195-6.

<sup>22</sup> Clifford, J. 'Collecting Ourselves', *Interpreting Objects and Collections*. Ed. Susan M. Pearce. London, 1994: p 265.

originally conceived as the possession of science and technology, and who now possess history, in contrast to natural history<sup>23</sup>.

The natives, both American Indian and African, in the eyes of the white settlers had the same cultural worth as the beasts of the animal kingdom. Even when museums classed indigenous artefacts under anthropology and ethnography the objects only functioned to support Western scientific theories on primitive societies. Though some of these items belonged to an ancient tradition they had no merit as historical material because they did not have a part in European history. Ralph Appelbaum points out that "'anthropology' has meant the story of conquered peoples, as told by the conquerors, while 'history' had traditionally been the story of conquering peoples-again told by themselves"<sup>24</sup>.

African monuments were also treated in the same way with the colonists applying interpretations that fit in with their race theories, thus discrediting the cultures that had erected the monuments. Great Zimbabwe suffered from this line of thought. Much of its history was lost in attempts by diffusionists to prove that the monument could not have been built by local blacks. Rhodesians were not the only ones to create fanciful myths to explain some of the wonders they discovered in their new land. In Australia, nineteenth century reasoning was having similar effects on the rationale towards Aboriginal culture:

Aboriginal artifacts excited no admiration and little interest. As social Darwinism gained increasing credence such material was used to support hierarchial theories of race that placed Australian Aborigines firmly at the bottom of the evolutionary ladder. Not surprisingly, when early European explorers "discovered" some of the complex rock paintings in northwestern

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<sup>23</sup> Karp, Ivan. 'Other Cultures in Museum Perspective', Exhibiting Cultures. The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display. Ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D, Lavine. Washington, 1991: p. 377-8.

<sup>24</sup> Appelbaum, Ralph. 'Multi Cultural by Design', Museum News, March/April 1993, p. 55.

Australia in the 1840s, they concluded that they could not have been "executed by a self-taught savage"<sup>25</sup>.

Besides theoretically stripping indigenous people of their heritage the colonists adopted the local monuments and used them for schemes and purposes that shifted the focus of these places from black to white, like at Matopos. What originally was a place dominated by African history, religion and culture was turned into a "Rhodesian Valhalla ... and a recreation area for Rhodesian whites"<sup>26</sup>.

Here too one witnesses the differences in the black and white mindset. In order to 'preserve' Matopos' natural environment the colonial administration over the years evicted the local people living in the area because they believed the Africans were destroying the land. However, they ignored the fact that the blacks had inhabited the hills for hundreds if not thousands of years: "Gone was the notion of an immemorial occupation of the hills. Africans were intruders and ravagers of an environment that deserved European custodianship"<sup>27</sup>. These policies had a tremendous impact on the culture and traditions of the Matopos tribes. Although the Njelele shrine was left alone, other sacred sites in the hills lost their cultural importance like at Silozwane Cave and also at Nswatugi, where before the 1950s evictions "young girls from the Park villages used to come to the cave for dance so that crops would flourish. But then all the villages were removed so that now no-one comes to dance"<sup>28</sup> The colonists were not just content with belittling African culture in Western-style museums but their efforts to protect the country's monuments led to the destruction of the indigenous peoples' 'living' museums. They were only concerned with advancing their racist views

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<sup>25</sup> Anderson and Reeves. 'Contested Identities', p. 88.

<sup>26</sup> Ranger, 'Whose Heritage?', p. 220.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.

and reinforcing their superiority over the black people. European museums admirably fulfilled the settlers' needs as they represented the advanced and civilized nature of the colonists and at the same time validated their 'right' to guide and rule more 'backward' peoples.

### **Conclusion**

When the white settlers of Rhodesia set up their museums they differed little from other colonial museums. The museum's early years mirrored the B.S.A. Company's commercial concerns and followed an imperialist pattern that was also seen in other British colonies: "Because industrial and commercial enterprises were so important to the economy of the colonies, museums were justified in helping to identify and enhance natural resources which included anthropological collections. African and Amerindian cultural heritages were part of the exotic baggage acquired with territorial prizes"<sup>29</sup>. However, the museums underwent experiences that were particular to each colony resulting in each having its own unique characteristics. For Rhodesian museums these characteristics were moulded by the decisions of the country's rulers starting with the B.S.A. Company administration. The Company's main goal was financial, which in Rhodesia's case meant the "success of white settlement was measurable by its ability to command local resources and subjugate indigenous peoples to the needs of the white economy. This necessitated an elaborate network of controls and prescriptions on all aspects of social and economic life in the colony"<sup>30</sup>. One of the prescriptions was the promotion of scientific race theories to confirm and assert white supremacy. The

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<sup>29</sup> Cummins, 'The "Caribbeanization" of the West Indies', p. 198.

<sup>30</sup> Kennedy, Dane. Islands of White. Settler Society and Culture in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1939. Durham (USA), 1987: p. 4.

colonial museum was increasingly seen as a fitting instrument for broadcasting this view. When Rhodesia gained self-governing status in 1923 its museums' commercial prejudices gave way to promoting the colonists' budding sense of nationalism and by 1936 these bastions of European culture and learning had earned a place as an official government body.

However, this new nationalism sprung from settler resistance to change. While Britain and many of its colonies began to evolve, Rhodesia clung onto its nineteenth century attitudes: "Once isolated from the European homeland and its "stress toward change", these colonial societies became frozen in the "ideological" patterns introduced by their immigrant fragments"<sup>31</sup>. While the rest of the Western world renounced and regretted its imperialist past, Rhodesia became increasingly rigid in its old-fashioned views. The country's cultural institutions defined themselves within this colonial mentality and therefore like Rhodesia did not make any progress. Instead the museums and monuments concentrated on refining these colonial traits. The witchdoctor display that was first exhibited in the 1920s and was still a main attraction in the Rhodesia's museums in the 1970s points to the lack of innovation that resulted from the organisations' support of white minority ideology. This loyalty went so far that the National Museums and Monuments of Rhodesia colluded with the colonial government to deliberately mislead the public on the origins of Great Zimbabwe:

65 years of archaeological research all of which had shown absolutely conclusively that Great Zimbabwe was a Shona creation, research that had won international acceptance and respect, was reduced to the level of racist mumbo-jumbo, pedalled by bigots on the fringes of science who found an eager audience among the ministers of the Smith regime<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>32</sup> Garlake, 'Museums Remain Rooted in the Past', p. 31.



By the time white Rhodesian rule was abolished in 1980, Zimbabwe's museums and monuments were so steeped in colonial philosophy they could not adapt and take on a more African form. Their all white staff failed to realise that there was an alternative way in preserving and displaying objects for the benefit of the community.

For the eighty years previous to Independence in 1980 Rhodesian museums were created and existed only for the benefit of the white community. The majority black population was represented as the minority race in these European institutions:

Such actions completed the alienation of the museums of Zimbabwe from the people of Zimbabwe ... The process was, in fact, inevitable. The role of museums in colonial or neo-colonial society has always been to entertain the tiny leisured elite of colonist, Comprador and foreign tourist. The people's culture is both pillaged and denigrated. Objects torn from their social environment are carefully isolated and displayed as strange and exotic sometimes valuable and artistic, but always devoid of any social and historical significance, and unrelated to the life of a people<sup>33</sup>.

