

**MISSIONARIES' IMPACT ON THE FORMATION OF MODERN ART IN ZIMBABWE:  
A CASE STUDY OF CYRENE AND SERIMA ART WORKSHOPS**

by

**GRACE ZHOU**

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**SUPERVISOR: PROF BMR VAN HAUTE**

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# Declaration

I declare that **Missionaries' impact on the formation of modern art in Zimbabwe: A case study of Cyrene and Serima art workshops** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature .....G. Zhou

Date ..... November 2017

**Title:**

Missionaries' impact on the formation of modern art in Zimbabwe: A case study of Cyrene and Serima art workshops.

**Summary:**

Focusing on Cyrene and Serima art workshops under the tutelage of Paterson and Groeber, respectively, the study acknowledges the foundational importance of Christian art (from the late 1930s up to the 1960s) in the rise of prominent first generation artists in Zimbabwe such as Mukomberanwa, Ndandarika, Khumalo, Songo, Sambo and many others. It rejects perceptions of African modernism as inauthentic imitations of artistic innovations that originated with European art. While accepting that there was a deliberate fusion of traditional art into mission mainstream education to produce Christian art forms with a strong Africanised identity, the study reveals missionaries' conservatism and restrictions on artistic freedom. It, therefore, locates the formation of modern art in Zimbabwe largely within a broader spectrum of Africans' encounter with colonialism or western culture which induced artists to invent new artistic expressions reflecting their own emergent political and socio-economic circumstances. The novelty and outright rejection of missionary impact are, therefore, alien to the natural synthesis that informed artistic modernism in Zimbabwe.

**List of key terms:**

Missionaries; Colonialism; Art workshops; African modernism; Appropriation; Hybridisation; Artistic expression; Homogeneity; Heterogeneity; tradition and culture.

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## **PREFACE**

This dissertation examines the impact of missionaries on the formation of modern art in Zimbabwe, specifically focusing on Cyrene and Serima art workshops. It is my argument that African modernism must be largely understood within a complex narrative of the movements, appropriations, rejections and transformations of diverse Western and African traditions and cultural contexts in Zimbabwe's art-historical life. The study shows that African modernism in Zimbabwe was not a homogeneous entity but a variegated one that emerged from, survived, and transcended European colonialism. Yet sound as this may appear, I argue that missionaries' impact must be understood as part of the broad phenomena that shaped the formation of modern art in Zimbabwe. In spite of the conservatism and restrictions to artistic freedom by missionaries, Cyrene and Serima art workshops laid the foundation for and defined the direction of the development of modern art in colonial Zimbabwe. It were these mission art workshops that inaugurated the blending of Christian iconography with traditional African forms and styles which became a permanent feature of modern art in Zimbabwe. This work therefore hopes to fill the historiographical gaps left by previous scholars by linking the emergence of modern African art to mission art workshops and colonialism. Images of artworks collected largely from Cyrene, Serima, National Archives of Zimbabwe and the National Gallery of Zimbabwe, are the most important primary source and main object of the research, with written sources and interviews merely used to support ideas derived from the artworks.

Several people have been of great help in the production of this dissertation and I am greatly indebted to all of them. I especially want to thank, Prof Van Haute, of the Department of Art History, Visual Arts and Musicology, University of South Africa, whose thorough supervision and insightful criticisms enabled me to complete the writing of this dissertation. Many thanks also go

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

NAZ – National Archives of Zimbabwe

NGZ – National Gallery of Zimbabwe.

SPG – Society for the Propagation of the Gospel

SBM – Swiss Bethlehem Mission

SPGFP – Society for the Propagation of the Gospel IN Foreign Parts

UDI – Unilateral Declaration of Independence

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The study analyses Missionaries' impact on the formation of modern art in Zimbabwe with specific reference to Cyrene and Serima art workshops. Mission art workshops were central in the development of modern art in Zimbabwe. This study locates the origins of modern art in Zimbabwe from the late 1930s and mid to late-1940s in the mission art workshops of Cyrene and Serima, respectively. Not only did Canon Edward Paterson and Father John Groeber's mission art workshops at Cyrene and Serima, respectively, prefigure the better known Workshop School Project (1957-1973) associated with the myth of Shona sculpture as invented by McEwen, but the mission art workshops were responsible in part for the success of McEwen. African modernism has been largely omitted in art historical studies in Zimbabwe. Even where it has been considered, it has tended to be regarded as inauthentic imitations of Western art (Okeke-Agulu 2015:51). Thus, apart from an analysis of impact of missionaries on modern art in Zimbabwe the study examines the nature and authenticity of African modernism.

The study argues that the encounters and embroilments advanced by colonialism in Africa produced complex issues of appropriation and commodification of African visual expressions (Monda 2014). It is a historical fact that early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, expatriate teachers opened 'fine art' schools in numerous African centres, many of them in concurrence with their Christian missions, introducing new techniques and aesthetics. According to Caplan (2012:2-7), these synthesised frameworks produced hybrid forms of art through the blending of Christian

iconography with traditional African forms and styles. The workshops of Paterson at Cyrene, and Groeber at Serima and Driefontein Missions in Zimbabwe were no exceptions. Under the tutelage of Paterson and Groeber, there was deliberate fusion of traditional art into mission mainstream education to produce Christian art forms with a strong Africanised identity. The study also aims to show that some African styles were adapted to meet and, in some cases, to satisfy dominant foreign expectations.

Although there were other mission centres that introduced art in Zimbabwe, this study is confined to Cyrene and Serima missions largely because they are the most representative of the mission art workshops in their impact on African modern art development in Zimbabwe. Other centres will only be considered in connection with promoting Cyrene and Serima art traditions. It is my major argument in this study that mission art workshops were the incubators of African modernism in Zimbabwe as elsewhere in Southern Africa. I will also demonstrate that African modernism must be understood as a fusion of many sources, an amalgam of both Western and African cultures that must be appreciated as post-modern *avant la letter* (Okeke 2001:29).

Paterson and Groeber's mission work was not restricted to Cyrene and Serima as the former was involved in the establishment of Chirodzo and Nyarutsero Art schools in Harare in 1954 and 1961, respectively. Groeber's influence saw the opening of Driefontein carving school after 1967 and his art works were a source of inspiration to students at Driefontein mission long after his death. The impact of Cyrene and Serima mission art traditions, therefore, was far and wide and deserves rigorous examination. It is hoped that the study will also unravel the continuities and discontinuities between mission art workshops and Frank McEwen's workshops. The mission art

workshops not only prefigured McEwen's workshops but also guaranteed his success. The roots of the development of modern African art in Zimbabwe must, therefore, be sought in mission art workshops rather than McEwen's workshops.

The research questions which guide this study are the following:

1. What were the pedagogical philosophy and tutorial methods of the Serima and Cyrene mission art workshops?
2. What role did mission art workshops play in the development of African modernism?
3. In what ways can the nature of African modernism in Zimbabwe be understood?
4. How can the continuities and discontinuities of mission art workshops and McEwen's workshops be disentangled?

Stiles and Selz (2012:1-5) argue that there has been growing interest in the vitality of art, globally. McEvelley (1993:16-17) posits that art is in constant flux because of many factors that include, *inter-alia*, interaction among artists and cultural nomadism. It is important to note that much as assimilative processes result in an amalgam of art techniques, processes, themes, media and sources of inspiration, they are fundamentally operationalised within the dictates of specific cultural contexts. Modern Zimbabwean African art has been no exception to this rule and has gone through various phases of evolution to become what it is today.

As much as Zimbabwe has maintained her indigenous art perspective, it is noteworthy that it has been significantly influenced by acculturation. It is my argument in this study that modern African art in Zimbabwe was a product of the meeting of European and African cultures. Zimbabwean art has in the process of its development assimilated new art forms, foreign media and materials, artistic approaches and processes, among other aspects that are now an integral element of art

practice. The impact of international exposure is self-evident as artists produce art for the gallery space, which was not the case before the advent of colonialism. The development of modern art in Zimbabwe must be viewed more as an example of the meeting of African and European cultures with a positive outcome, rather than McEwen's conception of an African avant-garde (Pearce 1993:85-86).<sup>1</sup> As such, the study reveals how the artistic works of Paterson and Groeber's students reflected both a deep connection with local artistic traditions and the stylistic sophistication of 20<sup>th</sup> century modernist art, revealing how artists translated Zimbabwe's socio-political and economic experiences into artistic modernism.

## **1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

There has been very limited research by Zimbabweans in order to unravel local art forms. Research by westerners has brought to light the rich artistic heritage of Zimbabwe. Frank McEwen (1968:18-25), the Director of the then Rhodesia National Gallery (now National Gallery of Zimbabwe), tried to erase mission art from art history in Zimbabwe by claiming that he was the father of modern art through his Workshop School Project (1957-1973). Indeed McEwen (1968:18-25) points to the spontaneous flowering, *ex nihilo*, of stone carving skills of Shona artists. In his perception of African early modernism, McEwen dismissed any missionary influence. He viewed the rise of modern art from the 1950s, through the 1960s and 1970s as a spontaneous African renaissance with roots dating as far back as the carving of the stone birds of Great Zimbabwe. It is not only the spontaneity of this renaissance that is questionable but also the players, namely Shona artists. The reductionist approach of dubbing every artist in Zimbabwe, Shona, including Ndebele, migrant

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<sup>1</sup> Frank McEwen was appointed director of the National Gallery of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in 1956. He erroneously believed that there was no known indigenous or contemporary art in Rhodesia before the opening of the National Gallery of Rhodesia in 1957. In the period 1957-1973 he conducted workshops at the Gallery training African artists to produce what he felt was better African work distinct from European art and Western influence (Joosten 2001:19).

labourers from Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique, is not tenable. What cannot be denied is that far from having natural, untutored and authentic skills most of the artists associated with the African avant-garde in the 1960s (and therefore the rise of modern art) had received missionary training from the late 1930s through the 1940s. Hence my aim is to trace the origins of modern art in Zimbabwe to the mission art workshops.

Roberts (1982), Arnold (1986), Mor (1987), Pearce (1993), Sultan (1999), Vera (2002) and Winter-Irving (1993, 2001, 2003, 2004)'s works have been crucial in bolstering the persistent interest in art in Zimbabwe. It is Garlake's (1987:17) argument that Zimbabwe's artistic heritage, like many countries in Southern Africa, dates back to the San rock paintings and glyptics. Arnold (1981:1) views the soapstone birds of Great Zimbabwe as the "only extant examples of large-scale, early Shona sculpture". Vansina (1984), Willet (1993), Matenga (1998) and Dederan (2010) argue that Zimbabwe is well known for the stone architectural forms scattered all over the country. This artistic stone masonry seems to have subsequently gone dormant after the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Sadly, these works either mention Christian missionary activities as a parenthesis of the modern sculpture movement or totally alienate the missionaries from the movement. By claiming that the art of the Shona in Zimbabwe is restricted to myth and magic, Kuhn (1978) seems to dismiss the external impact and internal dynamism and growth in the development of art in Zimbabwe. Sultan and Winter-Irving's analyses are closeted by their association with the Pierre Gallery in Harare and Tengenenge sculpture community of Guruve, respectively, as well as their heavy dependency on former Director of the Rhodesian Art Gallery, McEwen's perceptions of the history of Zimbabwean sculpture.

Considerable research is, therefore, available on modern sculpture movement in Zimbabwe initiated by Frank McEwen and Tom Blomefield from the 1960s. There has, however, been very little research (Randles 1997; Morton 2003; Zilberg 2013) on the mission art workshops that emerged in colonial Zimbabwe in the late 1930s and 1940s, and their subsequent impact on the development of modern African art in Zimbabwe. Walker (1985) provides biographical material on one of the most prominent persons whose activities at Cyrene are the subject of this study. Though not specifically reflecting the impact of his work, such biographical data provide invaluable information to fully comprehend Paterson's activities. Equally important is Plangger's publication (1974) which gives valuable information on missionary work at Serima where Groeber operated.

In general, there is lack of attention towards the development of modern African art which is marginalised in art history and even more in other sciences. Even stone sculpting in Zimbabwe is a poorly explored field with most existing publications written by art historians such as Winter- Irving (1993, 2001, 2003), Arnold (1981), Sultan (1999) and others. A few anthropological studies have been made, but mainly focusing on the artistic production and the question of the ethnic labelling of the art form as Shona art (Sicilia, 1999). However, there is lack of research on missionaries' impact on the formation of modern art in Zimbabwe, which is the subject of this research.

The historical roots of modern art were integrated in the advent of colonialism in Zimbabwe in general and mission school education in particular. Religion has been an important aspect of people's lives since the beginning of humanity. When religion changes the social activities

associated with it are also subject to change. Zimbabwe was no exception after colonial conquest in 1890 and the subsequent activities of a myriad of Christian Missionary Societies fostered the emergence of African modernism in the country. Mission schools such as Serima, Cyrene, Silveria and St Faith represent an alien religion with a foreign culture and Western civilisation attached to them. It was therefore inevitable that missionary activities at such schools were bound to change the social outlook of the indigenous Zimbabweans in the vicinity of the areas, and play a crucial role in the growth of modernism in Zimbabwe.

Mission art education in Zimbabwe during the colonial period must be understood within a broad prevailing educational philosophy that argued that education for Africans should not focus on academics, beyond basic literacy, but rather on providing vocational skills that would ostensibly help the students secure employment within the sphere of economic activities open to Africans in an increasingly racialised Rhodesia (Walker 1985: ix, xii). Yet, by no means did this imply monolithic styles and media in the art produced in mission schools. Mission art schools produced divergent styles and media (wood carving, stone sculpture, painting, lino cutting and crafts), and nurtured various reputable modern artists in their workshops such as Joseph Ndandarika, Nicholas Mukomberenwa, Samuel Songo, Kingsley Sambo, Lazarus Khumalo, Gabriel Hatugari and Tapfuma Gutsa, to mention only a few. This work therefore hopes to fill the historiographical gaps left by previous scholars by linking the emergence of modern African art to mission art workshops and colonialism. It also deviates from scholars who have viewed modern African art as mere tribal art or Shona art, more so taking into cognisance the players involved. It is, therefore, my hope to bring out new dimensions and nuances that characterised the development of modern African art in Zimbabwe.

### **1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The research uses post-modernism in unravelling mission art and its role in the development of modern art in Zimbabwe. It is important to emphasise two general points in relation to modernity and modernism: the plurality of modernity and the realisation that there are other modernisms beyond the European context. Hassan (2019:454-455) defines modernity as social changes implied in becoming modern – urbanisation, industrialisation, wage labour and factory systems, and so on – and modernism as the aesthetic, artistic, and representational practices associated with modernity. In addition to the distinction between modernity and post modernity in the field of social theory, the discourse of the postmodern plays an important role in the field of aesthetics and cultural theory. Until the 1950s African art typically functioned as one of the global shadows that sets off the brilliance attributed to the Euro-American trajectory (modernism) as it moved from cubinism to abstract expressionism and beyond – a necessary backdrop for the performance of those appearing on the world stage (Greenburg 1989; Childs 2008:18; Armstrong 2005:24). In the post-1950s scholars such as McEvelley (1991:13-17), Danto (1997:3-10) and Moxey (2009:2-7) called into question this narrative of progress ascribed to artistic production. They argued that modernism's time was multiple – as it flowed at different speeds in different situations, and art history had one paradigm by which to understand developments in one context and another to cope with those taking place in others, and such paradigms were not hierarchically organised. Moxey's (2009:1-2) multiple modernities imply that different forms of modernity occurred at different times in different places. As such, post-modernism liberates art from modernism tyranny of universal time and gives space for and visibility to African artistic traditions.

Mudimbe (1994:xv) argues that *The Idea of Africa* is partly an invention and partly the affirmation of certain natural features, cultural characteristics, and values that contribute to Africa as a continent and its civilisation as constituting a set of differences from those, say, designated by Asia and Europe. However, Africa is also a diverse and highly complex historical entity due to, among other things, experiences of slavery, colonialism and decolonisation. As such, Africa and African modernism are products of historically complex entity and global presence. Using a theory of “natural synthesis” Okeke-Agulu (2015:89) unravels the selective use of artistic resources and forms from Nigeria/African and European traditions, inaugurating the multiplicity and complexity of post colonial modernism in Nigeria. Post-modernism, therefore, rejects the traditional values and politically conservative assumptions of modernism, in favour of a wider, more entertaining concept of art, using new artistic forms enriched by past and present experiences.<sup>2</sup>

Post-modernism opens and challenges up the tyranny of universal time and use of master narratives. In his post colonial discourse, Ngugi (1982, 1989) challenges western ‘master’ narratives and resists traditional strategies of European containment of Africans in Kenya. Similarly, Mignolo (2002:59) argues that the geopolitics of knowledge is organised around the diversification, through history, of the colonial and imperial difference. It follows, therefore, that the modern/colonial world-system must be conceived as a socio-historical structure coincident with the expansion of capitalism and colonialism. By rejecting tyranny of universal time and master narratives, post-modernists reject the idea that knowledge or history can be encompassed in totalising theories, embracing instead the local, the contingent, and the temporary. Therefore,

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<sup>2</sup> Jameson (1991:16) uses ‘postmodernism’ to describe those diverse aesthetic forms and practices which come after and break with western modernism.

postmodern theory rejects modern assumptions of social coherence and notions of causality in favour of multiplicity, plurality, fragmentation, and indeterminacy (Best and Kellner 1991:4). It is within this context that the heterogeneity rather than the homogeneity of African modernism in Zimbabwe must be fully understood.

Other narratives rejected by post-modernists include the idea of artistic development as goal-oriented, the notion that only men are artistic geniuses, and the colonialist assumption that non-white races are inferior (Lyotard 1984:42-43; Ngugi 1982, 1989). The study must also be fully conceived within Kasfir (2002:9, 2007:20-30)'s perception of African art as a field of mismatched genres, a process of *bricolage* upon the already existing structures and scenarios on which older, pre-colonial and colonial genres of African art are made. The study is, however, more inclined to Kasfir's concept of *bricolage* wrapped in post-modernism. In this post-modernism ethos, a multiplicity of western and African cultural traditions is exploited by artists to shape their artistic positions in a manner that opens the way for the proliferation and increased visibility of African art. Consequently, African art in the era of colonialism and in encounters with European modernity is viewed reflexively as an encounter with categories of time and a march toward a post-historical paradigm where traditional styles are no longer the sole designation of the aesthetic coordinates of artistic production (Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu 2009:12). Rather, a convergence of traditional styles and Western paradigms emerges with two distinctive thrusts: one reflecting its connection to the historical past, the other a product of appropriation of Western culture and thus establishing its separation from the past.

While missionaries' own grounding in European modernism and its influence on the nature of their teachings in mission art workshops will be assessed, more importantly is the study's thrust to unravel missionaries' impact on the formation of modern art in Zimbabwe. The variegated discourse of African modernism is illuminated as a fusion of European and African culture. Often these synthesised existing frameworks produced hybrid forms of African art. The origin of modern African art is, therefore, explained as a deliberate (for Cyrene) and accidental (for Serima) product of the modernist tastes of missionaries during the late 1930s and 1940s, in particular those of Paterson and the Swiss priest, Father Groeber. They established mission art workshops and organised art exhibitions (particularly for Cyrene) that subsequently induced their African students to adopt and Africanise Western visual aesthetics through interaction. By and large, this study examines how artists assimilated new approaches, techniques and media through the inter-cultural learning at the mission art workshops at Cyrene and Serima and how subsequently such appropriated and hybridised traditions influenced the development of modern African art in Zimbabwe.

## **1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology comprises the research design, data sources, and data collection techniques; sampling techniques, data analysis and interpretation.

### **1.4.1 Research design**

The study employs a qualitative research design because it is multi-method in focus, and involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to subject matter (Denzin and Lincoln 1998: 3). A multi-disciplinary approach is employed in analysing art issues using strengths gleaned not only from

art history and philosophy of art, but also from other disciplines such as history and anthropology. The study uses Cyrene and Serima as case studies on mission art workshops' impact on the development of artistic modernism in Zimbabwe. The study also employs primary data from archives (gathered from 2014 to 2016), field work undertaken in Zimbabwe (in the period 2015-2017) and content analysis to make valid inference from sources (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their uses.

#### **1.4.2 Data sources**

Valuable archival material is available in the national archives of Zimbabwe for both Cyrene and Serima in the form of historical manuscripts and correspondence, and some pictures showing artworks at Cyrene and Serima; and in the Zimbabwe National Art Gallery in the form of documents referring to exhibitions from the mid 1980s to 2011 as well as artworks produced at mission art schools and displayed in the National Art Gallery. Equally important are missionary records (particularly correspondence) kept at mission centres' headquarters, such as Serima documents found at Gweru Diocese centre, in Gweru. The literature review, above, mentions available secondary sources that are useful in this study. Fundamentally, artworks are the most important primary source and main object of the research, with written sources merely used to support ideas derived from the artworks.

#### **1.4.3 Data collection techniques**

Data collection techniques involved visits to relevant places to collect images of artworks and gather information, while a questionnaire and interviews were used to gather more information to complement artworks. I visited Cyrene and Serima mission centres, National Archives of

Zimbabwe and National Art Gallery of Zimbabwe to collect images thereof (paintings and sculptures) and other relevant information. A questionnaire was distributed to and collected from an informant (historian) by the researcher. I also conducted personal interviews with artists connected to Cyrene and Serima, historians and Roman Catholic Church officials. Gubrium and Holstein (2001:65-68) argue that interviewing is more popular than ever as a means of generating information for both scholarly and professional purposes. Arguably, the array of methods employed ensured that information used in this dissertation is validated and/or triangulated. Patton (2002:242) posits that triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985:39-40), in qualitative methodology, the researcher typically becomes the main tool for conducting research, especially interviews. Three interviews were conducted in Bulawayo, two in Gweru, one at Serima, two in Masvingo, four in Harare and one in Rusape. The interview process is an exercise of engaging in a conversation with a purpose to specifically gather information (Berg 2001:66). Where possible, attempts were made to ensure that creative interviewing ensued punctuated by lengthy and unstructured interviews where I used my personal skills to adapt to the changing interactional situation of the interviews. I made inventive attempts to reach mutual understanding and intimacy of feelings with the interlocutors. The interviews were mostly conducted at interlocutors' working place as an integral part of the participant observation particularly from artists. Participant observation is directed towards social practices, gestural as much as verbal, and to analyse how people's practices give answers about the functioning of their social system. In the words of the late American professional baseball catcher, Yogi Berra, "you can observe a lot just by watching" (quoted from Helpers 2000:228). Observing artists at their workplaces helped me to gain empathy through personal experience,

provided opportunities to interact with artists in action and in the process learned answers to questions I wouldn't have had the sense to ask. It played an important role in co-producing my findings and analysis. In general artists had a high willingness to talk to me and, just as other interlocutors, asked to be acknowledged by their names in this research. To them an interview was, therefore, a way of exposure, where others could read about them, as well as a way of making people aware of their artistic world.

Adler and Adler (1998:80) posit that observation entails gathering impressions of the surrounding world through all relevant human faculties, without necessarily manipulating the subjects under scrutiny. Interviews conducted with first generation artists such as artist Lazarus Khumalo, Gabriel Hatugari and Locadia Ndandarika and second generation artists such as Tapfuma Gutsa and Adam Madebe enabled me to observe artists' mannerisms and understand their use of hybridisation and mixed-media, in transforming modern African art practice in Zimbabwe. It also enabled me to analyse the Zimbabwean art world from the artists' perspectives. With interviews allowing apprehending social practices in artists' personal as much as collective trajectory (Beaud, 1996:40), it gave insights into their perceptions of themselves and modern African art. Through this form it became possible to derive personal aspects such as their own trajectory as artists and their perception and opinion about the art world in its collective form. Grabski and Magee's (2013:1-8) work offers insight into oral history interview reflexivity by detailing the experiences of dispersed artists, museum curators, art historians, and anthropologists, who show how interviews can be used to generate new meaning and the ways in which connecting with artists and their work can transform artistic production into innovative, critical insights and knowledge.

Arguably, when done well, interview and observation can be used to provoke alternative understanding of art.

In adhering to qualitative research's use of multiple means of enquiry, I also used the camera to take pictures of mural paintings at Cyrene and wood carvings at Serima, and this made the camera a research tool for gathering data that is both selective and specific (Leavy 2009: 217). By and large, images of artworks are specifically selected for use in conjunction with qualitative interviews, and other documents.

#### **1.4.4 Sampling techniques**

Purposeful sampling and a preliminary field assessment done in 2015 influenced the selection of participants with special knowledge of the area under investigation in advance (Patton 2002:243; Berg 2001:32). As stressed by Hoepfl (2009:12-14) and Patton (2002:225-227), purposeful sampling seeks out information-rich cases for purposes of in-depth analysis. I used my contacts within the academic, church circles and the art community in Zimbabwe as informants in recruiting respondents. Their recommendations and links facilitated interviews with the most knowledgeable persons in the field using the snowball aspect of purposeful or purposive sampling (McNealy 1999:157). The key interlocutors whom I interviewed included: artist Lazarus Khumalo (a former Cyrene student), artist Gabriel Hatugari (former Serima student), artist Tapfuma Gutsa (former Driefontain student with strong links to Serima), artist Ennica Mukomberanwa (daughter of Nicholas Mukomberanwa), artist Locardia Ndandarika (former wife of the late artist Joseph Ndandarika), and artist Adam Madebe (former student of Khumalo and Songo). Both the current Catholic Bishop and Vicar of Gweru diocese (under which Serima falls) were interviewed, and so

was Serima Priest in charge. Two renowned historians, Dr James Muzondidya and Pathisa Nyathi, acquainted with the development of mission art education were also interviewed and added an important historical flavour to the study of modern art in Zimbabwe.<sup>3</sup>

Care must be taken to note that it is not so much the sample size that is important in this study, as qualitative studies (and historical studies) typically employ multiple forms of evidence (Patton 2002:230-232). In spite of the apparent advantage of purposeful sampling, the researcher takes cognisance of three types of sampling error that can arise in qualitative research. The first relates to distortions caused by insufficient breadth in sampling; the second from changes over time; and the third from distortions caused by lack of depth in information collection. The targeted interlocutors were information rich sources and provided adequate information from their recollection, artworks, archives and research which when combined with other sources provide a basis for rigorous analysis. It is, therefore, envisaged that the use of varied sources complemented by purposeful sampling methodology will enable me to unravel the dimensions and nuances of missionaries' impact on the formation of modern art in Zimbabwe.

#### **1.4.5 Data analysis and interpretation**

Document analysis involves describing and interpreting a social group's or society's artefacts. Usually, these are written texts such as newspapers and books. However, Marshal and Rossman (1999) and Bogdan and Biklen (1992) include other forms of communication like music, pictures and political speeches. For the purpose of this study, paintings and sculptures are the main object

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<sup>3</sup> Although Dr James Muzondidya's research is more inclined to race, class and minority groups (particularly coloureds) he has also carried out research on the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe. Pathisa Nyathi is a renowned social historian whose writings have extended to missionary activities in Matabeleland.

of the research. As such, Cyrene and Serima paintings, wood carvings and stone sculptures are rigorously analysed in terms of artistic style, appropriation of Western culture, hybridity, expression of African culture and mannerisms, innovations and changes over time. Equally important is deciphering homogeneity and heterogeneity in the artistic style and the sources of change and continuity over time. Other primary and secondary sources are used to bolster ideas on African modernism emerging from artworks overtime. The study, therefore, incorporates content analysis of both paintings and sculptures, and written information as observable data worthy of interpretation on missionaries' impact on the formation of modern art in Zimbabwe.

## **1.5 OUTLINE OF THE CONTENTS**

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 gives the basis for understanding the whole study by providing the statement of the problem, literature review, theoretical framework and research methodology. The thrust of chapter 2 is on the philosophy and development of mission art as espoused by Paterson and Groeber. Cyrene paintings produced in the colonial period 1939-1945 and Serima wood panels in the church will be analysed to demonstrate Paterson and Groeber's teachings in mission art workshops, respectively. In theory both Paterson and Groeber claimed their respective art instructions at Cyrene and Serima amounted to little more than praise, encouragement and absence of teaching. In practice, both had an imposing influence on their students.

Chapter 3 analyses the impact of Cyrene mission art on modern African art development specifically focusing on Paterson's students, viz, Samuel Songo (1929-1990s?), Lazarus Khumalo (1930-2015) and Kingsley Sambo (1936-1977). These artists' contribution to the development of

modern art in Zimbabwe will be assessed. Chapter 4 focuses on the role played by Serima mission art on the development of modern African art in Zimbabwe with particular reference to Groeber's students, notably, Nicholas Mukomberanwa (1940-2002) and Joseph Ndandarika (1940-1991). Chapter 5 is the conclusion and highlights the implications and significance of mission art education in the development of modern art in Zimbabwe.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Cyrene and Serima Mission art workshops in colonial Zimbabwe, 1930s-1960s**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Mission schools have had an undeniable influence on the development of skills and therefore of art in Zimbabwe. Only three missions - Cyrene, Serima and Driefontein (which was an extension of Serima) - were able to break away from conventional production of religious images and souvenirs, and demonstrated real originality in the decoration of their churches. This chapter traces and explains the philosophy and history of mission art as espoused by Paterson (1895-1974) and Groeber (1903-1972), and shows how this laid a foundation for the emergence of African modernism in Zimbabwe. Cyrene paintings produced in the period 1939-1953 and Serima carvings, paintings and decoration in the church will be analysed to demonstrate Paterson and Groeber's teachings in mission art workshops, respectively. It is also my argument in this chapter that both Cyrene and Serima mission art workshops sought to find an African means of expressing Christian belief. Cyrene and Serima art workshops, therefore, give insight into the different but connected worlds of Anglicanism and Catholicism in modern African art history.

#### **2.2 PATERSON'S CYRENE MISSION ART WORKSHOP**

##### **2.2.1 The beginnings of Cyrene Mission**

The genesis of Cyrene Mission was, in part, a product of Bishop Edward F. Paget (of the Anglican Church)'s whirlwind energy. In 1936 Paget had read the Government's Tredgold Committee report on juvenile delinquency among white urban population.<sup>4</sup> The report proposed a rehabilitation

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<sup>4</sup> The white urban population in colonial Zimbabwe was concentrated in the capital city of Salisbury (now Harare), industrial hub city of Bulawayo, Gwelo (Gweru), Umtali and other small mining towns.

centre, preferably under church control. Paget approached John Banks, a wealthy railway engineer, Surveyor of the Railways and farmer who had been forced by a fall from a horse which broke his neck to leave his farms near Bulawayo. Consequently, in 1936 John Banks donated two farms (Collaton and Irene), including a splendidly equipped large farm house, to the Anglican Diocese of Southern Rhodesia (Paterson 1949:3; Randles 1997:71-83). Under Bishop Paget, two projects were launched: St Pancras Home, a rehabilitation centre for delinquent white boys, and a skills-oriented primary school for black boys. To supply a spiritual focus for the two projects, a Chapel was built under the influence of Father Baker in 1937.

While St Pancras Home was established first, after the arrival of Canon Edward (Ned) G. Paterson in 1939, it was closed and emphasis was placed on developing the school. Paterson was in total control of the two Anglican Church farms (Collaton and Irene) and was eager to fulfil his emerging dream of an educational centre with an agricultural, technical and artistic emphasis. Paterson named his scheme Cyrene after Simon of Cyrene, who helped Jesus carry his cross (Luke 23:26) and whom he believed was "... traditionally an African" and dark skinned (Paterson 1973b:5). According to Paterson (1949a:3), "The name has come to carry in it the idea of hard work, hard work for God, for Africa, for each other, and for oneself". Simon's Cyrene was also one of the first mission centres in North Africa. An agricultural centre, it was named after a Greek nymph whose son Aristaeus was supposed to have invented bee-keeping (Walker 1985:30).

### **2.2.2 Paterson's background**

In order to fully comprehend the Cyrene arts and crafts tradition, it is important to first give Paterson's historical background. Born in Aberdeen, Scotland, in 1895, Paterson emigrated to

South Africa with his family in 1901 (Paterson 1973b:1). His memoirs further reflect that at the age of thirteen, he left school and went to work part-time in the Transvaal Scottish Regiment. Paterson's regiment was called up during the First World War, and he served in the Namibian and East African campaigns before being demobilised in 1918. After the war he was awarded a veteran's scholarship, and went to study at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London in the period 1920-1923 (Paterson 1973b:2). It was here that he became acquainted with John Ruskin (1819-1900)'s Arts and Craft philosophy and William Morris (1834-96)'s ideal of artistic socialism or a community of artists and craftsmen (MacCarthy 1994:69-70, 87). Ruskin, the writer, art critic and social reformer, revered beauty in nature for its own sake, felt that art had a high moral function, and was passionately opposed both to industrialism and to the use of art teaching merely to improve industrial design. He proclaimed that true art is a process of joyful growth (Hewison 1996:220-226). This philosophy would make a life-long contribution to Paterson's work in art and education. As propounded by Walker (1985:11), "It would be combined with Morris's view that all men's right to 'eager life while we live, is above all things the aim of art'".

As such, many of Ruskin and Morris's ideas fashioned Paterson's views. They rejected elitist art training that involved long apprenticeships of copying complex designs and forms. According to Harvey and Press (1996:175-185), Ruskin and Morris focused on spontaneous production of simpler and more direct forms. It was their conviction that all children should learn to draw at the same time they learned to read and write. Consequently, a larger and more demographic group of artists capable of decorating and beautifying their surroundings would emerge. Harvey and Press (1996:184-186) further argue that it was the conviction of Ruskin and Morris that, if sufficient demand arose for craftwork, it was imperative that artists should group together as professionals

to meet the demand and ensure control of the artistic process. As such, Ruskin and Morris built a vision of society itself as a network of intimate, caring, creative communities or interactive workshops. In these communities people would work together in harmony for the common good.

After completing his art degree in London, Paterson returned to South Africa and joined the Transvaal diocese of the Anglican Church in 1924. In 1925 Paterson was posted to Grace Dieu, an Anglican high school near Pietersburg, where his artistic influence was first felt (Paterson 1973b:4). He introduced the school's workshop students to bas relief carving, which he had learnt in art school. Butler (2000:47) posits that this form of carving soon became the school's brand style, and continued after the departure of Paterson under the tutelage of a nun by the name of Sister Pauline.<sup>5</sup> It is noteworthy that the school developed Southern Africa's first art workshop, with students and attached professional carvers producing religious carvings on commission for churches needing furniture and ecclesiastical objects. Paterson completed his religious training in 1928 and was ordained as a deacon. Between 1928 and 1938, Paterson served a number of African congregations for the Transvaal diocese in locations such as Johannesburg and Potchefstroom. Despite his regular duties, Paterson managed to decorate a number of new Anglican churches in his diocese, including many murals and carvings (Walker 1985:22-26). Paterson also supplied many of the designs used at the Grace Dieu workshop through the late 1930s as a means of augmenting his meagre income. It was only after these years of service that in 1939 he was given

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<sup>5</sup> Though she had no great technical competence as a carver or art instructor, Sister Pauline was a long-standing teacher and organiser of art workshop programs at Grace Dieu School and played an important role in the development of modern Southern African art from the 1920s until her death in 1954. Two of her students, Ernest Mancoba and Job Kekana became Southern Africa's first professional black modern artists from the late 1920s (Morton 2013c:50-52).

control of a farm he named Cyrene, 30 km west of Bulawayo, to implement his ideas of a cultural centre in Southern Rhodesia where art and education for African children were combined.

### **2.2.3 Conception of Cyrene Mission**

The conception of the Cyrene Mission was two dimensional. Firstly, the focus was on a primary school with a strong focus on agricultural and domestic crafts. Art was to be part of a syllabus geared towards improving the lives of rural Africans from surrounding areas. It was Paterson's hope to make agricultural and practical education the crux of the boys' development, though of course literacy was to be part of the school's mission. Writing in his *Cyrene Papers*, Paterson (1939:3) stressed that "the natural aptitude of the native for manual work has been neglected and thus we have seen as a result hordes of children passing slowly through ... to enter the world fit for nothing but simple clerking or shop work". Fundamentally, the idea was the traditional one of industrial missions: to provide skills and some Christian religion, not to create an urban snob but to train people who would be of value in their home areas. It was therefore imperative, in Paterson's perception, to counter the growing trend of urbanisation by spreading practical skills in African rural reserves. As put succinctly by Paterson (1940:3), "Our aim is to turn out the self-contained burger type, able to farm rationally and to care for his cattle, able to build his own home and to make its furniture and even to enrich them by carving and design".

Secondly, in addition to the above, there would be a strong centre for the study and practice of art, especially art done by Africans. Art and craftwork was to make up about a third of school time, the rest of which was divided between agriculture and the classical subjects. As put forward by Paterson (*Cyrene Papers* 1939:4):

The crafts we will teach will have a bearing on agriculture and the domestic needs, but in addition we hope to develop a really strong center for the study and practice of art and especially what is known as African Art. About this last subject my Bishop is as keen as I am.... I do not doubt the ability of the Matabele to do craftwork, for all African people seem to have that co-ordination of brain and hand which makes for fine workmanship.