It is no wonder then that in 1980 many Zimbabweans felt that the country's museums as colonial creations had no relevance or place in African society. However, because these institutions contributed to the country's heritage and were part of its history they could not be ignored or discarded. Instead the National Museums and Monuments faced the difficult task of trying to find a suitable place in post-Independence Zimbabwe. Initially, the all-white NMMZ staff thought that increased funding and renewed contact with other countries would be enough to bring the organisation up-to-date with its new black audience. They did not recognise that everything the NMMZ had formerly stood for went against the beliefs of the African majority:

Many of those entrenched in power in Zimbabwe prior to Independence [did] not readily accept the necessity for change; nor can they envisage a role for museums different to their colonial role ... All research into the early history of Zimbabwe ... [was] conceived within a colonial settler

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.



framework, which depicts African society as deeply traditional, conservative, hostile to, and incapable of generating any change itself ... No thinking Zimbabwean can identify with this vision of the past: museums and prehistory are consequently written off as irredeemable relics of colonialism<sup>34</sup>.

Even after Zimbabwe's museums and monuments became fully indigenised African curators struggled to balance the needs of the people with the interests of the country. Exactly the same dilemma faced the Zimbabwe government. To obtain funding from the wealthy Western donor countries the black administration has had to sacrifice some of its socialist policies<sup>35</sup>. As they have done since their creation, Zimbabwe's museum and monuments have mirrored the factors affecting the country's situation. Consequently, financial wants have forced the NMMZ to take a stance that favours measures intended to attract foreign tourists and their money, rather than address the requirements of the local people, like at Great Zimbabwe and Matopos.

The efforts made, mainly by the Queen Victoria Museum in its capacity as the nation's ethnography museum, to bring the museums and monuments closer to the community are weakened by the continuing influence of the Western world. Although these endeavors consist mainly of collecting and researching the African culture, they have not made any impression on NMMZ policies. For instance, although the museum staff recognise and understand the African attachment to material objects and the role these relics have in a black person's life the museums' approach to artefacts remains a western one. Traditional "attitudes towards 'heirlooms' do not appear to have any place in the plans of NMMZ, which takes such objects into permanent custody for

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>35</sup> Ucko, 'Museums and Sites', p. 258.

static display"<sup>36</sup>. Like the Zimbabwe government the NMMZ is constrained by the need to remain in the 'good books' of external funding agencies. Following a traditional route might not be to the liking of the donor countries as it entails rejecting western ideas on museums and monuments.

The inability of the NMMZ to take on a more African guise does not make it useless to Zimbabweans. In spite of the problems the National Museums and Monuments organisation must address it still has the power to shape the way people look at the past to give them a better understanding of the present, which in turn affects the future. Critics of the country's heritage institutions should consider the obstacles the organisations faced because of their colonial background are the same hurdles that the whole of Zimbabwe confronted in 1980. The museums and monuments have documented the events that make up the country's recent history from the time of the coming of the white man to the present: displaying the economic motives of the first settlers; the colonial ideology and its suppression of the African; the struggle between black and white; and finally the stresses that faced a newly independent black nation. Thus, they are an essential aspect of Zimbabwe's identity, embodying the country's heritage and past and hopefully its future.

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262.

## Appendix 1

### **Constitution of the Rhodesia Museum, 1909.**

**(Extracts from a Memorandum of Agreement between The Rhodesia Chamber of Mines (Incorporated), The Rhodesia Scientific Association, and the Bulawayo Municipal Council).**

1. "It is agreed that the said Museum shall continue and exist as the National Museum of Rhodesia to be styled The Rhodesia Museum, having for its object and purposes the acquisition, preservation, and/or exhibition of materials, records and facts, to illustrate and record (also arrange and keep separate exhibition collections for visitors and scientific collections for investigators) as completely as possible the following, viz: The Mineralogy, Geology, Zoology, Botany, Archaeology, Ethnology and History of Rhodesia, as well as in a general way the same of other countries; And having in view the following as five of the main purposes of the Museum, viz: a) Attractively educational, b) Scientifically educational, c) As a Museum of Record (housing and preservation of materials and information for original investigations), d) Contributive to scientific literature, e) Investigations by the Museum staff with the view to the development of the economics of Rhodesia."

2. "That there shall be constituted a Committee, to be styled 'The Rhodesia Museum Committee' consisting of 13 persons who shall be elected as follows, viz:- four by the said Rhodesia Chamber of Mines (Inc.), which number shall include the President thereof for the time being; four by the said Rhodesia Scientific Association, which number shall include the President thereof for the time being; four by the said Bulawayo Municipal Council, which numbers shall include the Mayor of Bulawayo thereof for the time being; and one by the Government of Southern Rhodesia."

## Appendix 2

### **Extracts from the Colony of Southern Rhodesia Act No. 15, 1936 (The National Museum Act).**

- ACT** To provide for the nationalisation of the Rhodesia Museum and to establish a board of trustees to administer the said museum and such other museums as the board may hereafter acquire or establish.
2. (2) The board shall consist of no less than five members, who shall be appointed by the Governor.
  4. (1) The building situate at Bulawayo known as the Rhodesia Museum shall, from the date of the commencement of this Act, be known as the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia.
  5. (1) The board may, subject to the approval of the Governor, by agreement with the owners thereof acquire any existing museum in the Colony and thereafter maintain it.
    - (2) If so directed by the Governor, the board shall establish and maintain any new museum in the Colony.
  6. (1) The National Museum of Southern Rhodesia and every museum acquired or established by the board under the provisions of this Act shall be held in trust for the people of the Colony and shall be open free of charge to the public on not less than 4 days in every week during such hours as the board shall appoint.
  8. (1) The funds of the board shall consist of such grants, donations, fees and subscriptions as may from time to time be made to it or be payable to it.
  - 10.(1) The board may make bye-laws -
    - (c) regulating the access of the public to museums owned by the board.

### Appendix 3

#### **Extracts from the Statute Law of Southern Rhodesia, The National Museum and Monuments of Rhodesia Act, No. 17, 1972.**

**ACT** To establish a board of trustees to administer museums and monuments in Rhodesia; to provide for the establishment and administration of museums; to provide for the preservation of ancient, historical and natural monuments, relics and other objects of historical or scientific value or interest; ... to repeal the Monuments and Relics Act [Chapter 70] and the National Museums Act [Chapter 71].

4. (1) The national museums and other property of the Board shall be held in trust for the people of Rhodesia.
- (2) Subject to the provision of this Act, the functions of the Board shall be: -
- (a) to administer museums and national monuments vested in or controlled by the Board; and
  - (b) to provide for the preservation of monuments, relics and other objects of historical and scientific value or interest; and
  - (c) when required by the Minister, to investigate and report upon any matter relating to any monument or relic, including the desirability of declaring any monument to be a national monument; and
  - (d) to compile and keep a register of all the national monuments and of any relics that it has acquired or that have been brought to its notice.
- 42.(1) Subject to the provisions of subsection (3), the Board may make by-laws:-
- (a) regulating the access of the public to museums, ancient monuments, relics, specimens, models or displays which are owned or controlled by the Board ...;
  - (b) safeguarding -
    - (i) national monuments, ancient monuments or museums, models or displays owned or controlled by the Board, or
    - (ii) relics, specimens or the contents of the museums, models or displays referred to in subparagraph (i); or

(d) regulating the excavation of national monuments or ancient monuments and the removal of relics from national monuments, ancient monuments or ancient workings.