The history of Cyrene was not only an original experiment in African education but an unusual example of a developing relationship between certain Anglican Church members in England and a mission project in Africa in which the ideal of spreading the Gospel, social justice and the arts and crafts movement were simultaneously being propagated. In essence this was a paternalistic projection of piecemeal assistance to Africans that was intended to ease discontent emanating from colonial rule and make missionary work acceptable. Not surprisingly, in the periodic letters (*Cyrene Papers 1939-1954*) sent out eventually to over 400 interested people, who lived mainly in England and belonged to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), Paterson wrote about the progress of work at the mission and sought financial contributions for Cyrene. Paterson, therefore, wanted to build an institution for African education that would stress the teaching of craftsmanship and agriculture alongside academic education.

#### **2.2.4 Curriculum and teaching methods**

The school opened in 1940 with 120 boys between the ages of 10 and 20 (Paterson 1973:7, 9). This was largely because Paterson (*Cyrene Papers 1940:3*) had advertised Cyrene as an “Institution for the development of art in agriculture and craftsmanship”. Much as there were African teachers of agriculture, building, carpentry and some simple metal work, among others, the principal of the school (Paterson) taught art himself as a compulsory part of the curriculum. Pearce (1993:92) states that Paterson promoted a highly decorative style, “withholding the teaching of perspective but encouraging bright, clear colours laid flat, the use of black paint to outline forms and the use of patterning techniques” reminiscent of Rousseau and the early Matisse,

on one hand, and Medieval iconography on the other. It is imperative to analyse his teaching methods since they were central to the development of a Cyrene style. At any rate, Paterson's students later worked in the same manner when they went on to become teachers themselves and popularised his methods.

Drawing and painting were compulsory for all students and all the courses were personally taught by Paterson until his departure in 1953. Paterson (1949a:11) dubbed his *modus operandi* "the absence of teaching" or, at other times, "the encouragement of art", in which the work developed along natural lines without the super-imposition of Western ideas. Paterson encouraged his students to draw from observation and from their daily experiences. The boys, drawn largely from rural Zimbabwe and a few from Zambia, Malawi and Botswana (*The Star* 1949), with little history of two-dimensional artistic production beyond stone and wood carvings, textile and costume, were presented with paper, pencil, paint and pen and told to draw something from their own minds and imagination. As stressed by Paterson's best student, Sam Songo, "He would let us finish what we were doing without a word ... but then he would tell us what was wrong. He insisted on detail. But if I wanted to make a red flower, which was only one little flower on the veld tree, as big as the whole tree in my painting, that was all right" (quoted in *The Star* 1967).

Paterson (1949b:45) asserts that another form of encouragement of art or learning by observation was through showing students the most confident work of the 5% talented students. It is noteworthy that in any group of people working together in relative isolation from the rest of the world, as was the case at Cyrene, only a small percentage constitutes some genius of one form or another and transforms itself into a leadership which the remaining majority is willing to follow,

contenting itself with being a watered-down edition of the genius (Paterson 1949b:45). Paterson (1949b:45) further argues that Cyrene made its name with a dozen boys with talent for art and this genius found Cyrene congenial because the other boys who were mere imitators formed themselves into an understanding and sympathetic background against which the artist could do his work. Cyrene, therefore, provided a good environment for young boys to meet, interact and ensure control of the artistic process. Thanks to Paterson urging the boys to ‘fill the page’ a collective painting style of rich, decorative patterning began to emerge. As stressed by Paterson (1973b:8), “‘I can’t draw’ was heard less and less frequently” as the less confident boys were encouraged by the artistic efforts of more confident boys and positively changed their expression to “I can try”.

It is evident that Paterson’s educational philosophy was greatly shaped by the ideal of artistic socialism or a community of artists and craftsmen which he acquainted with at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London in the period 1920-1923. Paterson’s philosophy of absence of teaching and artistic socialism was commendable in fostering a critical pedagogy of dialogue and participatory action. However, it restricted unlearning and constant learning of new methods and processes essential to remaining competitive. Lee (2003:16) defines unlearning as the act of letting go of old information or habits in order to make room for new ideas which might be better for the enterprise, creativity and innovation. It is, therefore, a critical element in the learning process, which sadly was discarded by Paterson. By becoming the final judge of students’ products and classifying them as talented or not, Paterson’s educational philosophy in practice amounted to a banking concept.<sup>6</sup> Above all, by stressing art as a social and spiritual exercise and an exercise in

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<sup>6</sup> Freire (1972) views banking education as a practice of domination, a fundamental system of oppression in which the teacher marginalises and alienates students.

training fingers and senses, Cyrene could not avoid stifling the personal and artistic growth it sought to produce. Arguably, Paterson limited students' artistic skills, growth and progress.

Not only was Paterson firmly against imposition of Western artistic tradition on students but also against the putting up of reproductions on walls. Paterson (1953b:2) wrote:

Cyrene, in as great a measure as we are able to achieve, exists in an artistic vacuum. All expressions of the art of other times and peoples is rigorously excluded from its pupils... This almost complete vacuum was created because the principal was curious as to what would happen ... had they the materials to express themselves but not the influence of European art.

As such, much as students knew well that Paterson could draw, from seeing his scribbling on the board and the murals in the church, he kept his hands off their drawing books – curious to see what would happen. However, his students were exposed to his aesthetic sensibilities through his own artworks which served as models for them. Paterson had made murals around the altar at Cyrene before the school opened which could have indirectly influenced his students' paintings. According to Walker (1985:31) one of these paintings was that of Christ depicted as an African priest (**Fig 1**).

While students were not allowed to view art books, Paterson encouraged them to read ecclesiastical and history books in order to obtain ideas for drawings. Conversely, though he encouraged students to read the scriptures for stories that they could express in a single composition, he also expected them to look beyond the Bible. There is evidence that Paterson at times censored his students' work. According to the *Visitors' Guide to Cyrene* (Anon. 1970:7), Paterson asked the artist James Ratumu to replace 'a most potent-seeming ram' with an innocuous lamb in a painting of the parable of the Good Shepherd.

It is within this context that Paterson's conception of a distinctive 'Cyrene tradition in art' – an art which grew out of the life and culture of those who produced it – must be comprehended. The subjects were various, with many pictures showing life in the countryside – its houses, trees, animals and birds. Arguably, the Cyrene style was landscape-oriented and often included scenes of granite inselberg formations, as well as local flora and fauna. According to Paterson (1955:45; 1973b:8), it was partly because of Cyrene's "self contained isolation and partly because of indolence (making use of hands to pass the time)" that the results were reminiscent of some aspects of "Persian Art – trees with, I counted once 4 000 leaves, contorted rocks, human figures with the anatomy pretty good – they [students] often saw the human body in the nude and they also had each his own body". It is, however, possible that such incredible amount of detail in the paintings could have emerged, partly also as a result of Paterson's criticism. Much as lack of technical training led to lack of depth in students' works, some boys developed a gift of patterning leading to the creation of surprising abstracts. As noted by Paterson (1973a:1), "a few discovered the charm of distance, with its mountains and other detail". Above all, the art was communal, with one boy showing another or others any achievement he was proud of, with the consequent admiration. As succinctly put forward by Paterson (1973a:1), the Cyrene painting style was "not African art but art done by Africans *sui generis* - the product of the boys working together, seeing each other's work, as in a Medieval Guild".

Other non-mandatory parts of the Cyrene curriculum were woodcarving and stone sculpture. Woodcarving was taught in the afternoons and fascinated physically challenged students unable to partake in agriculture, construction and sport as well as the most gifted art students. That the crippled often acquired much greater proficiency than the physically normal students, was echoed

by one student who was overheard complaining to Jones (Paterson's successor as head at Cyrene) that "I shall never be a good artist, for I am not a cripple" (Jones 1958:1). Students engaged in a broad array of art making including linocut, bas relief, wood and stone carving. This afternoon assemblage had by the late 1940s evolved into a group of talented artists working in the manner reminiscent of Grace Dieu carvers. Much as commissioned artwork for churches was never a full-time preoccupation of this group, it was all the same part of its responsibility.

Paterson had arrived in colonial Zimbabwe in 1939 with determined plans for woodcarving and stone sculpting. His passion for archaeology had developed his imagination and curiosity to revive the artistic techniques of previous generations. He envisioned the resurrection of soapstone carving found at the archaeological site of Great Zimbabwe. He hoped for the discovery of a soapstone deposit for many years. However, it was not until the early 1940s that he obtained several tons of wonderstone for his students from part of a huge cache sent to colonial Zimbabwe by the British government to be used for war grave headstones (Paterson 1973a:1).

Much as Paterson was disappointed by the absence of practicing woodcarvers in the area of Bulawayo, he made great efforts to encourage woodcarving. From the mid-1940s, Paterson employed a local African teacher, Siziva, to teach traditional rural African woodcarving<sup>7</sup> with simple implements such as adzes, scrapers and scorching tools (**Fig. 2**). Bowls were cut from solid wood with the African adze<sup>8</sup>, scooped out with an 'ingweba' (a metal rod that was bent and specifically designed for scrapping part of wood to make cupped wooden containers) and then

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<sup>7</sup> Traditional rural African woodcarving was indigenous woodcarving that produced implements for domestic use (including farming and hunting) using simple tools.

<sup>8</sup> An adze is a tool similar to an axe, with an arched blade at right angles to the handle, used for smoothing or carving wood in hand woodworking.

decorated. Paterson (1949:5) argues that the marula tree (*Sclerocarya birrea*) provided a soft wood which did not crack. While Siziva was a gifted African carver who could have enhanced Paterson's conception of "self-contained burger", it was unfortunate that his indigenous carving ethos (while beneficial to students) did not resonate with Paterson's fund raising in a market dominated by whites.

Walker (1985:43) asserts that whereas the students initially produced patterned wooden bowls, they later graduated to the production of heads and small-scale replicas of animals. Stone carving was more experimental than woodcarving. Paterson crafted a stone font for the Cyrene chapel in 1942 - possibly the first modern stone sculpture in Rhodesia. Most probably this piece was a training exercise for him as much as a decorative one, and thereafter a few of his students began to work wonderstone. The carving of the afternoon group only became speedily enhanced and professionalised after the departure of Siziva in the late 1940s due to a paradigm shift from producing products for domestic use, an increased stream of commissions and a ready market for artwork.

### **2.2.5 Paterson as fundraiser and promoter**

Paterson aimed at raising funds for Cyrene since he started it with a meagre funding of £2 000. The number of students increased from 120 in 1940 to 200 by 1951 (*Cyrene Papers* 1951:5). With students paying merely £10 per year (and unable to pay more) for both fees and boarding, Paterson had no other option but to solicit donations. Paterson's second priority was to encourage the development of skilled craftsmen as much as to promote art for its sake among Africans. Through training students he wished to popularise art and keep the traditional crafts thriving in order to

promote rural development. As pointed out above, the idea was to turn out a fairly rounded person who would accelerate development rather than a person who would gravitate to a job in the city. Paterson's lowest priority was to promote individual artists themselves. Much as he laboured to train, market and place his finest artists, Paterson mainly viewed them as being part of a group effort rather than potential professional artists. Paterson was immensely successful in publicity and fund raising, and popularised Cyrene art among the white public in Southern Africa and abroad. He also made art education a reality for African children and stimulated their imagination and curiosity. However, Morton (2003:77) argues that Paterson's weakness "lay in his unwillingness to let his most talented students progress beyond the simple methods that he taught". This was largely because he restricted western influence, trained students to do as he did and refused to introduce more sophisticated techniques.

Indeed, Paterson proved to be an exceptional fund raiser for Cyrene. He began the *Cyrene Papers* - a cyclostyled report (newsletter) on Cyrene issued occasionally. Between 1939 and 1953, twenty *Cyrene Papers* were produced and sent out to diverse Anglicans in South Africa and England, as well as to possible donors in the liberal funding community (Paterson 1939-1953). This simple newsletter delineated Paterson's teaching and religious philosophies and the general goings-on at Cyrene before the typical pleas for charity at the end. However, although the *Cyrene Papers* were always readable, their major thrust was not on achievements but extensive plans for the future. As mentioned by Paterson (1973b:6), the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) widely publicised the first *Cyrene Paper* and "money began to come in from overseas – some £300 in the first year, which wiped out my debit". Not surprisingly, by the time Paterson left in 1953, 250 copies of *Cyrene Papers* were being printed and generated over £7000 in donations. Above all,

Paterson also earned substantial amounts through art sales. These broad financial sources enabled Paterson to provide art materials to students and to build excellent school rooms as well as a large carpentry and carving shop. By and large, Paterson was always able to fund his projects even though he began his school with a very minimal budget.

Paterson was very successful as a publicist for arts and crafts and the related need to make art education available to African children. In as much as he lived in a racist colonial setting, he managed to induce missionary agencies, churches, education departments, national governments and the white art-buying constituency to support his viewpoint. Above all, he managed to teach thousands of African children art for the first time - many of whom later developed into art educators in their own right.<sup>9</sup>

In order to spread his Arts and Crafts message, Paterson rarely turned down an opportunity to speak or present a lecture. He also used the southern African academic journals (Paterson 1942a, 1942b, 1949b, 1955) as a venue to write about various forms of traditional African art and their relevance to modern craftsmen. A major step towards spreading of art ensued in 1948 when Paterson started a village school at Cyrene to which came about 40 children from surrounding farms. This gave Cyrene the right to do Evangelistic work amongst the children's parents. As Paterson (1948:1) stressed, "we may be able to help these people in other ways – hygiene, home craft, etc". An attempt was made to apply Cyrene art to home decoration, weaving and embroidery. Paterson also used his position on the Rhodesia Arts Council to propagate consideration of the needs of Africans (Paterson 1948:1). While he failed to gain eminence from these activities, he

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<sup>9</sup> Prominent among Paterson's students who are subjects of discussion in chapter 3 are Sam Songo, Lazarus Khumalo, Kingsley Sambo, Adomech Mbenge Moyo, Richard Rashidi, Crispin Chindongo and Randford Sililo.

nevertheless put considerable effort into them in the 1940s. Finally, Paterson discovered that the best method of propagating his message, and also raising funds, was to exhibit his students' work.

Paterson drew some inspiration from school exhibitions that had been prominent in the English Arts & Crafts scene just after the First World War when he was at art school. The sixth *Cyrene Paper* (1942:3) shows that Paterson, for the first time, managed to have Cyrene included at an exhibition of Bulawayo's white schools. Although his students were not yet properly skilled, their paintings and carvings drew the most attention and generated the first sales by the school. A much bigger exhibition of art, crafts and music inspired by Paget and held in Bulawayo in 1944, was such a great success that almost everything was sold before the official opening. Walker (1985:38) asserts that, pleasantly amazed at the success, Paterson remarked: "Cyrene art is startling enough: an art of surprising pattern and the oddest juxtaposition of colour, but perhaps it provides an antidote to the evenness of modern life". At other small shows, Cyrene work continued to receive great praise. The challenge that Paterson encountered in these early years emanated from racial prejudice as whites refused to believe that African students could produce the art that he put on display (Walker 1985:45). Consequently, he brought his luminaries to exhibitions to put on live demonstrations.

By 1944 the local exhibitions had revealed to Paterson that the popularity of Cyrene work was growing. As a result of Paterson's publicity, the first major exhibition for Cyrene was held in Johannesburg and Cape Town in 1946. Though not as wildly triumphant as later efforts, it brought Cyrene to the notice of Lady Tait, the wife of Rhodesia's governor, who began to visit the school regularly. At her insistence, Cyrene staged another large show in 1946 that went to Bulawayo and

Salisbury. All through the exhibition Cyrene students were surrounded by a crowd of onlookers. According to Walker (1985:45), the reaction of white children to these artists was amusing because they started arguments with the students, and just would not believe that the pictures displayed were their own work. After witnessing live drawing, painting and carving demonstrations, all sense of racial differences disappeared and friendly chatter took its place. According to Wall (1982:35), this exhibition ultimately toured South Africa.

Cyrene received an unprepared visit from the British King George, Queen Elizabeth and their daughters in 1947 (*Cyrene Paper* 1947; Paterson 1973:10). Royal visits were major events in Southern Africa in the colonial days and were always accompanied by photographers, journalists and newsreel coverage. After seeing the exhibition in Salisbury, the Queen had been impressed by Cyrene carvings and insisted on visiting Cyrene. The Queen spoke to the students and urged them to make full use of the opportunity given to them. Following the royal visit, accounts of Cyrene then appeared in newspapers and publications across the Empire. Spurred on by the unexpected royal visit to the school in 1947, exhibitions in Cape Town and Pietermaritzburg followed. Eventually, Paterson took the works (pictures and stone and wood sculptures) to London in 1949 and held exhibitions at the Royal Watercolour Society Gallery in Bond Street (Paterson, 1949b:45) and at the Central School of Arts and Crafts (Paterson, 1955:74). The art works were met with fascination and acclaim; the show was packed.

The Queen who had been acclimatised to Cyrene art in 1947 also paid a surprise visit to the London exhibition and afterwards sent a lady-in-waiting to choose several paintings for copying by the Royal School of Needlework. Mrs Kenneth Goodenough, wife of Southern Rhodesia High

Commissioner in London, told the London correspondent of *The Star* (1949) that she was delighted with the interest that was taken in the exhibition in London. To use her words, “This interested me the more, because when I first saw the exhibition I thought how suitable many of the paintings were for reproduction in tapestry and textile designs”. The collection of Cyrene art toured England for three years before being shown in Paris and then America. A second SPG touring exhibition was also organised in 1953, which Paterson took to London on his retirement (Paterson 1955:73-76). It comprised Cyrene art of all sorts, namely watercolour paintings, poster powder paintings and sculptures in wood and stone.

Cyrene students sold a momentous amount of work after the royal family’s visit in 1947 and received a large number of commissions. Unlike the Grace Dieu students, Cyrene students tended to sell their work as individuals first. The pictures began to be sold for amounts ranging from \$15 to \$100 in one case (Paterson 1973b:8). Sales from the exhibitions were reasonably lucrative. According to Paterson (1973b:8), the 1949-55 travelling exhibition alone “brought in a good deal of money – four figures, but I forgot the exact amount”. Commissioned work also became vital after 1947. According to Walker (1985:58), between 1949 and 1953 the most visible Cyrene artworks were murals done for permanent display at the Livingstone Airport in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) – the major hub for tourists on their way to Victoria Falls. Paterson (1955:73-76) and Walker (1985:54-60) mention that other artwork, often in the old bas-relief genre, was produced for an array of institutions in Zambia, South Africa, Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), and

England<sup>10</sup>, while various pieces sold at exhibitions ended up in museums across Europe, Southern Africa and the United States.