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Fig. 1. Map of Zimbabwe

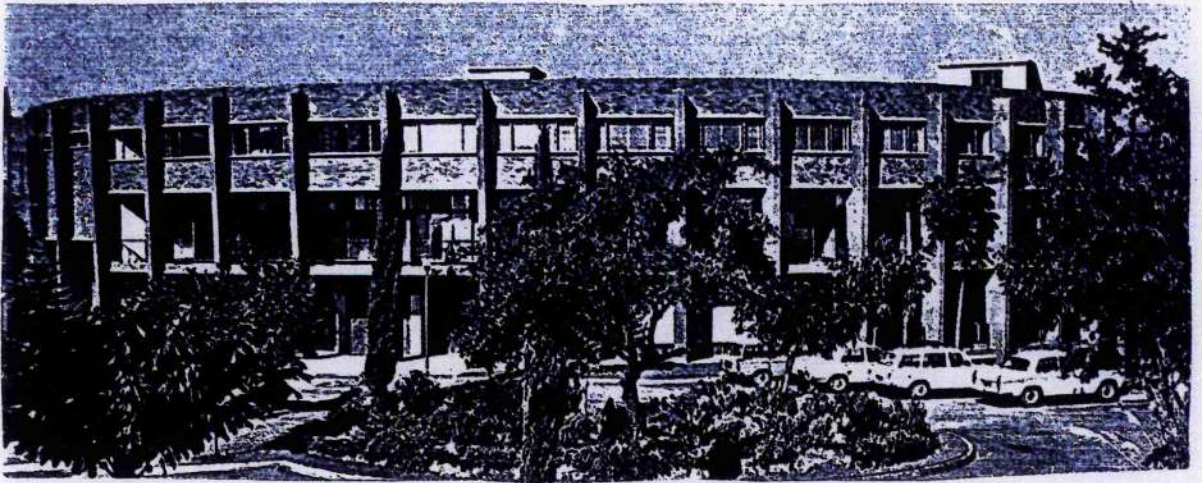


Fig. 2. The Natural History Museum, Bulawayo.

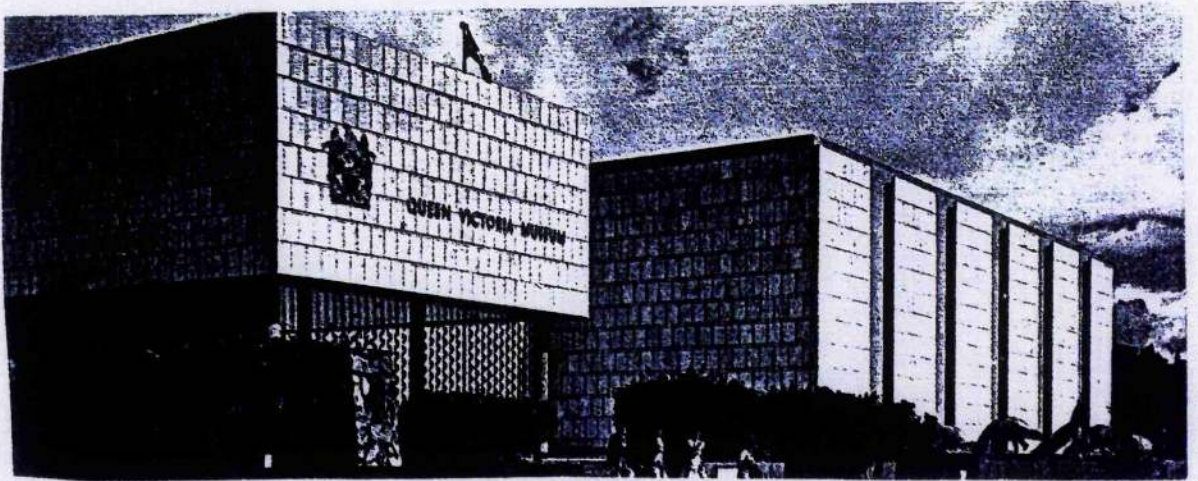


Fig. 3. The Queen Victoria Museum, Harare.

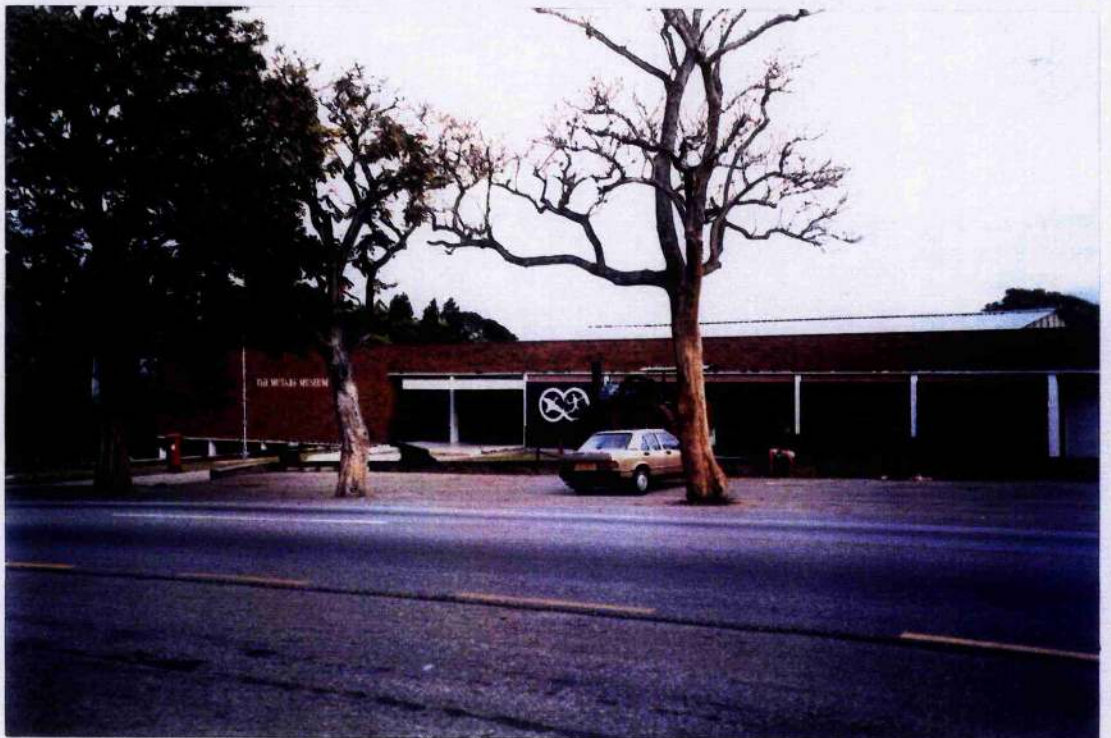


Fig. 4 The Mutare Museum, Mutare.



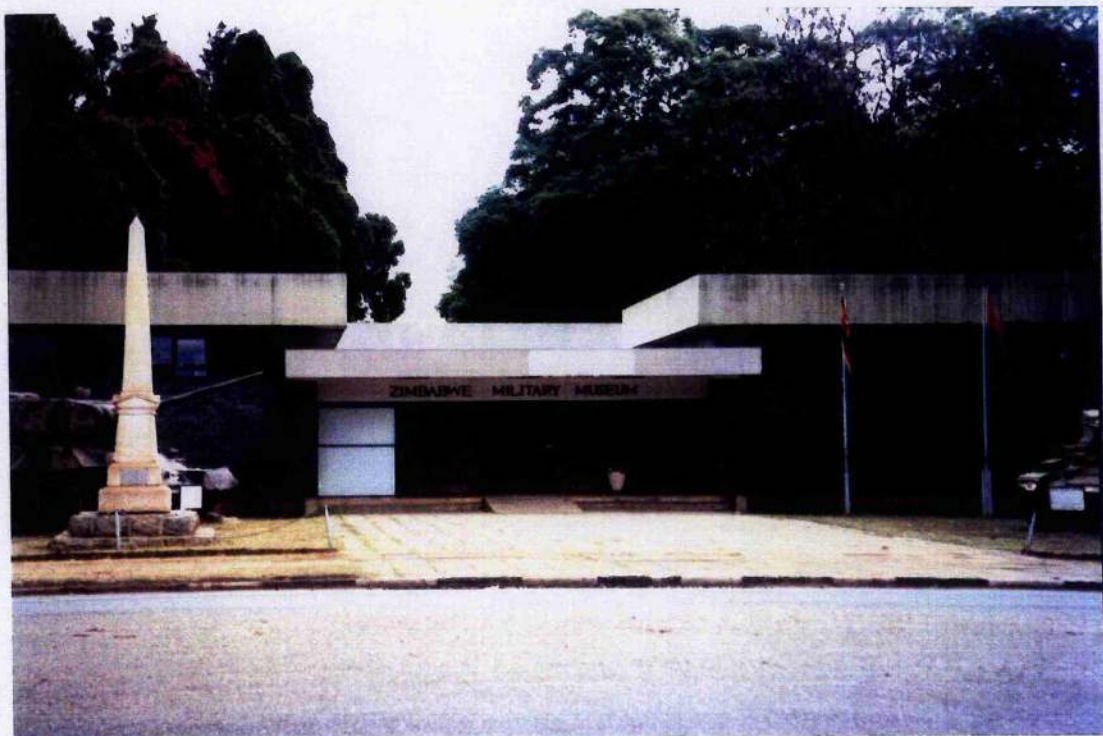


Fig. 5. The Zimbabwe Military Museum, Gweru.

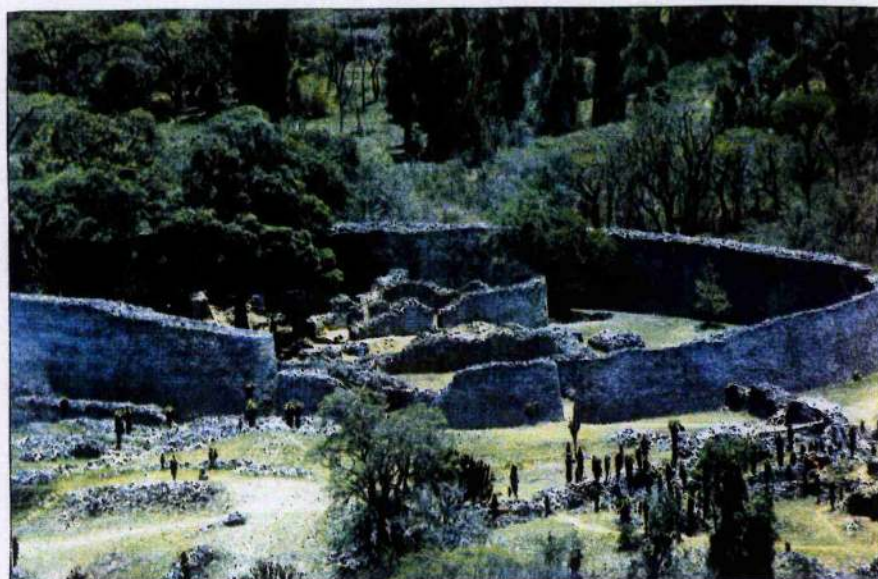


Fig. 6. The Great Enclosure, Great Zimbabwe National Monument.



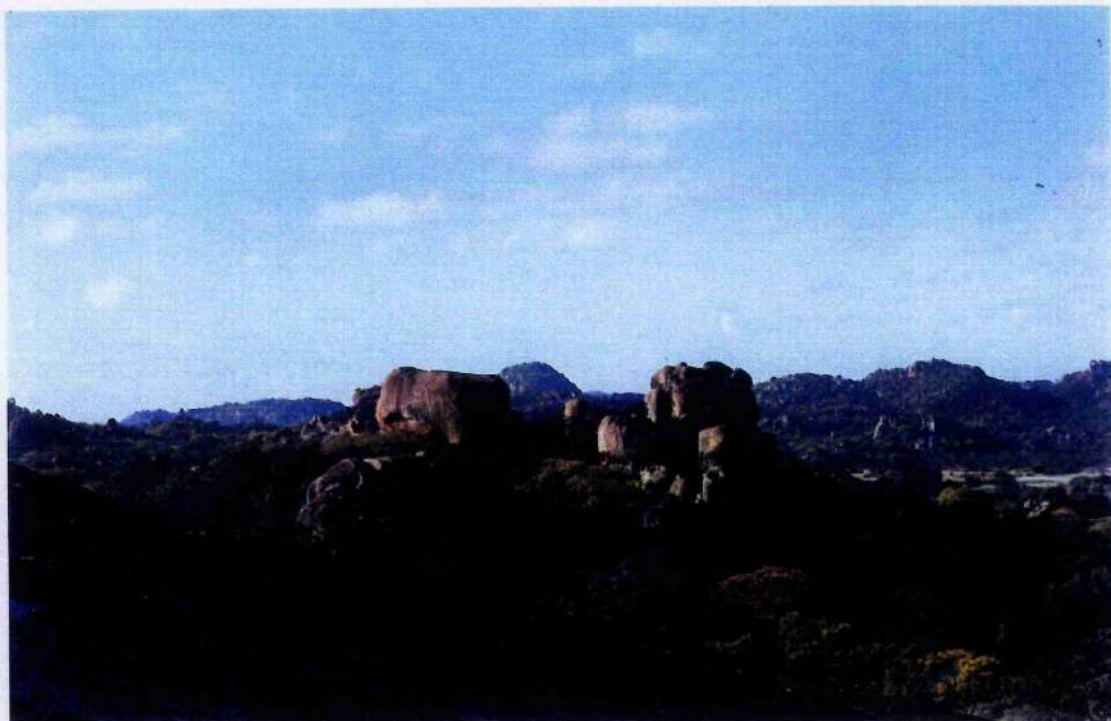


Fig. 7. The Matobo Hills Landscape.

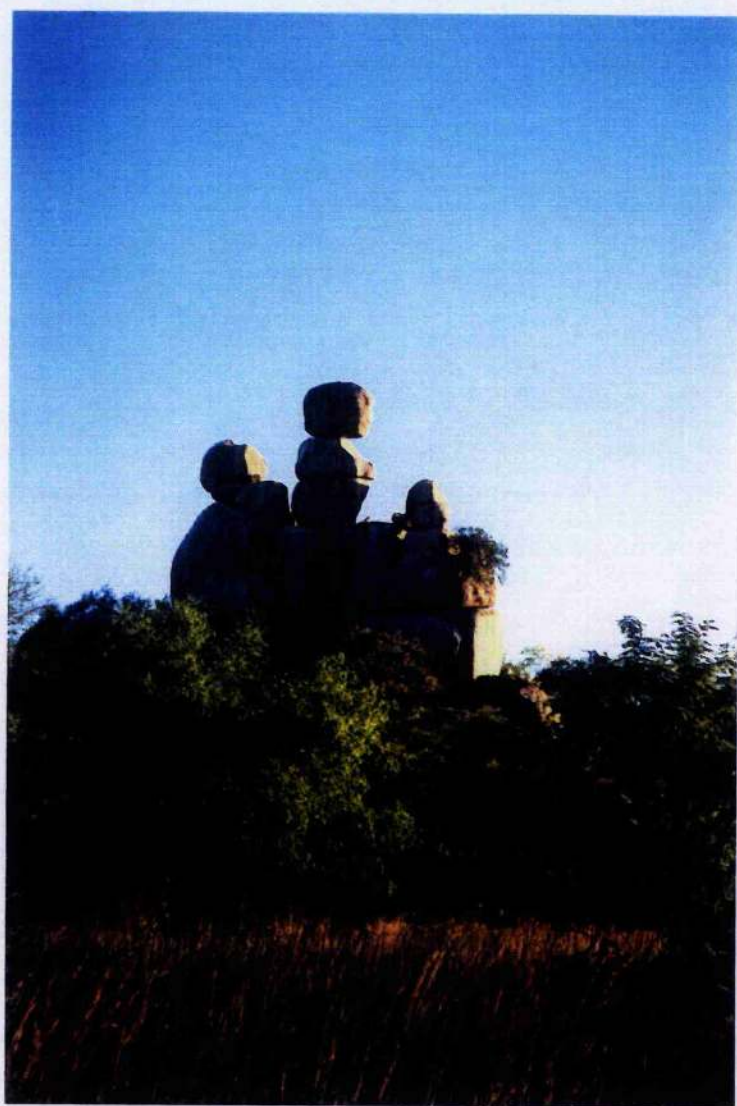


Fig. 8  
Matobo Rock  
Formation.