The earnings from the exhibitions went largely to the school and not the artists. From second year, artists whose works were sold got a 'rake off' plus remission of school fees. If students showed reasonable progress, they received full scholarships with effect from the second year, as well as a small commission. This system was financially injurious to students with private sponsors, such as Richard Rashidi, as they did not receive anything from the sales they generated (*Cyrene Papers* 1951, 1953). As discussed in the next chapter, the maximum financial benefits ever received by a student ensued to Sam Songo. One significant work done by students without any commission was the historic decoration of the walls of Cyrene's renowned chapel with beautiful murals of Biblical scenes with African themes throughout the 1940s (**Figs 3, 4**). Paterson observed the students' progress carefully. It was considered an honour to be selected as a muralist and add to the work that Paterson had started. The honour of painting murals was also a preserve of what Paterson conceived as the most gifted students in their final year at Cyrene. Paterson even induced his former students to keep on manufacturing art, and was amenable to the inclusion of their works in any of his exhibitions. However, he insisted on a 50% commission from the earnings, on the pretext that former students had no market of any kind in the African community and he could, therefore, generate far higher prices for the art than them (*Cyrene Paper* 1953 (19):4).

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<sup>10</sup> Most of these were Anglican and Catholic Church institutions in the respective countries. The National Museum of African Art at the Smithsonian in Washington DC and the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel acquired large quantities of Cyrene artworks through Paterson (Zilberg 2013:1).

Yet sound as Paterson's willingness to sell works by his former students may appear, he was reluctant to help them pursue their careers by obtaining academic art training. Paterson stopped his former Zambian student Randford Sililo's art education. After a long career at the Rhodes-Livingstone Museum, the British Council of the Federation of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland proposed to send Sililo to England to an art school. Paterson was "infuriated and distressed ... To take Randford to an English Art School would be equivalent to putting a Byzantine artist into the Renaissance" (*Cyrene Paper* 1950 (17):3). Paterson was certainly against contamination of his students by Western modernism. It is noteworthy that even at Cyrene, Paterson was not interested in pursuing the academic work up to the level of Junior Certificate and Matric. He could not stand dealing with this type of African student, "because the pressure of academic work would make them free of all industrial work and they would become a sort of 'babu' caste [privileged class]" (Paterson 1948:1).

Paterson's obsession with limited academic prowess may have emanated from his boyhood South African experience in which education went as far as Standard 7 so that at the age of 13 he had completed his education, after which he looked for work. One can even argue that Paterson refused formal European art education for his students, because he did not want them to progress as artists. However, a deeper analysis reveals that it was a product of Paterson's prejudice and closeted conception to the effect that the work that his students produced was unadulterated, because the nature of the rural African was essentially dignified. Conversely, he felt that Western academy methods would taint the unique freshness of his artists. His Arts and Crafts methods, on the other hand, did not pose this danger. By and large, like all mission educators, Paterson proposed to keep his artists technically and intellectually limited. Fundamentally, 'the absence of teaching', outlined

above, meant that artists were not trained in the history of art or in critical appreciation of their own and others' work. Consequently, they were able to appreciate their work only in terms of pleasing or displeasing their patron, Paterson. Paterson's selection of muralists, censorship of outside influence and students' work, outlined above, constituted powerful forms of aesthetic criticism which imprisoned artists in a terrible blindness. Like Groeber at Serima, Paterson also entrenched patriarchal prejudice, inequality and oppression of women by restricting his Cyrene training to males. It was only in 1965, after leaving Cyrene that Paterson extended art training to women (Walker 1985:66) and therefore asserted the value of women in a male dominated society. This entrenchment of the traditional views of genius and creativity as a domain of men explains the prejudicial exclusion (or limited number) of females from the artistic canon in modern Zimbabwe.

Another aspect of Paterson worth noting was Cyrene's niche as a training institution for the physically challenged. Walker (1985:48) reflects that Cyrene became virtually the only known school for the physically challenged and attracted the most determined of them. Whereas Paterson had aimed at producing a 'self-contained burger' acclimatised to art, Cyrene pragmatically ended up producing a considerable number of skilled physically challenged people. As reflected above, these students could not partake in agriculture and sport in the afternoon and spent much of their time making art. Not surprisingly, they became Cyrene's most excellent artists and produced most of its renowned work. Cyrene's best student, Samuel Songo, painted and sculpted (Walker 1985: 35, 48), while Lazarus Khumalo and David Chituku carved in stone and wood. Stephen Katsande and Aaron Gwagwa specialised in bas-relief carving. The physically challenged artists were remarkably valuable in popularising Cyrene as an art centre. Four out of six students who

performed live drawing, painting and carving demonstrations in the successful 1946 Bulawayo exhibition were physically challenged. All in all, Paterson inexorably fashioned a niche in Southern Africa for the physically challenged artist, a niche that has continued to exist in the tourist industry to the present day.<sup>11</sup>

### **2.2.6 The Paterson style and its impact on students**

Although the impact of Paterson's style on his students can only be properly reflected after a consideration of the works of his students in the next chapter, it is imperative to establish some of its characteristics in this chapter. As much as Paterson claimed that Cyrene's students produced art "sui generis" without any outside influence, the most striking aspect of the painting and bas-relief work done at Cyrene reflects how closely the students came to mimic his own personal style. Though Paterson insisted that a discrete Cyrene style emerged "as the product of the boys working together, seeing each others' work, as in a Medieval Guild", it is undeniable that his own drawing and design techniques were the basis of the Cyrene style. Fundamentally, as at Grace Dieu, regardless of Cyrene's expansion into different media and techniques, designs always started with drawing and focused on human subject matter (**Figs 1, 3, 4**). While Paterson claimed he restricted outside influence on his students, he could not prevent them from absorbing his own influence.

Paterson's designs for Cyrene wood carving and his church murals greatly influenced the drawing style of his students. As highlighted above, he produced much of the early murals in the church and the stone font as well as designs for crucifixes and chests. Above all, he drew on the board during art lessons (Paterson 1973:8) and in the process shaped the style of his students. Paterson's

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<sup>11</sup> Many physically challenged artists dominate airport art in Zimbabwe.

style at Cyrene was an extension of his earlier work at Grace Dieu. In the words of Morton (2003:86):

Grace Dieu furniture commonly shows human figures in profile set at the bottom of the composition, with African flora and fauna stacked in the background up to the top. Hence he always filled the page, and worked primarily as an outliner in doing designs for furniture. His murals, meanwhile, involved Black biblical figures in profile.

The subject matter of painting and drawing by Paterson's students consistently involved human figures (**Figs 3, 4, 5, 6, 7**). Though they rarely dominate the painting in terms of scale, human figures remained the thematic focus of Cyrene students. The figures are also heavily stylised. Cyrene artists seldom depicted the human face from a full-frontal view (**Figs 3, 4, 5, 6, 7**).

Heavy outlining of forms was another trait that Paterson imparted to his students. This resulted from the prescribed procedure of drawing the composition on the paper first, and subsequently filling in the paint. Heavy dark outlining was frequently used for subjects such as human figures as well as important background details like animals and rocks (**Figs 3, 4, 5, 6, 7**). Faint outlining was used for smaller details like leaves and grasses (**Fig 8**). However, in spite of the heavy outlining, there was still a soft overall feel to the works due to the artists' attempts at shading. Usually, the shading was achieved by adding a white wash to specific detailed areas throughout the work. The dominant feature of Cyrene art, in terms of composition, is that human figures are almost always placed at the bottom of the picture (**Figs 6, 7, 8**). Paterson's method of starting all drawings at the bottom of the page, and then working upwards from there, may account for this. In most cases, the composition comprises human figures in a setting characterised by stacks of rocks and bush with occasional houses and animals.

Yet there were some differences between Paterson's mural paintings and those of his students. Students' paintings within the chapel interpret familiar scriptures within the rural context in which they were made and the lives of students who painted them. According to Delport (1995:56), "biblical themes are interpreted solely through the experience of the artist; that is their social and spiritual life, beliefs, folklore, history and minute observation of their environment, so that the form itself is fused with subjects and insights drawn from these sources". *The Prodigal Son* (**Fig 3**), *The Good Samaritan* (**Fig 4**), *The Sower* (**Fig 5**) and other untitled Cyrene paintings (**Figs 6, 7, 8**) reflect details of the Matopos hills and animals: dogs, pigs, cattle and birds, groups of people engaged in various activities, rocks, trees, rivers and fields. There are also stylistic differences between Paterson's work (**Fig 1**) and students' work (**Figs 3, 4**) at the chapel. While Paterson utilised elements of Romanesque art such as conventional static gesture and decorative insignia, students' work departs from this and is vibrant, dynamic and compositionally crowded. As such, the narrative quality of students' work is punctuated by a dense, flowing story structure. Whereas Paterson's mural was painted in rich gold, red and black, students' use of colour in their work was preoccupied with what could be seen in the Matopos. By and large, the analysis above has shown that Cyrene painting styles radiated Paterson's influence with only minor differences. The focus, techniques and prominence of detail all bear the distinctive trademark of Paterson's work, in clear contrast to his claim that his students created a *sui generis* style of their own.

### **2.3 GROEBER'S SERIMA (SAINT MARY'S) MISSION ART WORKSHOP**

Like Paterson's Cyrene Mission, Father Groeber's Serima Mission (a Catholic Mission) is an excellent example of the influence of Christian art, and its consequent impact on the development of modern art, as will be further reflected in chapter 4. So as to create a distinctive, neo-

Romanesque church for his mission, Groeber decorated the interiors in an ‘African style’<sup>12</sup> with extensive carvings. Not only did he seek to develop African art at Serima, but he also designed a training programme tailor-made to entrench African art. The modern techniques and styles that Groeber inaugurated at Serima were later institutionalised at the Driefontein Carving School and used in the secular stone culture movement that emerged in Salisbury from the late 1950s. Among the best known artists that emerged from the school are Nicholas Mukomberanwa, Joseph Ndandarika and Tapfuma Gutsa.

### **2.3.1 Groeber’s background training**

Groeber was born in Switzerland in 1903 and died in Zimbabwe in 1972. According to Pearce (1993:92), before Groeber came to Zimbabwe in 1939, he had some modicum of construction, architectural and art training in his professional background. Any prospects he had for advanced professional training were greatly constrained by his unassuming background in a Catholic section of working class Basel. Given his talent for free drawing, it is not surprising that Groeber took his first job as an apprentice building draughtsman for an architectural firm at a young age. He stayed at the company long enough to ultimately acquire excellent skills in architecture and construction. On a deeply personal level, he was driven to prove that despite his modest background, marginal academic abilities and credentials, he was capable of producing an architectural triumph that would define his life’s work (Plangger and Diethelm 1977: 5-10).

Groeber enrolled for training as a priest for the Swiss Bethlehem Mission (SBM) in 1926. It was during this protracted period of training, spanning over ten years, that he completed his high school

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<sup>12</sup> The decorations had a deep connection with local African artistic traditions but also depicted themes of the bible.

education and also received formal art education. After completing his religious training he was ordained as a priest in 1936. The SBM allowed him to enrol at an educational centre for training teachers and students of the visual arts by the name of Kunstgewerbeschule Lucerne. Groeber wanted to broaden and sharpen his skills in the arts which he would use in the mission field as a means of spreading Christianity. He received rigorous training in European art history and spent considerable time studying Romanesque painting and architecture. However, Groeber was unable to complete his degree as his superiors forbade him to take live drawing classes for fear of exposing him to the female nude. Yet, even without a degree, Groeber possessed vast knowledge in architecture, construction and art (Heaney 1966).

Groeber came to colonial Zimbabwe from Switzerland in 1939 (Walker 1985: ix). He was sent by the SBM to join its mission field in the country. Groeber first taught art at Silveria Mission, Bikita. In the period 1940-1946, he never stayed at one place for a long time but moved from one mission to another (such as Driefontein, Silveira in Bikita, St Benedict's, St Joseph's in Chirumanzi, Gokomere and Fort Victoria now Masvingo) and in the process completed six building projects. Much as his main thrust was on the architectural and construction aspects of these projects, he also experimented with the decoration at Silveria. In both the church and classrooms, he executed a set of murals portraying biblical scenes based on African designs and colours. As Mutuka (1989:9-11) remarks, Groeber had a daring and pioneering approach.

### **2.3.2 Genesis of Serima and Groeber's conception and vision**

The genesis of Serima goes back to 1946 when Groeber asked his superiors to allow him to build and run his own unique mission with an arts-oriented school. Consequently, in 1948, he was given

the responsibility for the new mission at Serima, in Gutu district, near the present day town of Masvingo (Saint Mary's Mission 1962:7). Today, the magnificently decorated Serima Church and its family of school buildings is more than eloquent tribute to Groeber's inspiration and sheer hard work in the period 1948-1968.

It is noteworthy that art training was not Groeber's primary focus. Basically, training young men to carve and paint was a by-product of his never ending pursuit of the spread of Christianity in the Third World. Fundamentally, Groeber wanted to prove that, despite his unpretentious background, his insignificant academic feat and credentials, and his homosexuality, he was capable of producing an architectural *chef d'oeuvre* that would define his life's work. It appears that Groeber was influenced by Richard Seewald (1957)'s ideas on the artistic expression of Christian beliefs. It was Seewald's conviction that it was imperative for the Catholic churches to reprise the strong visual elements found in its medieval buildings rather than confront the modern media-saturated churchgoer with sterile white walls. Seewald (1957:10-11) argued convincingly that strong, modern representations of the message of salvation, radiating a simple monumentality, devoid of pathos and unnecessary frills and details, could convey clear allegorical messages across time and cultures. It is within this framework that Groeber's strong disapproval of the use of religious *kitsch* in any form at his missions must be understood. It was the conviction of Groeber that when conversing with people of another culture, it was imperative to meet them with compassionate interest, coupled with deep reverence. He encouraged meaningful dialogue and logical disputation between missionaries and Africans as opposed to talking at the latter. Equally important for Groeber was the creation of a new visual picture of Christ in Africa, one with blacks for blacks

(Munyongami 2015). Not surprisingly, Groeber later used woodcarving as a way of creating this imagery and to transmit the Christian message to Africans on their own terms.

So as to turn his vision into reality, Groeber had to build an entire mission station from scratch, almost entirely with local materials. Firstly, Groeber focused on building the school and by the end of 1955, this had been accomplished and thereafter the school became operational. Aided full-time by a couple of SBM missionaries, Groeber directed the construction. Equally important was labour and support from the local converts. After the completion of the school, Groeber's attention turned to the church. Bricks were first made on the premises, after which construction of the church started in 1956 (Saint Mary's Mission 1962: 7). According to Lotscher (1959:60), it took about a year for the brick work to be completed and it was not until 1966 that the interior work was finalised. Noteworthy is the fact that the main body of workers was a buoyant group of around 15 male carpentry students who carried out construction work in lieu of tuition and board fees (Pasi 2015). The community of converts also contributed significantly in terms of their labour and funds that enabled Groeber to complete the church construction. Arguably, Groeber's untrammelled energy, ability to mobilise and maintain community support for his vision was the critical determinant in his success at Serima. As the current priest in charge at Serima, Ceasar Muchingami (2015), puts it: "His humility was commendable, but few people who met him and see the work he has done fail to realise that his small frame housed courage, determination, and above all, a love for the Africans to whom he ministered".

By the early 1960s local Africans and Catholics in Zimbabwe and abroad were talking of the Serima Mission as the home and inspiration for a new African art form expressing itself in carving.

Behind Groeber's arches (curved structures that span elevated spaces) "which contain each building lie not only ordinary primary school class rooms for 205 pupils, but a special wood-carving workshop where the 20 or 30 pupils who show interest and aptitude are trained in this extra mural subject" (Saint Mary's Mission 1962:7). The carvings adorning every building on the 100 acres of mission ground have become the permanent monuments to his desire for a new, uninhibited African art form. From 100 acres of bare veld he built a thriving and continually growing centre which even in the early 1960s could attract more than 1000 converts for Mass meetings at Serima. Even today, dominating the site at Serima is the huge church with a high steeple, and decorated outside (at the back) with different soil daubs in the traditional Makaranga fashion (**Fig 9**).<sup>13</sup> The doors of the church, altars, window frames and shrines were all carved by students at the school.

It has been claimed that the design of all buildings at Serima (that all had graceful Groeber arches) was done in "an almost Spanish style" (Saint Mary's Mission 1962:7). However, some scholars argue that the architectural design drew inspiration from the medieval Romanesque church. Waugh (1960:128), and Plangger and Diethelm (1977:12) argue that a number of features such as arched doors and strip buttressing give the chapel a medieval look. Groeber also deliberately inserted some modern features, such as a triangular apse with the consequent overall shape resembling "a huge pair of shorts" (Plangger and Diethelm 1977:23). It is important to note that the fame of Groeber's arches spread in Southern Rhodesia and many Catholic mission buildings are, today, examples of this style by Father Groeber.

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<sup>13</sup> Makaranga fashion depicts the local ethnic Karanga group's artistic traditions.

Much as the architecture of the building may have been Spanish or medieval and modern, the decoration of the interior of the church was intended to create an African expression of Christianity. Plangger and Diethelm (1977:1) succinctly capture Serima art as a movement “towards an African expression of Christian belief”. Similarly, Walker (1985: ix) argues that the art which Groeber fostered was African in manner but Christian in subject. A second generation Zimbabwean artist greatly inspired by Groeber, Tapfuma Gutsa (2015), remarked that Groeber wanted “to create a church and form of art divorced of racism, and that would ensure that African people were at ease”. The creation of statues was not confined to wood carving but also included stone statues that even today adorn the portals of the church and the top of the bell tower. The decorative wood and stone sculptures represented biblical characters in African form. Many features of the Serima visual art were reminiscent of the European Romanesque period, most significantly in the technique of incorporating figurative sculpture into architectural details (**Figs 10, 11**). Above all, the geometric simplification of the human body and facial features, carved in a relatively shallow geometric plane, resembling relief, was also similar to the Romanesque. One of Groeber’s students at Serima, Gabriel Hatugari (2016), argues that “although the artwork and architecture were derived from different traditions, Groeber’s primary concern was to ensure the unity of the two”.