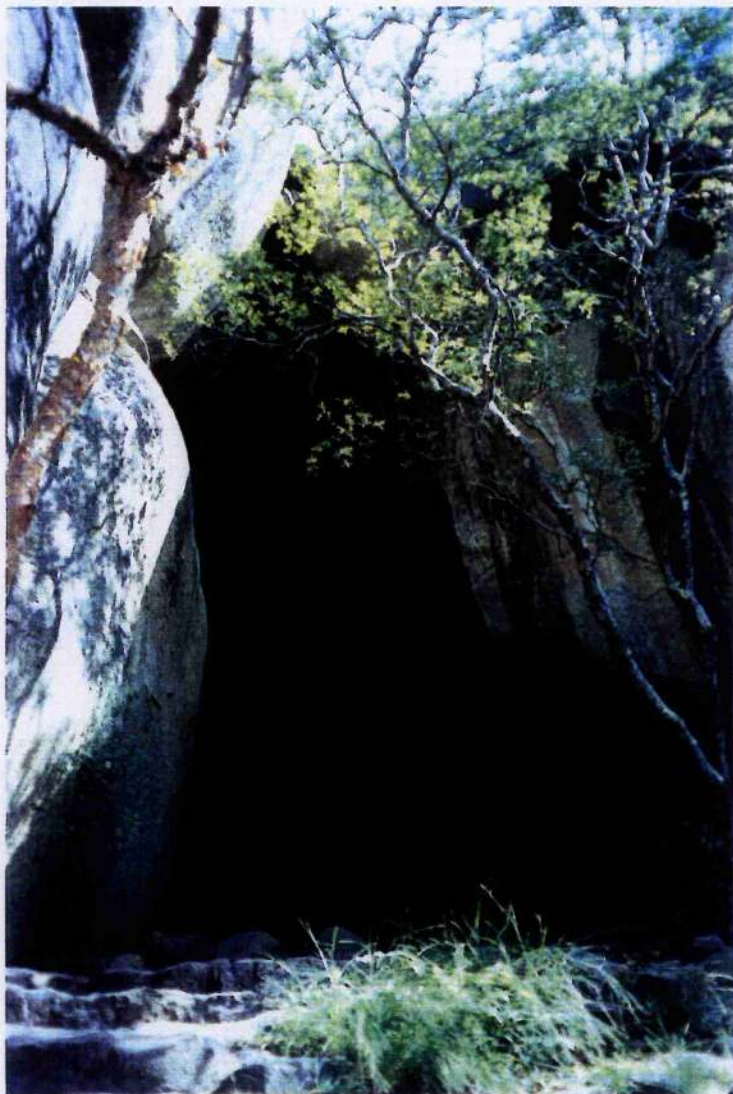


Fig. 9  
Nswatugi Cave,  
Matobo.



Fig. 10. Nswatugi Cave Paintings.





Fig. 11.  
White Rhino  
Shelter, Matobo.



Fig. 12. White Rhino Paintings.



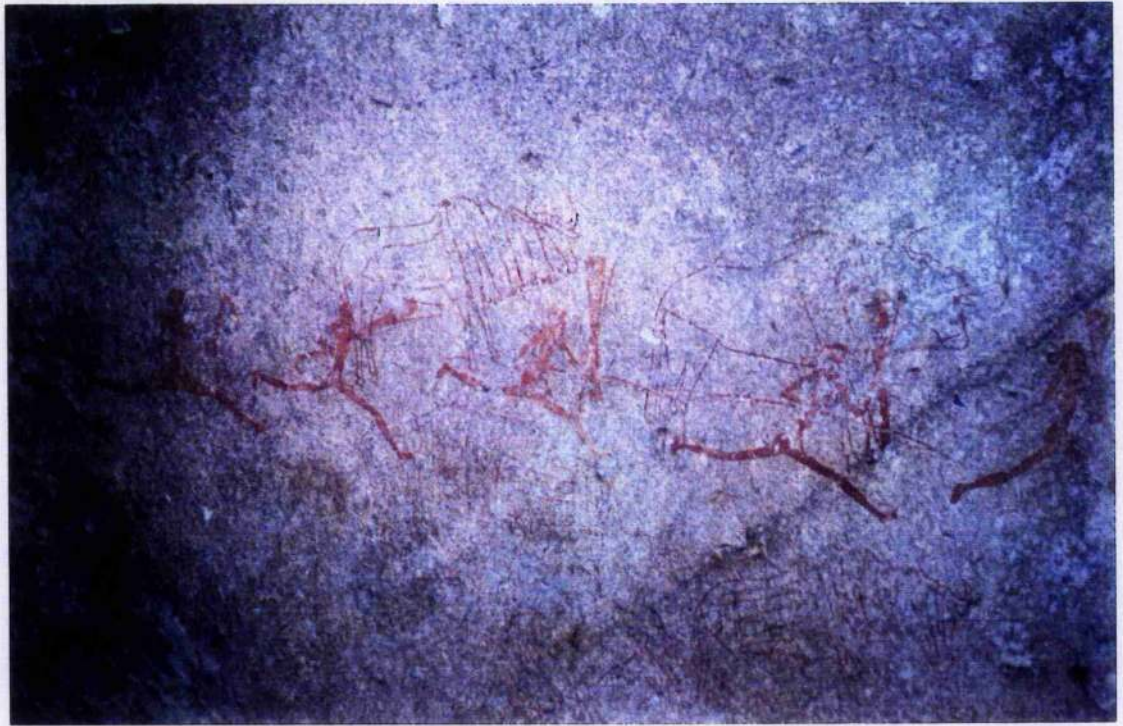


Fig. 13. White Rhino Paintings.