### **2.3.3 Art curriculum and Groeber’s training methods**

From the infancy of teaching and learning at Serima in 1955, Groeber gave all arriving students aptitude tests in art and taught art at the school. Though not part of the school curriculum, wood-carving lessons at Serima Mission took up about three and half hours a day under the supervision of Groeber. Initially, wood-carvers constituted a small group (3 to 4) chosen from Groeber’s art

classes, but by the early 1960s numbered between 20 and 30 (Saint Mary's Mission, 1962:7). Like Paterson, Groeber gave scholarships to his best artists but, unlike Paterson's students, Groeber's students were not encouraged to produce works for sale but to decorate the new church. Prominent figures who emerged from Groeber's group of carvers were Cornelius Manguma, Gabriel Hatugari and Ernest Bhere. The former finally became Serima's art instructor in addition to his duties working on the interiors of St. Mary's. Hatugari was hired as a professional carver after completing his training. According to Joosten (2001:13), Nicholas Mukomberanwa and Joseph Ndandarika were among the students who worked under the supervision of Manguma and Hatugari in the late 1950s.

The training of wood carvers was a tough process and was always carried out under Groeber's meticulous supervision. Students were trained in proportion and drawing and given accurate standards for their work. Whereas Groeber's students viewed him as a brilliant teacher who allowed them to exercise substantial autonomy in their work (Hatugari 2016), Serima's concord of style is frequently viewed as a product of Groeber's authoritarian teaching. His curriculum was determined by his own needs and interests. Fundamentally, Groeber wanted to ascertain talent that existed among his students through assigning all students to create drawings that told stories. Groeber then showed his students "how to draw, with pencils, crayons and paints" in an attempt to develop their talent (Saint Mary's Mission 1962:7). As propounded by an artist, author and prolific journalist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Evelyn Waugh (1960:128),

Every boy on arrival from his village is told to draw an account of his journey. Many are capable of nothing; some produce pictures not much different from the nursery scrawlings of European children some years their juniors. Those with discernable talent are then taught to control the pencil, the chalk, the pen, the brush; they make abstract symmetrical patterns, they draw 'matchstick' hieroglyphics of figures in action. Perhaps all this is a commonplace of 'progressive' education. I don't know. It was quite new to me.

As in the case of Paterson's 'encouragement of art' method, Groeber avoided the teaching of art history lessons on the pretext that teaching would contaminate his students' imaginations by letting them view European art. It was Groeber's conviction that copies of European style art were patently unconvincing "because the African children in the country districts have not experienced the European way of life" (Saint Mary's Mission 1962:7). Paterson and Groeber's philosophical pedagogies resonate with modern western obsession with the original. Krauss (1986:5-6) defines originality as "an organicist metaphor referring not so much to formal invention as to sources of life. The self as origin is safe from contamination by tradition because it possesses a kind of originary naivete". Okeke-Ogulu's (2016) work reflects that African modernism is not a belated copy of Western modernism. Arguably, on one hand it was commendable that Groeber (like Paterson) didn't expect his African students to mimic Western modernism, but on the other hand it was really problematic as students ended mimicking the patron. Contary to Groeber's stance against contamination, Appiah (2006) argues for cultural contamination stating that the theory that transnational capitalists based in the Western centres of power pump culture across the globe thereby homogenising society is preposterous because it assumes a lack of self-determination and individuated hermeneutics. He, therefore, defends the contamination of culture as a legitimate act, as culture has never been static, and argues against the concept of cultural purity.

Plangger and Diethelm (1977:15) assert that Groeber taught the drawing and carving of masks, "guided ... with illustrations of Congolese and West African masks" as well as works produced at Serima. Mutuka (1989:16-17) mentions that all art students went through a seven-stage drawing sequence. In the course of this sequence, students progressed from static, black and white drawing to sequenced, illustrated, painted stories which they were encouraged to edge with Shona designs.

After the completion of basic training, the best artists in the class were selected to become carvers. While most of the students continued to take drawing classes, the very best were exempted from industrial and manual training. They were, therefore, excused from doing the school's basic construction and spent most of their afternoons carving (Plangger and Diethelm 1977:16). Groeber explained that when he arrived at Serima he found that the people had very few handcrafts, but discovered that they had a wonderful flair for carving and drawing once they were introduced to the medium. He insisted that "the carvers express themselves in the African idiom, the art in which they are at their best" (Saint Mary's Mission 1962:7). Inclusion into the afternoon classes entailed rigorous training for the task of carving sculptures and reliefs for Serima's St. Mary's Chapel. Convinced that the carving of masks represented the true art of Africa, Groeber encouraged his students to design their own masks. Plangger and Diethelm (1977:15) state that Groeber first showed his students pictures of West African masks after which he asked them to produce their own.

According to Tapfuma Gutsa (2015), Groeber induced his students to exploit their drawing and design training to produce faces using squares, cubes and circles. In the process of such production much attention was paid to proportion, line, contours, and planes. "After the perfection of the drawings", Gutsa stressed, "they were turned into a clay model, and in the next stage after the introduction of the chisel to students, the design was then carved into wood" (Gutsa 2015). Pearce (1993:93) confirms that:

There was a set routine for teaching of drawing which focused the students' attention on the geometry of three dimensional forms. When students had grasped this they were allowed to draw their forms on to the wood to be carved. The act of cutting with a chisel was the last stage in the process of artistic creation.

The economy of detail and contour of Congolese and West African masks, clearly defined planes and cubes, and play of shapes, gave each a rhythm of its own. The Serima style of art was expressed through the use of wood or stone reduced to a series of planes, usually defined by geometric patterns. It was, however, the proportions of freestanding three dimensional forms which, in combination with features resembling mask designs, made Serima carvings distinctive and instantly identifiable. Groeber's idea of human proportions was that the body was divided into three equal parts, namely the head to the shoulder, the shoulder to the hip, and the hip to the feet. The absence of the neck always ensured that the face was very large. The hands were relatively oversized as a result of Groeber's emphasis that the hands had to be of the same length as the face. The distinctive character of Serima art is reflected in *Man* (1969, **Fig 12**) – a work by Groeber's student Nicholas Mukomberanwa, whose works and impact on the development of modern art in Zimbabwe are discussed in chapter 4.

The current Catholic Bishop of Gweru diocese (under which Serima falls), Xavire Munyongami, credits Groeber not only for teaching but also conducting extensive lectures on the use of ornaments and symbols in religious compositions that expressed religious doctrine and moral lessons, giving students the academic training that ultimately gave their art incredible quality (Munyongami 2015). Much as he on no account dictated the use of any one specific motif in a particular design, he all the same taught his students the global language of Catholic art.

While Groeber, like Paterson, seems to have had an imposing influence on the works of his students as reflected above, it must be noted that he gave his students considerable leeway and liberty in the concrete design of their figures. In a documentary by Rasmussen (2000: 8, 10),

Nicholas Mukomberanwa remarked that “Father Groeber was a wonderful man”. He explained that “[h]e had different kinds of ideas ... He would explain to us: ‘You must be creative.’ He would say, ‘Express it in your own way’”. This was a typical fashion similar to Paterson’s remarks to his students at Cyrene to “Fill the page”. Much as students had autonomy in the production of their works, the finished piece had to meet Groeber’s high standard and resonate with the ecumenical nature of the carvings of the chapel if it was to find a place there. According to the current Gweru diocese Vicar, Pasi, a considerable number of pieces that failed to meet Groeber’s final eminence test were ultimately sold to the public (Pasi 2015). As in the case of Paterson, Groeber’s rigorous supervision of his students and approval of art works placed in the chapel limited artists’ innovation and ingenuity as they were in most cases induced to produce work pleasing to the patron. Arguably, Groeber’s pedagogical philosophy and tutorial methods were detached from Freire’s (1972:26-30, 1975) problem-posing education (education as a practice of freedom) where teacher and students approach a problem together. The teacher-student respects the student-teachers because a reality is recognized, that in fact the teacher is not an absolute authority on the subject and the students are able to make a valid contribution. As such, the humanity of the students is valued; in that their truth as inquiring beings is engaged not stifled as in banking education. Both educator and educand (Freire’s word for student, designed to convey an equitable and reciprocal relationship) teach and learn from each other.

The stylistic uniformity which developed under Groeber appears to have been shaped by his notions of what an African iconography should contain and his selective use of models, together with the formal requirements for a consistent aesthetic for the church interior. A case in point is the decoration in wood panels of a section of the chapel interior dedicated to Martyrs of Uganda

(Fig 13). The big pots in this section show life in African villages, while the small pots reflect the form of martyrdom by stabbing, beheading or burning. Groeber's African students under the auspices of a Catholic patron saw no contradictions in depicting themes from the bible and their respective indigenous way of life and tradition. Sultan (1999:11) argues that the wooden sculptures that decorate the Serima church and school are striking in their simplicity, geometric structures, and expressionist feel, half-way between Roman sculpture and African art. By and large, Serima's carvings, with their mask-like faces, immense heads and hands, suggest the importance of the human mind and its powers of creativity. Arguably, today Serima church is considered to be one of Zimbabwe's architectural masterpieces, featuring a unique design combined with hundreds of carvings, murals, and ecclesiastical artworks that merge a coherent statement of Africanised Catholicism.

### **2.3.4 The transmission of the Serima style to Driefontein carving school, 1968-1972**

The period 1968-1972 saw concerted efforts to transfer Groeber's Serima style of art to Driefontein carving school. With the completion of St Mary's Mission in 1968, the priests of the Bethlehem Mission Society took a keen interest in the inauguration of a wood carving school. Not only could such a school utilise the talent developed at Serima, but it could provide both training and employment opportunities for rural Africans. According to the priest in charge of Serima, Ceasar Muchingami, the project was not only self-sustaining, it also could prospectively make meek profits that could sponsor other aspects of mission life (Muchingami 2015).

Much as the plan was supported by the Bishop and several priests of what is now Gweru diocese, it received herculean resistance from Groeber. At 65 years, he vehemently objected to the

transformation of the form of art he created to any form of commercial purpose. In spite of this spirited resistance, he was transferred to the nearby Driefontein Mission by Bishop Alois Heaney in 1971 (Munyongami 2015). Gutsa views the removal of Groeber from Serima to Driefontein as a *coup d'état* by the Bishop and priests, more so considering Groeber's acquaintance with Serima and his initial resistance (Gutsa 2015). By 1971 Driefontein Mission boasted a primary school and secondary-level diploma courses in tailoring and carpentry. With the assistance of his trusted former student and by then art instructor, Manguma<sup>14</sup>, Groeber established a carving school which opened in 1972. His health rapidly deteriorated and he died in 1972. By the end of 1972, Manguma became in charge of the Driefontein carving school and for over a quarter of a century as head of the school, he continued to use most of Groeber's methods.

As such, in spite of his death in 1972, Groeber's spirit lived on and the Serima style continued to have an imposing influence that affected the development of modern art in Zimbabwe. Under Manguma, the carving school continued to systematically teach Groeber's techniques with minimal modifications throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Not only did Manguma preserve Groeber's training tools and drawings but he also kept an array of old Serima student drawings that continued to be used by Driefontein students to serve as models and therefore perpetuate the Serima style. Manguma's most talented student, Tapfuma Gutsa, who was greatly inspired by Groeber's drawings and Serima art style in the late 1970s, went on to become the most innovative

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<sup>14</sup> Cornelio Manguma Sinyoro was born in 1935 and entered Serima primary school in 1958. He joined Groeber's first team of carvers when the new church at Serima was built. While his working relationship with Groeber is not clear, it seems he was his most trusted student who was elevated to an instructor and played a pivotal role in the decoration of the church and shaping artistic styles of other students. Manguma brings a truly sculptural and African sense of expressive carving in the service of Christian symbols. Groeber seems to have been impressed by his talent so much that he allowed him to retain some of his African qualities as a carver and to impart it to other students like Mukomberanwa. Through the mediation of the National Arts Foundation of Zimbabwe Manguma and Joram Maringa were in 1982 invited to participate in a Woodcarvers' Seminar at the Parnham Trust, Dorset, United Kingdom where they demonstrated traditional wood carving methods done with traditional tools (Joosten 2001:65).

and acclaimed member of the 'Second Generation' of Zimbabwean stone sculptors in the same manner Nicholas Mukomberanwa became preeminent among the 'First Generation'.

## **2.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has traced and explained the genesis of modern art in Zimbabwe to mission art workshops established by Paterson at Cyrene and Groeber at Serima. It acknowledges the foundational importance of Paterson and Groeber in the late 1930s, 1940s and 1950s and even in the 1960s in the complex and evolving art world. Through an investigation of the Cyrene and Serima mission art workshops, I have outlined the pedagogical philosophy, tutorial methods, limits on artistic freedom, commercial (or non-commercial) nature of the mission art enterprises under Paterson and Groeber. Paterson's 'withholding' of training, censorship of students' work and imposition of restrictions on his students' viewing of outside art meant that a distinctive and technically limited school style emerged. A similar conservative form of art emerged from Serima, more so because of Groeber's approval of works that had to be placed in the church. Both Paterson and Groeber entrenched cultural constructs of male artistic genius. In spite of limitations, it is noteworthy that Paterson and Groeber generated immense publicity for Cyrene and Serima, their artists, and their ideas, and laid the foundation for the development of modern art in Zimbabwe and not necessarily as a belated copy of Western modernism. It has been shown that from the late 1930s modern Zimbabwean artists (acknowledged by name as artists of considerable merit) were carving in stone and wood, painting murals and producing very fine linocuts. In the succeeding chapters I will demonstrate that it was the artists who emerged from Paterson's and Groeber's mission workshops that became the first modern artists and art teachers, and were therefore the progenitors of modern art in Zimbabwe that emerged from the 1960s.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Cyrene Mission and the Development of Modern Art in Zimbabwe**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

As discussed in the previous chapter, Cyrene was a school designed by Paterson in order to implement the ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement. His students created a distinctive painting and sculpting style that was heavily decorative and short on perspective and anatomical realism. This chapter examines the extent to which African modernism in Zimbabwe was mediated through Cyrene mission art workshop. Workshops offer a unique occasion to examine the development of African modernism in Zimbabwe. As pointed out in the previous chapter, they brought masters and apprentices, teachers and pupils, and also artists of the same status together and thus provided opportunities to learn from each other, to develop a shared style, or to distinguish the members as a group from other artists.

This chapter analyses the impact of Cyrene mission on the development of modern art in Zimbabwe, specifically focusing on Paterson's students, namely Samuel Songo (1929-1990s?), Lazarus Khumalo (1930-2015) and Kingsley Sambo (1936-1977). While it is undeniable that Cyrene Mission laid the foundation of modern art in colonial Zimbabwe and produced renowned first and second generation artists, it is a fact that African modernism was a product of factors that transcended the mission centre. As much as Paterson fostered more or less homogeneity in the artistic expression of his students, the chapter also unravels instances of artistic heterogeneity shaped by students' perception of their own political and socio-economic circumstances.

### **3.2 SAMUEL SONGO (1929-1990?)**

It was Paterson's aim to foster an impulsive, untutored style free of western and urban influence, a philosophy similar to that of the later National Gallery workshop school (in Salisbury, now Harare) of Frank McEwen (1968: 18-25). As Paterson's best art student and then teacher at Cyrene and later at Mzilikazi Art Centre (in Bulawayo), Samuel Songo in many ways defines the mission style, particularly in his painting and relief work. Songo's early works consisted of occasional paintings and sculpture but in later years he concentrated more on the classic traditions of the Shona people in soapstone carving. Paterson's artistic method in which painting and sculpture started from drawing were informative to Songo as an artist and teacher. Songo represents the first generation of modern artists to emerge in Zimbabwe. While he remained based at Cyrene, he played an important role in the emergence of modern art from the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed he played a pivotal role in spreading the Cyrene mission style and enhancing the development of art in Zimbabwe.

Born in the colonial Mberengwa district of south-western Zimbabwe, Songo was in 1946 taken to Cyrene Mission by the school inspector Jimmy Stewart, who knew he had a strong talent for art. On Songo's arrival at the Mission, Paterson (1949:49-50) did not expect much from him in light of his physical condition, viz, his legs were withered, only two fingers of his right hand were functional and his left arm was the best part of his body. Yet, in spite of his physical disability, he demonstrated excellent ability in both painting and stone sculpture once introduced to them. According to Walker (1985:48), "Sam's alert mind, fertile imagination, acute observation and patience made him an excellent artist, carver and painter with his left hand. Like many disabled

people, he turned his disability into an asset, developing senses which remain underused in the rest of us”.

After obtaining his teacher’s diploma, Songo became Cyrene school’s art instructor until 1971 when he moved to Mzilikazi Art Centre in Bulawayo, where he taught a new generation of artists. During the period of Cyrene art exhibitions, Songo gained widespread commendation, after which he fashioned large numbers of works for sale and on commission. It was through selling Songo’s carvings and paintings to tourists who visited Cyrene and through donations that Paterson was able to buy his student a wheel chair so that he could cheerfully roll himself around his work as he carved. Apart from many relief carvings and sculptures for churches, Songo also produced an array of secular works for private collectors.

Songo always painted his figures in facial profile, while his treatment of colour was very much in the Cyrene style. Figures were always placed in the bottom foreground, with heavily detailed flora, fauna and traditional huts filling the background (**Figs 14, 15**). These watercolour paintings are reflective of Cyrene style of art. Songo maintained dark outlining of the main figures and the background forms as well as every detail in the scene. His works are notable for his innovation of placing scenes within the scene, but each of these vignettes was always constructed as a complete one-scene painting. His paintings (most of which were done during his students days) reflect the same style. Much as Songo is renowned for his painting in water colours (Walker 1985:48), sculpture was his true specialty and gave Paterson’s later exhibitions their temperament. In the early 1950s Songo turned to linocutting for a short while in which he utilised the same technique as in his painting.

In typical Cyrene style, Songo's focus in all his sculptures was the human figure. What is striking about his early works and characteristic of his human figures is that he always depicted them in a moment of action (**Figs 14, 15**). His first human subjects in wonder stone were created with a dominant frontal view, but often included secondary objects on their backs to complete a theme. A case in point is the *Mother and Child* (1948, **Fig16**), in which the mother carries the baby on her back, with the latter looking out to the side. Another work, *The Good Shepherd* (1950/51, **Fig 17**), shows the man slinging a lamb across his shoulders. The lamb and child in these works can only be seen from the back and side, respectively. Therefore, Songo's early work is distinctly four-sided, rather than taking advantage of the full spatial potential of three-dimensional sculpture.