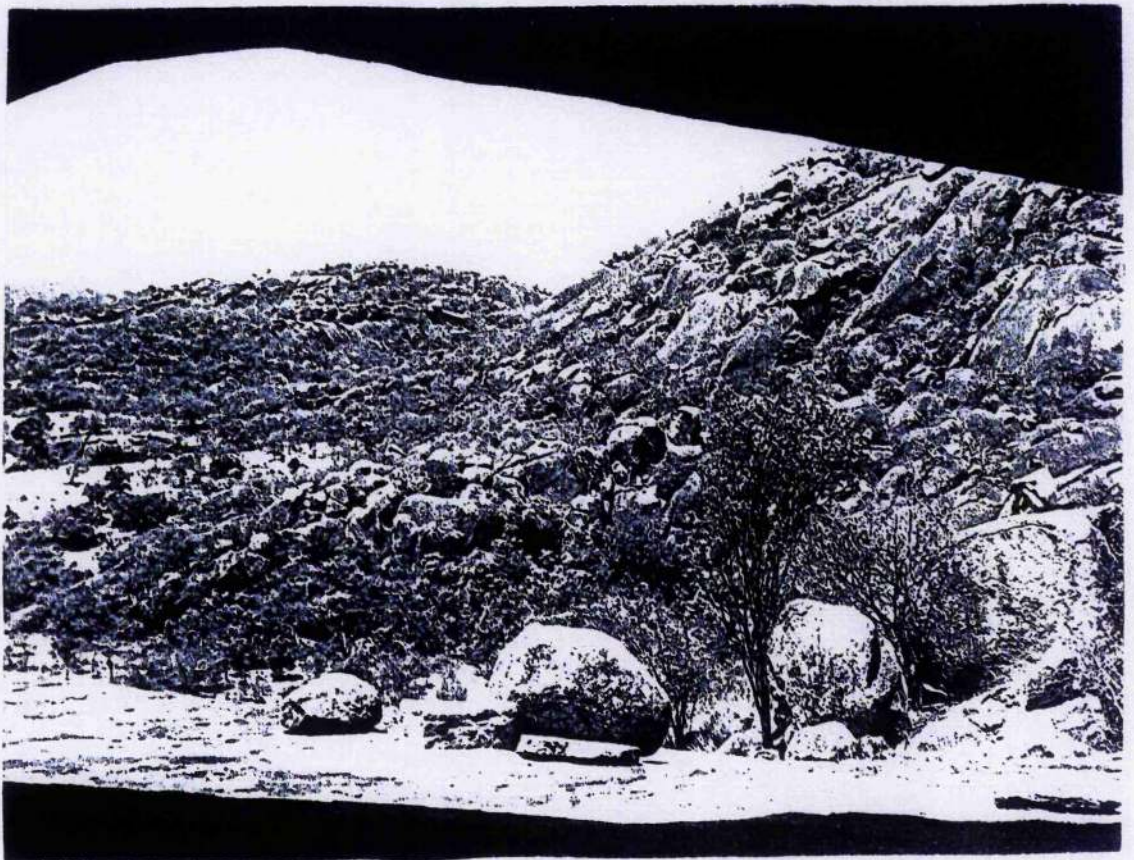


Fig. 14. View from Silozwane Cave, Matobo.



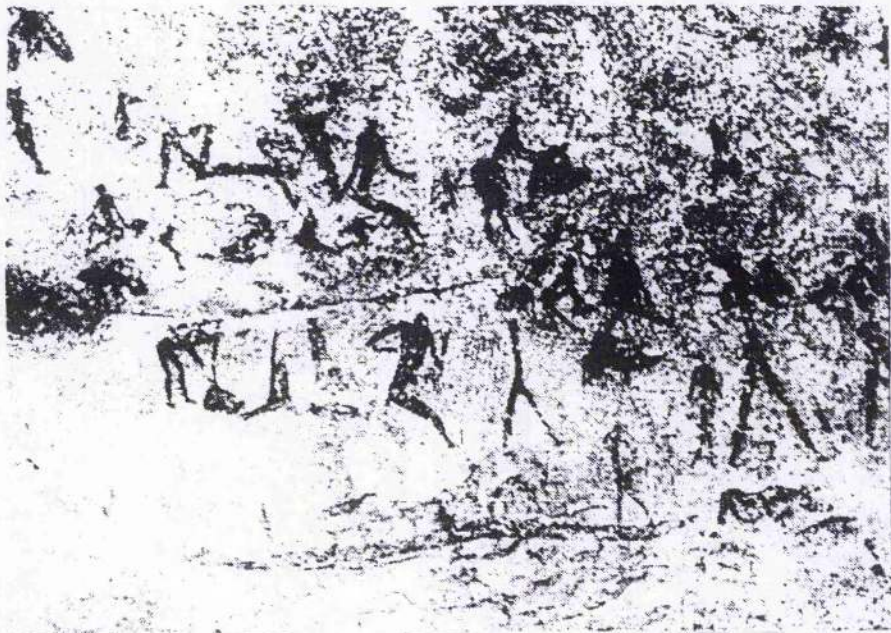


Fig. 15. Silozwane Cave Paintings.



Fig. 16. Cecil John Rhodes' Grave, View of the World, Matobo.



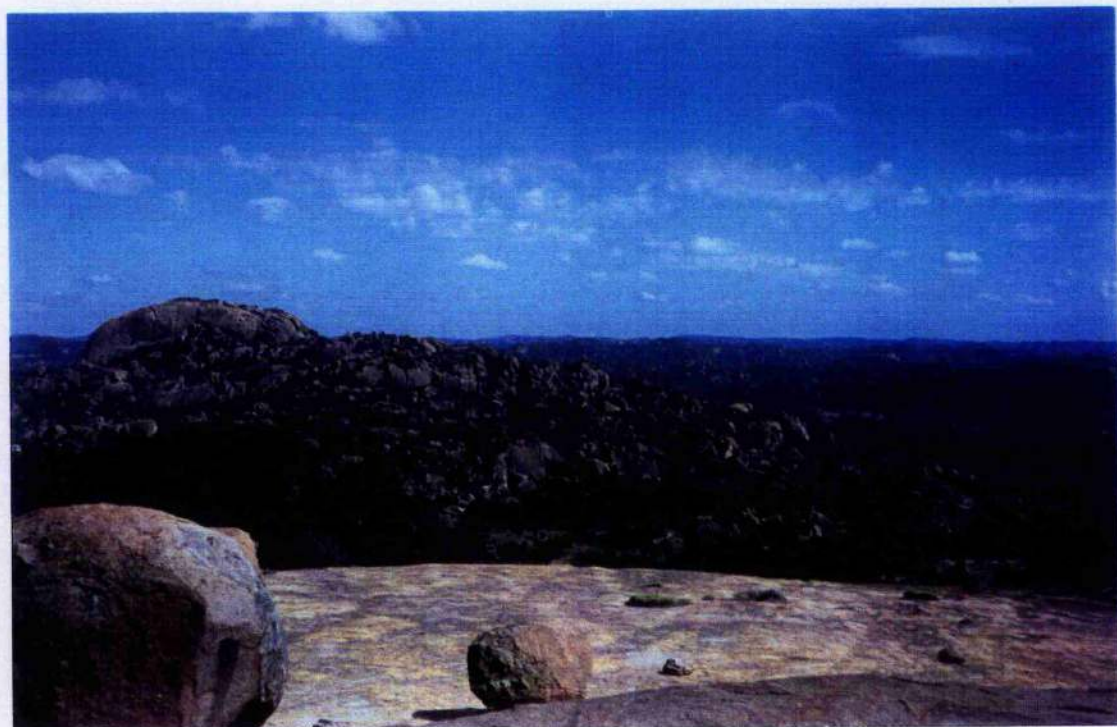


Fig. 17. View from Rhodes' Grave.

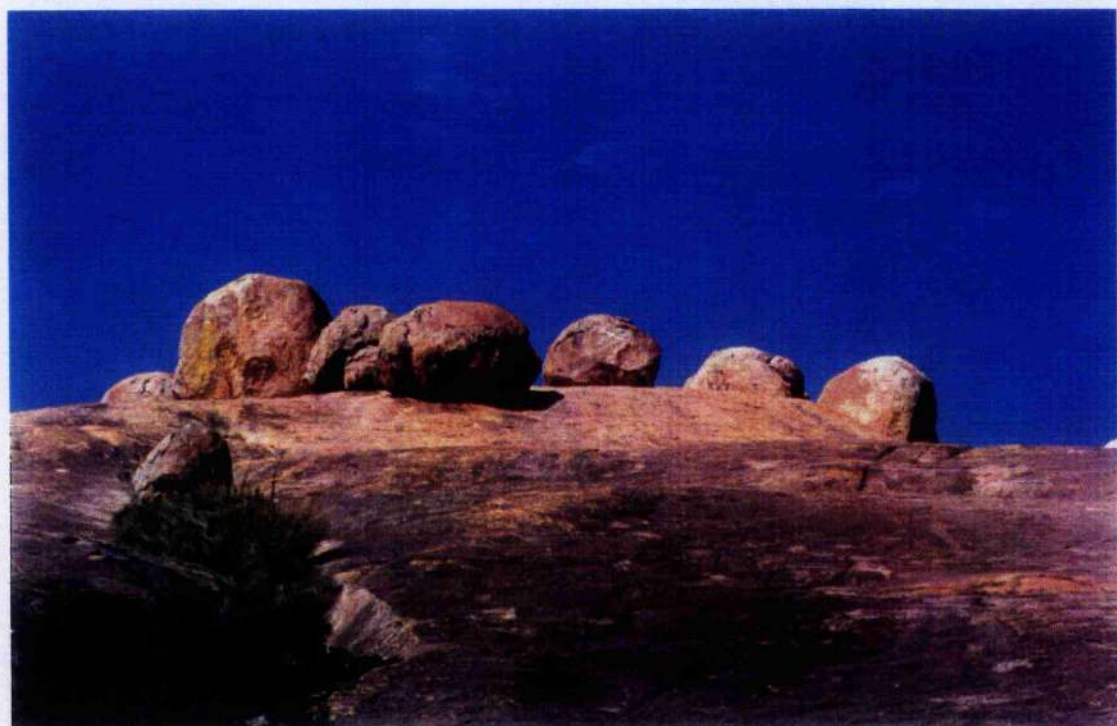


Fig. 18. Boulders on Summit of View of the World Surrounding Rhodes' Grave.



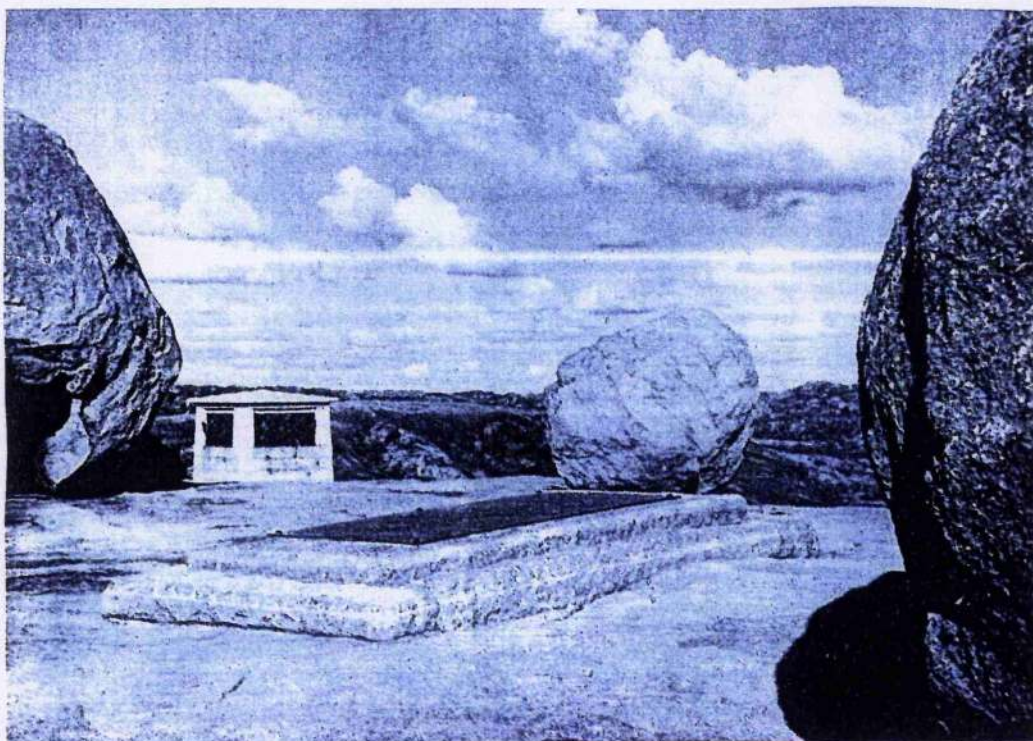


Fig. 19. Rhodes' Grave and the Shangani Monument.

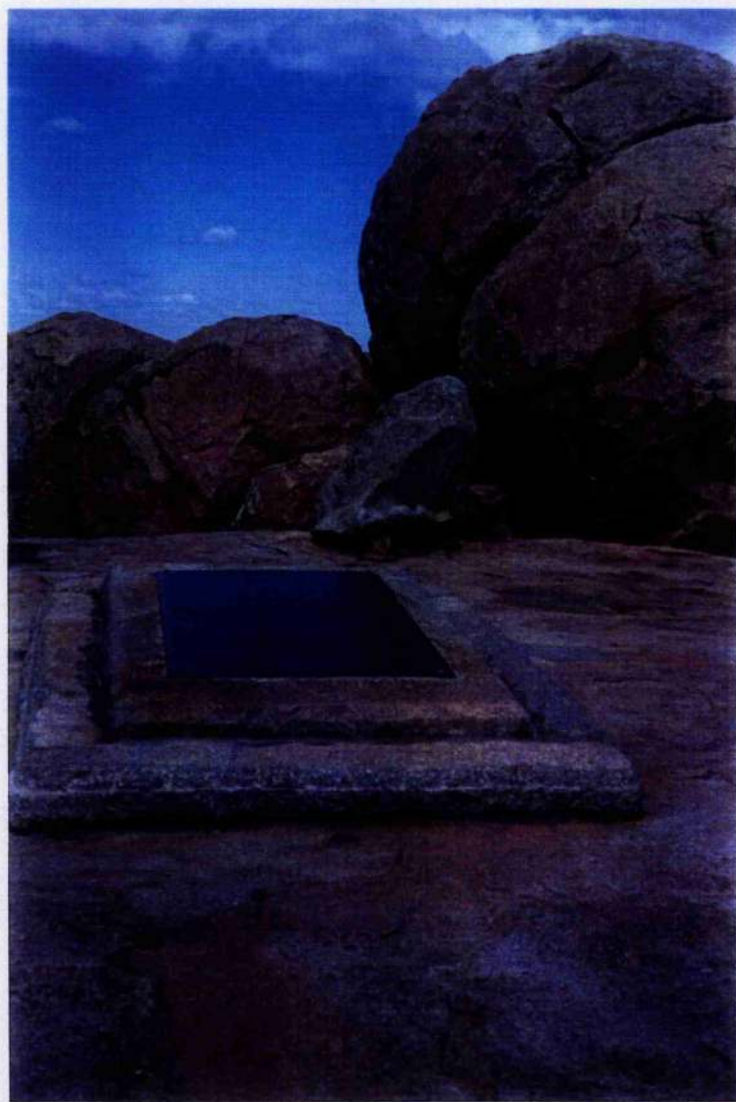


Fig. 20.  
Close Up of  
Rhodes' Grave.