The return of *The Prodigal Son* (1954, **Fig 18**) does not only reflect an African means of expressing Christian belief but also Christianisation of African art at Cyrene. Like many other Cyrene students, Songo's works translated Western themes into an African imagery. In this wonderstone sculpture both the father and son are depicted by Songo as Africans with kinky hair. The artistic expression of figures within African modern artists' familiar culture seems to have been fashionable at Cyrene as is also reflected in one of Paterson's students, Livingstone Sango's *Escape into Egypt* (1949, **Fig 27**) in which Jesus, Mary and Joseph are depicted as Africans. *The Prodigal Son* earned Songo the Silver Trophy for the best work of art at the first African Eisteddfod and the Cup for Sculpture.<sup>15</sup> Not surprisingly, *Time* magazine (1954) featured an article on the power of his sculpture, calling him a "primitive Epstein".

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<sup>15</sup> The award was made by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign parts.

As far as the style of Songo's human figures was concerned, the bodies were fundamentally ordered into basic shapes. Chests were rectangular blocks, limbs cylinders, and the faces spherical. Eyes were almond-shaped with heavy raised outlines, brought out by heavy brows. Hands and feet tended to be heavy and block-like, with the legs being especially thick and shapeless (**Figs 17, 18**). His later student and early teacher work tended to feature multiple figures telling a story - which replaced the original emphasis on a character in action. Although the features of the human figures – faces, fingers and hair – were more refined in terms of detail and more subtle in terms of line and shape, the bodies retained the same characteristics as in his early work.

Songo turned to wood when the initial supply of wonderstone ran out. His handling of wood was practically indistinguishable from his treatment of stone. He rubbed down the chisel marks and polished the final surface. Historian Pathisa Nyathi (2016) argues that Songo's methods were conservative, and his carvings were produced mainly for collectors connected with the Anglican Church. While relief carving was not a specialty at Cyrene, it became more important as the school's commissions increased. While wooden plaques were done by lesser talents, Songo also did a number of them along with many door panels. From the time he was a student through to the 1980s his panels did not vary much and were done in the same style as his paintings. Morton (2003) posits that they "seem to have been done from drawings, and hence display the same features and styles". Basically they are shallow, heavily outlined and smoothed. Even his door panels for the Cyrene chapel, which he executed under Job Kekana's guidance<sup>16</sup> at Rusape for the

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<sup>16</sup> After training in carving under Sister Pauline at the Anglican school, Grace Dieu, in the late 1920s Job Kekana was among the first professional black modern artists in southern Africa. Except for a brief period of total independence (1939-1944) Kekana worked under Anglican patronage from 1936 through the 1990s. Only as an older man, after the death of Sister Pauline (1954) and receiving formal art training (1960), and after he was given control of his own carving school, St Faith Mission, in Rusape, did Kekana fully develop his own characteristic freestanding realistic sculpture. He trained numerous woodcarving students at St Faith's Mission after 1965, with several of them becoming successful sculptors in their own right. Given the immense pressure that was put on African sculptors by their patrons

entire year of 1966, do not vary stylistically from his other plaques or paintings. Arguably, while Songo received sculptural training from Kekana, Patterson's conservatism at Cyrene workshop limited his artistic innovation, creativity and growth. The door panels' ambitious scale, with eight narrative frames on each door, and prominence on the beautiful chapel do, however, make them impressive. They undoubtedly deserve to be considered among Songo's best work.

Be that as it may, there was no great development in Songo's style during his Cyrene years, either before or after Paterson's departure. What cannot be denied is the fact that it was only after the arrival of the exceptional Sam Songo who was an autodidact in terms of three-dimensional carving that the Cyrene style in sculpture developed. He was the country's first well-known sculptor and indirectly influenced the sculptural development of Shona artists to the north. Although he remained based at Cyrene, Songo was one of the core artists of McEwen's group, known as the Workshop School, working in a semi-abstract organic style reflecting concepts drawn from Shona mythology from the late 1950s. Not surprisingly his works featured prominently in the National Gallery of Rhodesia, where McEwen was the director. Songo's works were exhibited in group exhibitions at the National Gallery of Rhodesia, New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1968, the Museum Rodin in 1971 and London's Institute of Contemporary Arts in 1972. Many were also sold to private collections and museums in England (<http://www.2021modernart.com>).

Although Songo's interest in stone carving had reached a low point at Cyrene by the late 1960s, following his move to Mzilikazi he renewed his interest in it as a result of the flourishing stone carving movement in Rhodesia. The critical shortage of painting materials after Ian Smith's

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and the art market not to make realistic art, Kekana's ultimate success was a rare achievement (Morton 2013c:52, 55-57).

Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965 greatly inhibited his painting opportunities which explain why he reignited his stone carving career. The realistic style of his early works was abandoned in his later works as he became far more stylized and abstract. And yet, the most obvious feature of his human figures, no matter how stylized, remained the thick, cylindrical legs. According to his student Adam Madebe (2016), “Songo’s move from the Cyrene mission world to the secular was without a doubt upsetting for him. His works became personal and introspective”. Based first at Cyrene and later Mzilikazi, Songo remained on the periphery of the stone sculpture movement that in one sense he initiated yet was never fully part of. While Songo is known for his works depicting African iconography and indigenous African life (**Figs 14, 15, 16**), care must be taken to note his artistic appropriation of western culture and hybridisation with African culture (**Figs 17, 18**) thereby fostering the African modernist trajectory. Songo’s influence on modern and contemporary art can be seen in the work of his students, especially the ones he trained at Mzilikazi, such as Adam Madebe, David Ndhlovu and George Nene, as is reflected later in this chapter.

### **3.3 LAZARUS KHUMALO (1930-2015)**

Although Lazarus Khumalo was less influential and wide-ranging than Songo, he nevertheless was one of the most excellent woodcarvers to emerge from Cyrene. Notwithstanding his movement away from the church’s benefaction, becoming a lifelong art teacher, and even studying for one year at the prestigious Makerere Art School in Uganda in the mid-1960s (Joosten 2001:41), Khumalo all the same retained the Cyrene style throughout his entire life. The artistic advances in Khumalo’s work over the years occurred in his treatment of the human figure.

In an interview at his Mpopoma home in Bulawayo, Khumalo (2015) revealed that he was born into a branch of the Ndebele royal family in 1930 and became crippled as a teenager. He further asserted that as his condition exacerbated, he became little more than ostracised. Consequently, he escaped from his family and for two years received free medical treatment from a sympathetic doctor who also looked for a place for him at Cyrene. Under the auspices of Paterson, Khumalo excelled at drawing and woodcarving. It was during his training at Cyrene that Khumalo worked with Songo on numerous church commissions and enriched and sharpened his woodcarving talents. In 1958 Khumalo was employed by the City of Bulawayo and ended up teaching art to township youngsters at the Mzilikazi Art Centre from then until the early 1970s. Although based in Bulawayo during this time, Khumalo (like Songo) exhibited regularly at National Gallery exhibitions in Harare in the early 1960s (Joosten 2001:41) and also produced works for a number of patrons in Bulawayo. He obtained a scholarship to attend Makerere University in 1966, where he studied under Cecil Todd. His funding was, however, cut off soon after his arrival due to Rhodesia's UDI proclamation.

Khumalo's artistic development at Cyrene closely resembles that of Songo, who was three years ahead of him. This must be comprehended within the context that they always worked together outside in the afternoons. The earliest example of Khumalo's work, his wonderstone sculpture of *Ndebele Warrior* (1950-1, **Fig17**), has a similar treatment of the body as a Songo piece. Like Songo's works, the body is a combination of basic shapes, and hands and feet are extremely oversized. However, Khumalo's individual characteristics are evident. His human figures are

severely frontal, lacking the motifs on the sides and back that give Songo's sculptures multiple views. While Songo's humans are engaged in action during his early student years, Khumalo's subjects are motionless. In addition, Khumalo's faces are more simplified than Songo's, with lips and eyes being created by heavy jutting outlines.

Morton (2003:96) stresses that by the mid-1950s Khumalo was working on small narrative groups of figures at Cyrene and refining his style. The facial characteristics of his figures became more sophisticated, with the eyes thinning into the face and the lips placed more naturally. As much as bodies remained heavy block shapes, they became much more dynamic. Moreover, the sculptures were increasingly less frontal with multiple points of view. In these works, Khumalo surpassed Songo by realising the spatial fullness of sculpture. Khumalo also explored the contrast between highly smoothed, polished stone surface and the decorative texture of details such as hair. Khumalo's sandstone sculpture, *Moses with the Commandments* (1960, **Fig 19**), like his sculpture of *The Good Samaritan* (1956) and his relief work on the outside wall of Cyrene chapel, *Crucifix* (1957), reflect both the African means of expressing Christian belief and the Christianisation of African art. The sculpture of *Moses with the Commandments* reflects a troubled person carrying a burdensome tablet of commandments. Khumalo's soapstone sculpture of the *Witch Doctor*, (1960s?, **Fig 20**) indicates how the artist remained deeply immersed in African traditional religion and way of life. It appears, therefore, that modern art became a reality not only because of mission art workshop, but also because of the visual expression of traditional beliefs by some Africans in their encounter with Western influence.

The *Crucifix* (1957) seems to have been Khumalo's final work produced at Cyrene before he moved to Mzilikazi Art Centre in 1958 and is a good example of his relatively limited relief work. As much as the crucifix is a relief, it has the hallmark features of the Cyrene painting style and was clearly influenced by the chapel's crucifix designed by Paterson. Christ's face is in full profile and is at odds with the necessarily fully anterior torso and arms on the cross. His legs and feet are then in full profile. The relief is very superficial with the minutiae appearing to be drawn with a thin chisel. Dark discoloration on the loincloth that gives it a painterly effect emphasises its two-dimensional effect.

During the 1960s Khumalo developed a deep interest in children and produced works that resonated with such interest. Childlike facial features became important in his artistic style. By the 1980s, Khumalo's love of the childlike led him to arrive at a further stylisation of the human form. He abandoned any attempt at anatomical correctness and reflected his figures' youthful nature by their nudity, round bellies and chubby arms. He bequeathed the style of nudity to several of his and Songo's disciples. With his three metre nude welded-metal figure, *Looking into the Future* (1985), Madebe was declared a *persona non grata* by the then Minister of Local Government, Enos Chikowore. In the 1990s, Khumalo moved back to painting. As in his paintings done at Cyrene decades before, his childlike figures and animals were always in profile. During this period, the use of bold, bright colour reminiscent of child art dominated the canvas.

### 3.4 KINGSLEY SAMBO (1936-1977)

By Cyrene tradition, Kingsley Sambo fits squarely into the description of a renegade artist. According to Paterson (1949b:48), Kingsley was the “son of Sambo of *The Rhodesian Herald*”. Apart from working in the printing section of a daily paper in Salisbury (now Harare), Sambo was also a shopkeeper and farmer in Rusape. As a child, Kingsley Sambo showed a talent for drawing and his father sent him to Cyrene Mission to study art under the tutelage of Paterson. Hava (1984:3) posits that Paterson predicted that Sambo would become a cartoonist because of his wit and facility. Arguably, Sambo was perhaps the best pure painter (visual artist who could give form to an inner life and communicate emotion directly with varying degrees) Paterson ever trained in his long career. Eschewing his mission background, Sambo went on to work in oils and preferred to depict township scenes, and later rural landscapes.

Contrary to Morton (2003:98)’s assertion that Sambo trained at Cyrene from the early 1950s to the late 1950s, Paterson (1949:48) reflects that Sambo started his training at Cyrene in 1945 and was due to complete in 1950. In the words of Paterson (1949b:48):

Kingsley, as one might expect of a town boy, spent several months in drawing cowboys, hep-cats and tough guys. He has a very definite leaning towards the Western conception of art and for that reason he is a disturbing influence in our art scheme. He alone of all the pupils is keen in drawing from nature and fills many sketch books with rapid studies of his school fellows busy about their duties. Some of his pen and ink studies of trees could not be bettered by anyone in Rhodesia. He has one more year to spend at Cyrene and then, I think, he would be worthy of employment in a commercial studio where his neat lettering alone would prove of value.

It is clear from the foregoing that Sambo was different from other students at Cyrene with his gravitation towards drawing from nature. Paterson also regarded most of the art made by rural Africans as more authentically African than the art of urban artists. Not surprisingly, Sambo was

regarded as different from his largely rural classmates since he had spent his childhood years living in the capital, Salisbury, where his father worked. His inclination towards Western conceptions of art was regarded as disturbing to the Cyrene art training scheme and ascribed to the loss of ‘imagination’ he had suffered by growing up in a city.

It appears that Paterson, like many mission founders, was disturbed by realistic art, especially in its depiction of humans. This was largely because of its association with Western art academy training which emphasised the study of the human body based on live models. Fundamentally, mission founders felt that Western influences like realism would spoil the fresh and pure quality of the art produced by Africans. As reflected in the previous chapter, European patrons at workshops and art education programs preferred to promote stylised, unrealistic work on the grounds that realism was un-African and merely mimicked Western art. Despite such feelings almost all founders (Morton 2003:99) were confronted with the fact that many of the artists wanted to pursue realism. This may be due in part to the fact that most of the school boys would have only seen two-dimensional images as photographs in newspapers and magazines. As for Sambo, he surely would have had an even greater exposure to photographic images as a boy because his father was a journalist. Not surprisingly, he had a strong inclination towards realism and the study of human anatomy.

A contemporary student with Sambo, Lazarus Khumalo (2015) expressed that Sambo was a distinctive figure who quickly became uncomfortable with Cyrene’s idiom of decorative detail and putting figures in profile. He further stressed that Sambo did set himself apart from other students at Cyrene by positioning figures at the middle of the drawing (rather than the bottom), which made

the background a fashionable accessory to the work. Arguably, he had a better understanding and ability to interpret human anatomy than his peers. Khumalo (2015) also confirmed Sambo's rebellious tag at Cyrene by mentioning that Sambo painted a mural showing a bare-breasted woman and other barely-clad onlookers around Khumalo's *Crufix*. It was the only artwork at Cyrene to depict nudity which Paterson detested. Subsequent to the completion of his education at Cyrene, Sambo attended an art school in Malawi where he broadened his artistic horizon and enriched his artistic skills. According to Morton (2003:100-101), it was in Malawi that Sambo acquainted himself with the use of oils and learnt to work "from sketches rather than proceeding straight to the final composition".

In 1959, Sambo returned to Cyrene where he taught art for a year. In 1960 he relinquished his teaching post in pursuit of a life-long ambition to become a cartoonist for the *Daily News* in Salisbury, which had a primarily African readership (Rodrigues 2012). Following his relocation to Harare, his work in oils continued to develop by leaps and bounds. With the ban of the *Daily News* by the Rhodesian government in 1962, Sambo attracted the attention of McEwen (1962), under whose workshop tutelage his artistic modernism (like that of many other talented Africans) continued to reflect an ethos of natural synthesis.

As a talented cartoonist and jazz guitarist, Sambo's artistic subjects were drawn from everyday life. Sambo played regularly in townships and shebeens, no wonder his works largely depicted scenes of township and shebeen life, particularly urban party scenes. Sambo usually painted in oils

on moderately sized canvases. Typical examples of Sambo's artistic genre in reflecting urban life are his *Dancers* (1962, **Fig 21**), *City Night Life* (**Fig 22**) and *After the Rain, Township* (1962, **Fig 23**). In these paintings Sambo moved away from the straight realism of Cyrene, and based his artistic style more on the use of line and colour. His art represents a variation on the European tradition of Expressionism: Afro-German Expressionism (Zilberg 2006:2). Zilberg (2006:5) defines German-Expressionism as a technique of simplification and enhancement of expression through rhythm and colour which was first coined in Germany in 1911. A new form of expressionism emerged in Southern Rhodesia in the early 1960s which earned the name Afro-German Expressionism. Contrary to McEwen who viewed such Expressionism as national creativity without any foreign influence, Zilberg views such a fascinating phenomenon as an Africanised expression of a venerable European tradition.

Sambo's expressionistic technique and use of bright primary colours referenced the work of Van Gogh. While his focus remained largely on human beings, it is noteworthy that they were reduced to swirls of line, colour and patterns. Sambo managed to capture the energy of township life and dense urban crowds through this technique. Morton (2003:101-102) argues that it was Sambo's sophisticated educational background, combined with his connection to the newspaper world, that "made him stand out from the unlettered [McEwen] Workshop School members - just as he stood out at Cyrene". Arguably, Sambo's paintings made him the most avant-garde of the modern Rhodesian black painters. As such, modern African art became a reality when some products of mission art workshop, like Sambo, used art as a medium for expressing their subjectivity and

coming to terms with their political and socio-economic circumstances – with their own emergent modernities.

Sambo's favourite place in Rusape was the bar at the Balfour hotel where he painted a mural which has long since disappeared. He was intrigued by the ebb and flow of the people around him in the modern capital city and Rusape. His oil on board painting, *Sipo and Nandi* (1965, **Fig 24**) reflects two people (possibly lovers) eating in a restaurant. It is an expression of his daily encounters. As in dancing scenes in bars, Sambo drew *Sipo and Nandi* with a sensitive line and painted them at rest in a restaurant. All in all, Sambo painted studies of people, giving them individuality and stature, and in all of this he anticipated the work of Luis Meque and Richard Witikani in the 1990s.

Sambo's works were expressive of the hope and exuberance that blacks had after the completion of the Kariba dam in 1957 under the auspices of the Federation of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (now Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi). According to the historian Muzondidya (2016), although the Federation collapsed in 1963, Southern Rhodesia as the centre of the Federal government had since 1953 benefitted immensely in terms of industrial development and tapping and harnessing resources from the three countries for her own development. McCloughlin (1987:85-104) argues that there was a considerable sense of cultural freedom that prevailed in the early 1960s in Southern Rhodesia before the darkening of the political and social landscape and the onset of the war which raged through the 1970s culminating in independence in 1980. Undoubtedly, Sambo embraced art and the city for the creative doors which were flung open for him. Devoted to jazz music Sambo loved the city life and the modern pleasures and freedom it

offered. Sambo's joyous depictions of urban township life and the impact of music became hallmarks of his artistic expressions.

Other than reflecting the optimism among the urban masses prior to Ian Smith's 1965 Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), Sambo's oil painting *At the Mine* (**Fig 25**) also references the appalling underground mining conditions and the treatment of African workers (including women and children) in a way tantamount to slavery. Van Onselen (1980:99) has called this *Chibaro* (forced labour), while Phimister (1988, 1996) has called it capital accumulation. By making women and children artistically visible in the history of colonial Zimbabwe's mining, Sambo is depicting not only a history of women and children but offers a new perspective on how colonial rule (and the robbery colonial economy) was established and thrived.

One of the consequences of the declaration of UDI by Smith in 1965 was a critical shortage of painting materials so that many black artists gave up painting altogether. Sambo, however, continued to paint on his farm in the eastern region of Dewa. Although Sambo is better known for his paintings of urban life, he also produced landscapes and religious pieces. At any rate landscape art was a kind of recognisable African modernism at Cyrene as workshop tradition encouraged the development of art out of the life and culture of those who produced it. In Sambo's rural landscapes such as *Walking in the Forest* or later *Countryside* (1973), people are absorbed into the landscape, reduced in size but nevertheless there at the heart of the strong colours and thick rhythmical brush strokes. People were living there, a small human presence in the world which extended beyond the frame of the canvas. Writing of *Walking in the Forest*, McCloughlin (1997:94) stresses that the

effect of the blending of the figure with the vegetation and the sky is to suggest a vast vibrant landscape into which man fits unobtrusively. As succinctly put by Hava (1984:6), the rounded brush-work, the rhythm of the strokes and the range of strong colours, reminiscent of Van Gogh whom Sambo admired, evoke a latent, even kinetic energy in the landscape.

Yet, much as Sambo admired Van Gogh he was constructing his own art world and finding his own strategies for living with the diverse contradictory local and foreign elements that constituted colonial Zimbabwe and African modernity, rather than producing works that would conform to the expectations of non-Africans. As for the conception that African modernism was second-rate because it was belated compared to European modernism, Okeke-Agulu (2015:12) argues that “nothing I have seen in the histories of modernisms around the world makes any particular one, whether it manifested earlier or later in the century, any more or less profound”. By and large, Sambo has left an enormous diverse artistic heritage which conveys the rhythmic vitality of the landscape, a feeling of empathy with the lurking power of the land and a presumption of close knit bonds between human beings and their physical and spiritual worlds.

Sambo’s work as a cartoonist also had an important influence on his artistic style. His cartoons inevitably reduced his subject matter to human beings that were themselves condensed to outlines. His *Self-Portrait* (1974, **Fig 26**) epitomises his blending of cartoon and painting styles. He used the simple lines of cartooning to create outlines of his face and features, and also applied swirling pigments to give them substance and character. It was because of such artistic talent that Paterson

(as headmaster of Nyarutsero Art School in Salisbury) hired Sambo as an art instructor in 1965 (Walker 1985:68). However, the reunion was short lived as Sambo's inclination to artistic nudity and addiction to frequenting township bars and shebeens was deemed dangerous to more than 2000 students under his tutelage. As noted above, Paterson detested nudity and Sambo's depiction of male and female nudes using the live models that were hired at Nyarutsero was viewed by Paterson as a direct attack on his authority. Not surprisingly, Paterson fired Sambo who subsequently moved back to Rusape and never had a full time job again.

From the late 1960s until his untimely death in 1977, Sambo worked from his father's farm or store in Rusape. Having gained a reputation with a series of risqué murals painted at various drinking establishments in the Salisbury area, it is not surprising that a stream of white buyers flocked to his father's store to buy his works. It was because of this association with whites at the height of the liberation war that Sambo was suspected of being a sell-out. Ultimately, his sports car was sabotaged in 1977 by ZANU members; he could not be located for a long time, only to be found dead some time later (Majongwe 2016). Sambo's paintings are in the collections of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe and in many private collections. After his death, Sambo's work gained in prestige, with the National Gallery holding a posthumous show in 1984.

Arguably, Sambo was driven by an extraordinary dynamism and the need to put his soul into his paintings. It was the unique natural synthesis that emerged as a result of interrogation of indigenous art, workshop experience, formal training and the colonial experience that contributed to Sambo's artistic brilliance. Sambo was very much the opposite of Paterson's idealised 'self-contained burgher', instead becoming a well-known figure traversing the town in his sports car frequenting

township bars and shebeens. It is clear from Sambo's example that African modernism is tied to the rise of modernity in Zimbabwe (as elsewhere in the African continent), which in turn is connected to the colonial experience. As such, as colonialism made European material culture and ideas more available, artists like Sambo invented new artistic expressions that reflected Zimbabwe's encounter with Europe, and also with the rest of the globe.

### **3.5 The impact of Cyrene art education on the development of contemporary art in Zimbabwe**

Cyrene Mission under the auspices of Canon Paterson was one of the centres that gave birth to modern art in Southern Rhodesia. As reflected in chapter 2, Paterson was able to introduce Cyrene art that was characterised by surprising pattern and the oddest juxtaposition of colour which provided an antidote to the evenness of modern life. Indeed, he was the most prolific art educator in Southern African history. He ran Cyrene from 1940 to 1953 after which he went to teach thousands more students over the next two decades (1954-1974). Moreover, many of his former students went on to become art educators themselves. Paterson and these students went on to spread his ideas across Zimbabwe and also Malawi, Zambia, Botswana and South Africa. The Cyrene painting style continued to be taught by Songo and Khumalo, among others, although the development of painting was severely inhibited by the lack of art supplies in Southern Rhodesia in the period 1966-1980. When painting suffered, wood carving and stone sculpture became a key emphasis. Cyrene students played a direct and indirect role in its growth in Rhodesia while Paterson used the methods he had developed at Cyrene to train dozens of sculptors in Salisbury.

Cyrene Mission under the leadership of Paterson played a crucial role in spreading art education in Rhodesia. Paterson was encouraged by the authorities and the Southern Rhodesian educators in charge of the African curriculum to train even teachers from the whole of Southern Africa. Walker (1985:36-37) points out that during the 1942 holidays, some forty African teachers spent a month at Cyrene working on painting and woodcarving, while in 1943 another fifty-two went through the same training. It is noteworthy that Paterson's foundational training in modern art was just beginning. However, the government's support for these workshops was short-lived as the colonial mission initially paid little attention to the visual arts, being mainly concerned with fulfilling the colonial power's need for low-level manpower – for clerks, for example, in the civil service (Okeke 2001:29).

From the infancy of Cyrene Mission in 1940, Paterson started training his own students as teachers in art in order to lighten his teaching load. Walker (1985: 38) commends him for placing a student, Joseph Macebo Ndhlovu, as the first African art instructor at Hope Fountain mission in Matabeleland in 1944. Giving a summary of Ndhlovu, Paterson (1949b: 47) wrote,

A quiet and secretive boy, he very rapidly became proficient in art; practising and scribbling incessantly. The first of our boys to see the beauty in a dead tree and to include it in his pictures; the first to include the small animals and birds, the changing colour of leaves in autumn and spring. A very capable sculptor in wood and stone.

Ndhlovu was not only the first African teacher in Southern Rhodesia, but also the first colonial formally recognised black art teacher in Southern Africa. At Hope Fountain the work produced by his students showed great promise. He also painted two very ambitious murals in the church at Hope Fountain (Paterson 1949b:47). He later left the school when a change in staff wiped out his art classes and he disappeared into the maw of Johannesburg (Paterson 1949b:47).

Another pioneer student, Stephen Bitirosi Katsande developed very rapidly at Cyrene in various mediums: water colour, pencil, pen, silver point, carving in wood and stone. After completion of his education at Cyrene, he worked freelance in Salisbury for a year before returning to his home area in Mtoko reserve to teach art (Paterson 1949:47). Although the government of Southern Rhodesia refused to sanction the acceptance of the Cyrene student Adomech Mbenge Moyo for teacher training because of his physical disability, in 1949 he was appointed as the first African teacher in the “Department of Vocational Therapy in Johannesburg Hospital, where 5000 patients” gave him ample scope for the exercise of his talents (Paterson 1949b:47). He returned to Southern Rhodesia in the mid-1950s in his capacity as a teacher of occupational therapy, teaching arts and crafts. Two of Paterson’s Malawian students, Richard Rashidi and Crispin Chindongo, both painters, eventually returned to Cyrene on government scholarships (Paterson 1973:8, 13). Subsequent to their training, they established art education in Malawian schools. According to Walker (1985: 58), Rashidi became the first qualified African art teacher in Malawi. There were many others who became teachers all over Southern Africa and therefore the impact of Cyrene art went far and wide.

The departure of Paterson from Cyrene in 1953 did not daunt the Cyrene art school which continued to exhibit work across Southern Africa under the management of William Ffrangeon Jones (1953-58). It even improved its volume of church commissions due to increased demand internally and externally (Paterson 1973b:10). As such, works by the more talented artists like Songo, Khumalo, Sambo, and the painters Livingstone Sango and Crispin Chindongo continued

to sell for prices as high as £50 through the mid-1960s (*Star* 1967). The foundation of stone sculpture, wood carving and painting is traceable to Cyrene. In Songo, Khumalo, Moyo, Sambo and Sango, Cyrene produced the finest first generation artists in colonial Zimbabwe whose creativity, innovation and dynamism nurtured several artists in Zimbabwe. Cyrene also played a crucial role in the development of modern African art in Malawi in particular and Southern Africa in general. Under Songo's management, Cyrene's impact on the development of modern African art continued to grow.

Admittedly, Cyrene's greatest impact was in the Bulawayo area, where several of Paterson's students gravitated and started their own art training centres. One of the first was the physically challenged carver Adomech Mbenge Moyo, who had a long career training the physically challenged at the Bulawayo hospital. He trained a large number of carvers specialising in tourist-oriented crafts. Above all, both Khumalo and Songo promoted Cyrene's methods during their combined thirty years at Mzilikazi Art Centre. According to Nyathi (2016), the Mzilikazi Art Centre has continued to be a source of pride, cultural heritage and creative arts, nurturing talent of thousands of youngsters in painting and carving. Most of the teachers at the centre were students of Khumalo and Songo, and have continued to use Cyrene methods of art training. The Cyrene style of training sculptors, by teaching students how to make drawings, transfer the pattern onto the wood in pencil and then do the carving, came to dominate training at Mzilikazi. Similarly, prospective painters were taught to draw their compositions first before using paints. It were these

methods that produced second generation artists of repute such as George Nene, Adam Madebe and David Ndhlovu whose works decorate the cityscapes of Harare and Bulawayo.

Adam Madebe (1954-) has become the leading sculptor and iron caster in the Bulawayo area since Songo's death. Although Madebe works primarily in iron, his work displays all the hallmarks of Songo's tutelage. The *Ploughman* (1993, **Fig 28**) was commissioned to enhance Hurudza House, in Nelson Mandela Avenue, in the capital of Zimbabwe, Harare. The building is home to the Agricultural Bank of Zimbabwe and Madebe's *Ploughman*, atop its 5-metre brick platform, offers a distinctive signature in an otherwise not very rural area. Viewed from some angles, the farmer is dwarfed, as if the hulking presence of Pearce's building (housing Pearce Partnership Architects which tasked Madebe to do the work) is adding yet more stress to his bent back; against a bright sky, he offers passers-by a dramatic profile of his perseverant labour. Madebe's contemporaneous addition to Harare's streetscape, *Construction Workers* (1993, **Fig 29**) stands nearby, in front of Construction House (Leopold Takawira Street, Mwamuka Mercuri & Associates). The symbolism of the three workers is no less blunt than that of the ploughman, but they are approximately working at ground level, the better to engage with their ambler neighbours. Arguably, in typical Songo style, Madebe's figures are always in a state of action (**Figs 28, 29**). While Madebe may not have had the opportunity or the engineering support to match the British sculptor Antony Gormley's phenomenal scale, he at least shares his sculptural anthropomorphism.

The work of David Ndhlovu (1963-) a woodcarver and sculptor, bears strong influence from his teachers Songo and Madebe. The *Tired man* (1985, **Fig 30**), seated on a low platform outside Bulawayo City Council offices has all the trademarks of Songo's style and guidance as reflected

by the figure's thick legs and state of action. The only exception is that it is a metal sculpture which also reflects Madebe's influence. Arguably, Songo's artistic creativity coupled with Bulawayo's development as an industrial hub of colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe, provided outlets for his students' creative appropriation and invention of artistic techniques or expressive media in metal sculpture.

George Nene (1959-2005) was Songo's best painting student, and later became Bulawayo's leading mural painter. As Nyathi (2016) posits, "George Nene was greatly influenced by Songo's Cyrene style and his paintings decorate many Catholic churches around the country". However, he was also highly influenced by liberation art and developed his own style both as a freedom fighter and later at art school. Through war art, the artist depicts and commemorates various aspects of war to give a pictorial record of events, often absent in written histories or other accounts of liberation warfare. War artists often explore the visual and sensory dimensions of war to enlighten audiences about the impact of war, be it fighting, suffering, destruction or the celebration of triumph. One important aspect of the influence of Cyrene art in a country coloured by racism was to generate the spirit of liberalism among the students. Not surprisingly, after training under Songo in the early 1970s, Nene left the country and joined the liberation struggle in 1976 under the auspices of ZAPU and returned in 1983 (Metz 1983:6-7). It is noteworthy that most liberation struggle leaders like Joshua Nkomo, Robert Mugabe, Hebert Chitepo and Nkhitha Mangena (to mention only a few) had received conservative Missionary education (Muzondidya 2016). As much as they were 'Westernised' colonial elites, they became deeply anti-colonial. Nene was no exception to this rule. As such, a new generation of artists emerged having learnt from the successes and failures of workshop-cum-laboratories, and at the same time having interrogated

their own indigenous arts. Mudimbe (1994:164) argues that such artists were children of two traditions, two worlds, both of which they challenged, merging mechanics and masks, machines and the memories of gods.

In *Liberation Part Two* (1985, **Fig 31**) Nene presented a positive transformation that occurred at independence in 1980, where guns are swapped for agricultural implements and where the war was seen as an act of reclaiming the fecundity of the soil. Monda (2015) argues that the three-part composite painting “narrates the early Zimbabwean uprisings which manifested into the First and Second Chimurenga wars”. The artwork illustrates the values of national liberation, which were rooted in the African values associated with the land. In typical Cyrene style Nene’s art was also inspired by Zimbabwean traditional daily life, liberation, agrarian, religious and pastoral themes. *Liberation Part Two* won him the ‘Corps of Diplomat awards for Young Artist of Promise’ at the National Art Gallery of Zimbabwe in 1986 (Monda 2015).

Paterson’s teaching at Chirodzo Primary (1955-1961), Nyarutsero Art School (1961-1968) and the Farayi Sculpture Centre (later the Canon Paterson Art Centre) (1971-1974) are beyond the scope of this chapter. However, they were also vehicles through which Cyrene art spread to Harare, and more so because Paterson was always ready to hire the services of his former Cyrene students, like Rashidi and Sambo, as art instructors. Paterson never changed his ‘Cyrene absence of teaching’ philosophy. As at Cyrene, he also produced noteworthy artists such as Pitias Gwinisa, Boira Mteki, Richard Muteki and Thomas Mukarobgwa (Joosten 2001:13).

McEwen (1968:18-25), whose writings and exhibitions set the tone for the burgeoning international reception of Zimbabwean art, silenced any discussion of Paterson's influence. It is his conviction that there was no modern art in Zimbabwe until the establishment of his Workshop School Project from 1957 to 1973. McEwen attempts to erase Christian art history with an erroneous alternative vision of the artists as “bush mystics” and “magic men” spontaneously reviving indigenous art. The previous chapter has shown how formal training was minimal at Cyrene so as to minimise interference with Africans’ assumed innate artistic talent. Morton (2003:85) has maintained that Paterson's students typically copied his own limited style, and were never able to get the training they needed to progress technically. As much as Cyrene produced a number of talented painters in the 1940s and 1950s, many of them failed to sustain artistic professional careers. Randles (1997:71-83) has maintained that mission stations such as Cyrene generally stunted the development of their artists. Livingstone Sango, by far the best-selling painter at Cyrene school (Paterson 1949: 48), continued to paint seriously and exhibit through the 1960s, yet worked his whole adult life as a museum taxidermist. According to Walker (1985: 59), Crispin Chindongo and Richard Rashidi, the talented Malawians, were eventually drawn into the Civil Service, with the former later settling in USA as UN representative of Malawi. Randford Sililo, the Zambian muralist, also worked in the museum sector. Evidently, there is justification for condemning Paterson’s training for failing to entrench a lasting painting tradition in Zimbabwe and neighbouring countries.

Despite these facts, there were exceptional cases such as Songo, Khumalo and Sambo. All the same, Khumalo is better known as a woodcarver than painter, while Sambo gained prominence more as a cartoonist than a painter. Yet, in spite of such weaknesses, Paterson must be credited for being part of a broader process that laid the foundation for modern African art in Zimbabwe. Credit must be given to him for producing talented first generation artists such as Songo, Khumalo and Sambo. It were these artists who produced some of the finest contemporary artists such as George Nene, Adam Madebe and David Ndhlovu. As stressed by Walker (1985:84), Paterson was more concerned “to develop versatility than patient perfection in single skills though he encouraged the meticulous detail of Cyrene painters”. Noteworthy is the fact that the Cyrene Mission and its products suffered from critical shortages of valuable materials after Smith’s UDI that militated against artists’ growth in the period 1965-1980, particularly painters. It is within this framework, coupled with the abundance of hard and soft stone suitable for carving, that the domination of the Rhodesian art scene by sculpture must be fully comprehended.

Morton (2003:108) argues that when the multitudes of students trained by Paterson are combined with the many “others trained in Bulawayo and elsewhere by Moyo, Songo, and Khumalo, it is clear that Paterson’s chief legacy is in tourist art - which Zimbabwe has come to completely dominate in Southern Africa”. While this is correct, care must be taken to note that this was by accident rather than design. Paterson’s most prominent students became first generation artists in Zimbabwe, such as Moyo, Songo, Khumalo and Sambo and therefore played a crucial role in African artistic modernism in colonial and post colonial Zimbabwe. That his sculptures were being admired in far-off England and the United States did not impress Songo as much as the prestige

they brought him at home. As the *Time* (1954) reported, “Sam’s priceless reward was seeing the revulsion in a native woman’s face at sight of him change to admiration when she saw his carvings”. Similarly, Sambo did more and more mural work in the 1970s in exchange for free drinks at various watering holes. In spite of training several artists at Mzilikazi Art Centre, Khumalo was content with the repute he attained in Bulawayo and died a poor man in 2015. Whilst this may be misconstrued as romanticisation of poor artists, it must be viewed within the appropriation of indigenous art ethics in which imparting artistic knowledge to the next generation was considered more important than personal profit. By and large, it was not so much by design as in response to the appalling rigours of life in colonial and post colonial Zimbabwe, as well as demand from the tourist centre in Victoria Falls that tourist art has become part of the legacy of Cyrene art in Zimbabwe. Tourist art must, therefore, be understood within the development of African modernism in which artists in colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe invented new artistic expressions that reflect their encounter with European art collectors. Many poor black people during the colonial and post colonial periods tried/try to make a living by engaging in tourist art. Above all, a tourist could be an art lover and an art lover could be a tourist.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

Cyrene Mission art laid the foundation for and defined the direction of the development of modern art in colonial Zimbabwe for over a quarter of a century. The genesis of stone sculpture, modern woodcarving and painting is traceable to Cyrene. The art workshops, demonstrations and exhibitions had their origins in Cyrene, with McEwen only later adding to the natural synthesis already in existence since the late 1930s. The students that gave credence to McEwen’s workshop

and exhibitions and who became the most proficient and creative first generation artists, were first nurtured at mission workshops. Although McEwen relegated Paterson to a sideshow in the late 1960s, by no means should scholars conceal the pivotal role Cyrene mission played in the development of African modernism. Within the confines of limited technical training and with minimal exposure to world art, Cyrene workshop developed an engaging artistic style that was admired in the UK and USA, and produced several artists of repute such as Songo, Khumalo, Moyo, Sango and Sambo. As much as Cyrene workshop aimed at the implantation of homogeneous modern African artistic expressions stripped of any western influence, this chapter has reflected heterogeneous artistic expressions shaped by artists' political and socio-economic experiences.