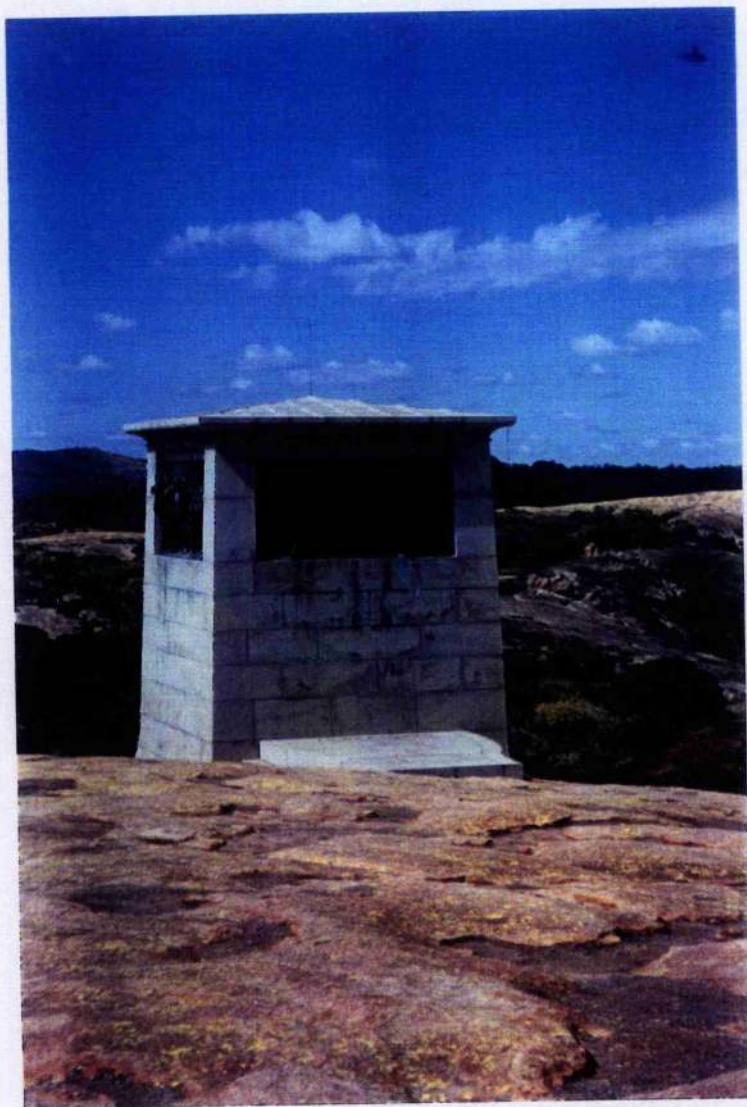


Fig. 21.  
The Shangani  
Monument,  
Matobo.

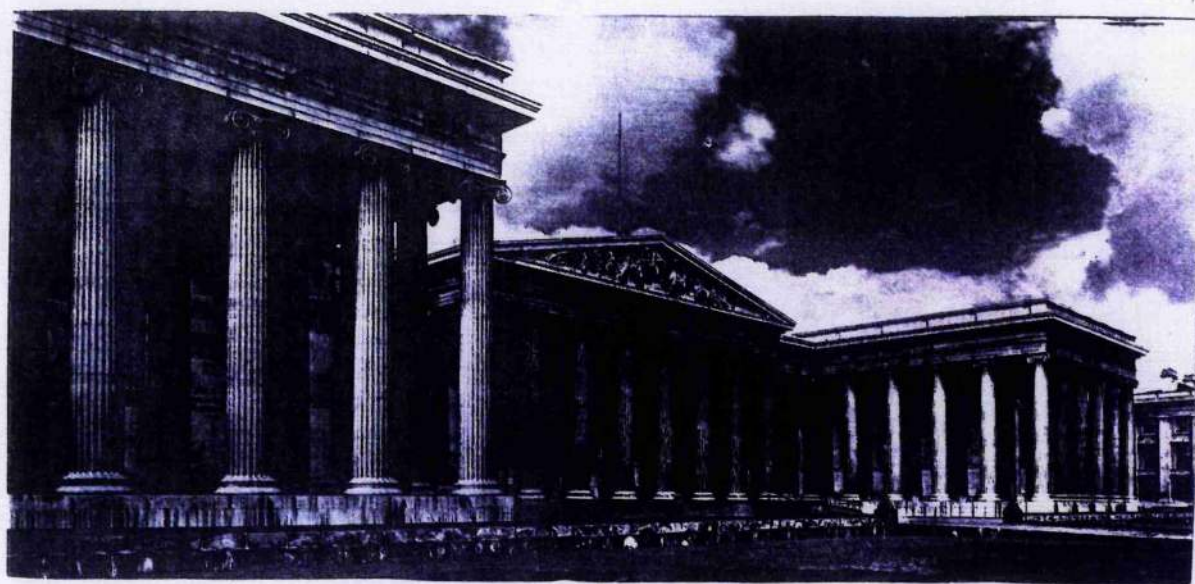


Fig. 22. The British Museum, London.





Fig. 23. The National Gallery, London.

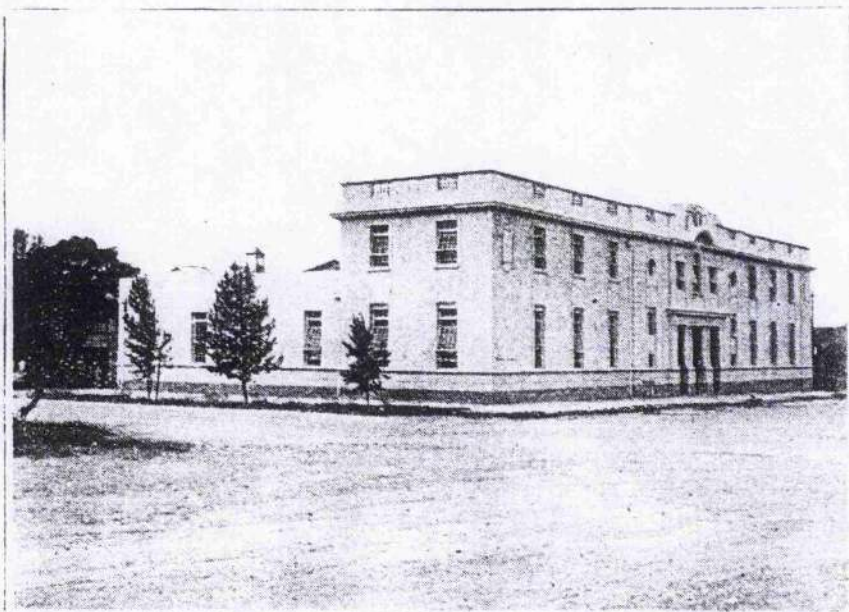


Fig. 24. The National Museum (1910-1962), Bulawayo.



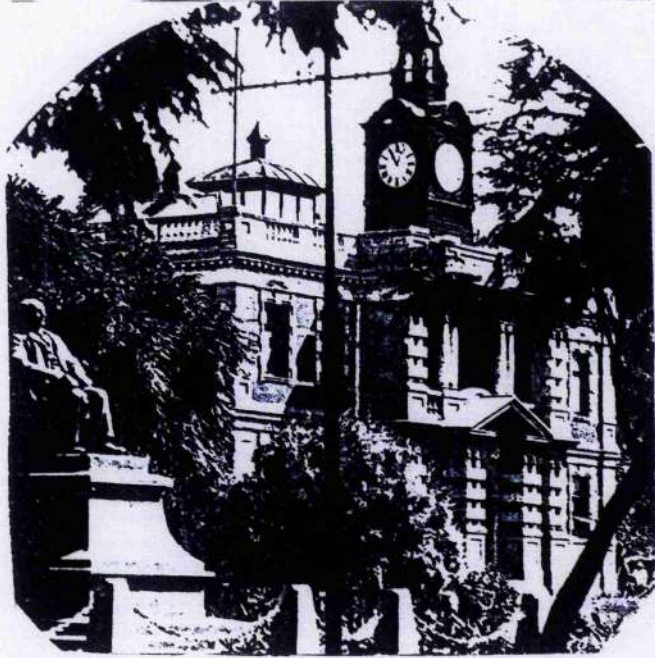


Fig. 24. The Queen Victoria Memorial Building (1903-1958), Salisbury, Rhodesia.



Fig. 26. Nswatugi Cave Site Museum, Matobo.