Kingsley Sambo, with an urban background and a predilection for realism and the depiction of modern themes, was a classic mission rebel, whose inclination to Pablo Picasso and Van Gogh greatly influenced his modern expressionism and his technical and stylistic sophistry. Yet by no means does this imply that African modernism was nothing but mimicry of Western art, neither were the artworks coming from Africa 'weak copies' of European modernism. As reflected in this chapter Okeke-Ogulu (2015:41) has effectively reframed the entire discourse on appropriation by arguing for an "African's right to determine his relationship with the art of his imagined and ... his freedom to establish and negotiate the terms of his engagement with Western art". Modern African artistic expressions evolved out of diverse colonial conditions, past the rages of colonialism, and

finally through the dramatic experience of decolonisation. African modernism in Zimbabwe was therefore a product of appropriation and hybridity of African and Western cultures.

The first generation of artists such as Songo, Khumalo, Moyo and Sango transmitted methods of painting, and stone and woodcarving to their students with the consequent production of identical murals, and figures with thick legs in a state of action by second generation artists. However, because of the decolonisation process, second generation artists, like Nene, appropriated liberation art in their murals. Similarly, industrialisation in colonial Zimbabwe led to creative appropriation and invention of artistic techniques or expressive media in metal sculpture by second generation artists such as Madebe and Ndhlovu. While the first generation artists were, like their master Paterson, against the commercialisation of art, the second generation artists have tried to find a balance between unfolding their skills and talent while earning an income from it.<sup>17</sup> By so doing, they were/are confronted with barriers given by the socio-political environment as much as the functioning of the international market and therefore needed/need to develop certain survival strategies. It is within this context that Cyrene's legacy of spawning Rhodesia/Zimbabwe's massive tourist art industry must be understood. Be that as it may, it is largely because of Paterson's training of art at the Cyrene workshop that Zimbabwe today is a nation of artists whose talents are recognized far and wide. Indeed, no other mission school in Africa has generated an art tradition that was as widespread and as long-lasting as Cyrene. Although Patterson's artistic

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<sup>17</sup> Second generation artists Gutsa (2015) and Madebe (2016) stress that information, communication and technology (ICT) as well as appointment of marketing managers has helped to organise exhibitions and market their artworks locally, continentally and globally.

training at Cyrene excluded women and therefore entrenched the oppression of women in a male dominated society, it is important to stress that he asserted the value of physically and mentally challenged people; of black people in a world ruled by whites; and of children in a world dominated by adults.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Serima Mission and the Development of Modern Art in Zimbabwe**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, we have seen the role played by Cyrene Mission in the development of modern art in Zimbabwe. Focusing specifically on Nicholas Mukomberanwa and Joseph Ndandarika, this chapter reflects the heterogeneity of African modernism as opposed to homogeneity in Zimbabwe. I argue that African modernism was a result of appropriation of western artistic styles and hybridisation with traditional styles or a product of the meeting of African and European cultures. The chapter therefore examines African modernism's heterogeneity in Zimbabwe and in the process ensures that spaces for the artistic traditions of African and European cultures become visible. While John Groeber was pre-occupied with creating art for his church at Serima, it is undeniable that he trained two of Zimbabwe's first generation of black artists (Mukomberanwa and Ndandarika) who came to dominate Zimbabwe's stone sculpture from the 1960s onwards. Indirectly his training methods produced one of Zimbabwe's finest second generation artists (Tapfumane Gutsa) whose work has continued to have an imposing influence on Zimbabwean art to the present.

As discussed in chapter 2, from 1948 an informal art school emerged at Serima under the auspices of Groeber, a Swiss missionary of the Roman Catholic Church. In an attempt to decorate the Serima church Groeber formed a group of artists who not only shared a workspace but also used it as a stable framework of communication and learning governed by the acknowledged expertise of their teacher. The approach at Serima was generally marked by lack of formal syllabi or defined courses with minimal direct instruction on issues of style or drawing. As much as students acquired certain technical expertise, they received little instruction in art history or theoretical issues. As in

the case of the Cyrene workshop, the Serima art workshop provides a unique occasion to examine the rise of African modernism specifically focusing on the artistic expressions of Nicholas Mukomberanwa and, Joseph Ndandarika.

#### **4.2 NICHOLAS MUKOMBERANWA (1940-2002)**

Meya (2012) asserts that Nicholas Mukomberanwa was born Obert Matafi in 1940, in rural Buhera District of the Manicaland Province (in south-east of Zimbabwe). His father was Malachia Matafi and his mother, Chihute, was the second wife of Matafi. She died when Obert was two years old. Henceforth, Obert was brought up by his father's first wife. In 1958, the artist was christened Nicholas by the Catholic missionaries at St Benedict Mission. According to Guthrie (1989:8), in honour of an ancestor, Nicholas took the surname Mukomberanwa which he officially used throughout his life and career.

Mukomberanwa attended Zvishavani School while his father worked at the nearby King Asbestos Mines. Although art was not taught at the school, Mukomberanwa showed a propensity towards art from a very early age and produced his first sculpture, in clay, at the age of 15 (Monda 2015). In 1958, at the age of 17, he was accepted at St Benedicts Mission, Chiendambuya, where his skills in painting and drawing were recognised. Consequently, in 1959, Mukomberanwa was offered a place at Serima Mission in Masvingo Province, where his artistic skills could be better nurtured and refined. At Serima Mission under the enlightened tutelage of Father Groeber, he was taught wood carving and encouraged to sculpt statues that blended Christian iconography with indigenous African forms and styles.

Sultan (1999:21) asserts that Groeber experimented with new teaching methods in art at Serima that allowed for individual interpretation of biblical stories and, together with indigenous African art, inspired Mukomberanwa who “developed a personal style using the edges of the wooden cubes he was given to carve – always preferring right angles and geometric forms”. As such, Mukomberanwa was heavily influenced by the drawing, patterning and carving lessons he learnt from Groeber and the school’s art teacher, Cornelius Manguma. Indeed, in his school at Serima the spark for an artistic career was ignited in him and he later became one of the internationally most successful sculptors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. “At Serima”, Mukomberanwa remembered, “the seed of art was sown in my heart” (<http://www.capegallery.co.za/mukomberamwa.cv.htm>).

Mukomberanwa produced his first artworks at Serima Mission in 1959. These included angelic figures in cement placed on the church tower (1959, **Fig 32**). He also carved three angelic figures in wood which can still be seen in the church (1959/1960, **Fig 33**). These visual art works are reflective of Mukomberanwa’s strategy of appropriation of the forms of imperial culture and its hybridisation with African culture. The faces of the angelic figures are produced in a manner that reflects West African mask-like faces. Especially in their depiction of facial features, the works reflect the importance of Manguma’s teaching in Mukomberanwa’s early artistic development. The eyes were treated as round bulbs encircled by a raised line indicating the eyelids. A strong brow line defined the upper eyelids thereby creating a definite shape for the forehead as well. The mouths and noses in these pieces were defined by distinctive raised lines. Contrary to Guthrie’s (1989:14-15) perception that Mukomberanwa only spent a year at Serima, Groeber’s correspondence (1961) with the Bishop of Gweru Diocese indicates that he was there for two years (1959-1961).

African modernism was not only characterised by appropriation of Western cultures, but also by the expression of African culture. This is epitomised in Nicholas Mukomberanwa's innovative piece based on Shona traditions entitled *The Chief* (1961). This particular work of art deviated from the Eurocentric Christian icons espoused by the missionaries and led to his expulsion from the mission school. Monda (2015) argues that "his strong African cultural beliefs and religious adherence to his traditions was a very radical stance for a young boy to take in the face of religious and racial colonisation". With the colonial Christian mission, cultural and creative education was not considered important for the converts. Oguibe (2002:243) argues that a crucial device of colonial authority was to insert and institutionalise a "corridor of slippage" that granted the colonised only partial access to the possibility of transition and transformation to a modern identity. The cornerstone of colonial policy was to allow the colonised only a mimetic representation of imperial culture, such that the colonised was transformed from the extremities of backwardness which colonial discourse ascribed to her (colonised), into a partial modern identity. The notion of artistic freedom was, therefore, antithetical to the ethos of colonialism. Mukomberanwa's expulsion from Serima Mission only served to fortify his beliefs in the relevance of Shona culture for the rest of his life. He moved to Harare in 1962, where he was forced to take a job as an officer in the British South African Police. He remained in the police force until the height of the liberation war, when he left in 1977 and made a conscious decision to become a fulltime artist (Guthrie 1989:17).

Although Mukomberanwa spent only two years at Serima, it is noteworthy that his artistic style was decisively shaped by his experience there. In the early 1960s Mukomberanwa became one of the first generation of Rhodesian stone sculptors; he continued to produce work fundamentally

similar to the work produced during his student days at Serima characterised by appropriation and hybridisation of Western and African cultures. An early Mukomberanwa carving, *Mother and Child* (1965, **Fig 34**) shows the sculptural influence of Mukomberanwa's training at Serima. Another artwork which shows that Mukomberanwa was strongly influenced by the time he spent at Serima is *Man* (1969, **Fig 12**). Facial features, and in particular the bulbous eye form, are typical of the Serima style. Drawings in Mukomberanwa's early works were occasional, simple, and derived from Shona carving patterns. Just like Manguma, Mukomberanwa used patterns on collars and hems of clothing. Yet surprisingly enough, when clothed, all his figures have Serima-like 'biblical' robes characteristic of Serima artistic style rather than any form of contemporary or traditional dress. In the words of Sultan (1999:11-12), "in his stylization of human forms, choice of geometric patterns, his broken lines, and his occasional choice of religious themes ... Mukomberanwa's works still bear testimony to these two sources of inspiration, Christian art and traditional African art".

As reflected in chapter 2, under the guidance of Groeber and Manguma, Mukomberanwa learnt to carve wooden sculptures depicting biblical narratives such as the Virgin and Child at Serima. Not surprisingly in his early years, he did not venture too far from his training in terms of iconography. As much as Mukomberanwa's themes were immensely extended in the 1960s into non-religious arenas, the theme of mother and child as a symbol of family unity remained a major theme in his work. *Mother and Child* (1965, **Fig 34**) illustrates the way in which Mukomberanwa clothed his figures in Serima-related style. The mother wears a biblical mantle and wreath in an untraditional like way as it dangles out at the back which is not the case in the traditional headdress. *Man* (1969, **Fig 12**) reflects an additional common Serima-feature, namely the mask/fantasy figure (which

emerged as a result of Groeber's teaching with illustrations of Congolese and West African masks) created out of geometric shapes. The mask-like faces, with immense heads and hands, suggest the importance of the human mind and its outstanding powers of creativity. As expressed by Ulli (1968:9),

Mukomberanwa's sculpture is full of ideas and inventions, he has a great variety of attitudes and expressions and he likes to portray whole clusters of intertwined figures. He works in many different stones, continuously using textures and colours. The mood of his sculptures is always meditative, sometimes religious, and they are of a very high quality.

As at Serima, during Mukomberanwa's formative years the human figure remained the crux of the subject matter, with the face usually the spotlight of the work. In most cases, the one-third proportion was retained, as reflected in *Mother and Child* (1965, **Fig 34**) and *Man* (1969, **Fig 12**). However, his treatment of the body was changing rapidly due to his broadened horizon and exposure to the work of Rodin at the Atlantic Foundation Exhibition (1960/1961) at National Gallery in Harare, and to a number of burgeoning Rhodesian stone sculptors skilled in different artistic techniques. Other exhibitions of modern French and Italian painters were shown at the National Gallery in 1963 (Hava 1984:6). Mount (1989:119) remarked that "[p]ainting and sculpture from major periods in the history of Western art and European-influenced, white Rhodesian work are displayed prominently on gallery walls. It would be a rare artist who could remain untouched when faced with this wealth of unfamiliar styles and techniques". As such, while it is undeniable that the seeds of art were sown in Mukomberanwa's heart at Serima, African modernism was a product of factors that transcended the mission centre. In addition to appropriation Mukomberanwa also used hybridism in his artistic expression. Full bodies rapidly became exceptional in Mukomberanwa's work. Intermittently, he looked beyond the single independent human body by fusing figures together as in *Two children* (**Fig 35**). In spite of rendering proportions insignificant, Mukomberanwa remained relatively close to the one-third

convention in all his work. As such, in the very beginning, Mukomberanwa addressed traditional African beliefs and socio-religious themes; his early style was detailed, rounded, with exaggerated features (**Figs 32, 33**). Works from the 1960s show much more stylised, patterned use of geometric as well as clear curvaceous forms - all the same fashioned with some semblance of Serima style.

It is noteworthy that in 1962, Mukomberanwa joined the workshop school of the Rhodes National Gallery where he was guided by gallery director Frank McEwen (Scharfstein 2009:343), who added to the natural synthesis of his art making. Mukomberanwa acknowledged the huge influence McEwen had on his artistic development. According to Guthrie (1989:19), Mukomberanwa remarked that McEwen “disliked copying and asked us to create something unique and new. He gave us freedom to do what we wanted but with our own feeling. He would say: ‘Whatever you make, if it should be called Art, it should be the only one piece of the work and should not be repeated again’”. This was essential in order to ensure that African modernism was not a belated copy of Western modernism.

The 1960s period was followed by a more expressionist outlook in the 1970s, when Mukomberanwa’s work announced pre-independence prophecies evident in *Breaking Free* (1978) and showed experimentation with abstract planes and stylization (*Gallery* 1995:20). *Breaking Free* (1978) was certainly part of liberation art as it epitomised a watershed in the political situation in colonial Zimbabwe and hope for better things to come in independent Zimbabwe. Mukomberanwa, therefore, reflected on the interplay between decolonisation (the process of dismantling the ideological foundations of colonisation) and modernism (art informed by visions of progress) across the world. After 1980, post-independence disillusionment preoccupied the artist, as

captured in *Street Beggar* (1982, **Fig 36**), *Corrupting Power of Money* (1985, **Fig 37**), *The Corrupting Power of Money* (1986, **Fig 38**), *Greed and Too Many Preachers* (1986, **Fig 39**). These works were moralistic in tone and dealt with issues of corruption and exploitation and the capitalist mentality. These pieces established the artist as a social critic. Therefore, it appears that African modern art came into being not so much because of Western-style education but because of some individuals to whom art as an autonomous practice became a medium for expressing their subjectivity and coming to terms with their political and socio-economic circumstances.

It is undeniable that Mukomberanwa's work changed greatly when he became a full-time professional artist after 1977 as he had more time to experiment and explore new forms that not only defined the human form but were much more geometric. It was as the Zimbabwean innovator of geometric patterns, achieved long after McEwen's departure, that Mukomberanwa attained international repute. As Morton (2013: 242-243) argues, such modernism clearly could have come from a Serima educated artist trained in drawing and design. As such, in his late geometric phases, Mukomberanwa relied heavily on patterning learned at Serima. Arguably, while Mukomberanwa's earlier sculpture (**Fig 34**) is relatively simple in conception; his later sculpture shows more ingenuity and power with human shapes wedded to the geometry of curves and angles. For instance, his *Mediator* (1986, **Fig 40**), which looks at first like a single head with all its features curving in one direction with the effort of its task, has the lips of its sober mediating mouth inserted into the mouths of the two persons whose differences is being resolved.

Although the body of his later works looked different from the walls of St Mary's chapel, some reflect the Serima artistic style. *The Corrupting Power of Money* (1986, **Fig 38**) illustrates how

Mukomberanwa occasionally continued to clothe his figures with Serima-like 'biblical' robes. The Serima Christianisation of the subject matter is also discernible in *Corrupting Power of Money* (1985, **Fig 37**) which makes one think of Judas counting his 30 pieces of silver. The Serima-like biblical attire is also discernible in the *Woman of Wisdom* (1987, **Fig 41**) and *Widow* (1988, **Fig 43**). *Woman of Wisdom* (1987) reflects how Mukomberannwa, as a modern artist, triumphs over patriarchal Serima training (that excluded females) limitations as he expresses both the power and authority of women as counsellors and mentors in society. *Woman of wisdom* artistic modernism epitomises gender equality taking into cognizance pre-colonial entrenched patriarchy and perpetuation of such patriarchy under colonial period as women were regarded as minors, as opposed to post-colonial recognition of their wisdom and value in society. It is also part of the liberation art fostered by African modernism in Zimbabwe. In independent Zimbabwe, *Woman of Wisdom* (1987) has come to epitomise gender equality and equity in general, and tapping and harnessing of women power and authority in particular, to generate peace, harmony and sustainable development.

As reflected by his 1980s work (**Figs 37-38, 40-43**), facial features retained the same look as in the 1950s and 1960s. The upper part of the eye was still fashioned by the brow line, which extended into the outline of the nose. In the 1980s the brow line was regularly extended to create an elliptical line surrounding the face. However, from the mid-1980s, the oval shape occasionally took a half-oval shape with the lower part of the eye collapsed (**Figs 41, 42**). At times even in the late 1980s, the eyes maintained the bulbous Serima style as observed in the 1960s (**Fig 43**). Not only was the lower face still brought forward in a Manguma-like way, but Mukomberanwa also maintained his characteristic crescent-shaped lips. It is, therefore, important to view Mukomberanwa's artistic

modernism as a product of natural synthesis of indigenous art and Western art. Even his Serima style was not necessarily shaped by Groeber alone but also by an indigenous African carver, Manguma.

A peculiar stylistic development of Mukomberanwa in the late 1980s was the emphasis on hands which made his figures look different. As much as his figures before 1970 had hands with cylindrical fingers, they became oversized, sharp, geometric shapes. In *Brothers* (1986, **Fig 42**), the emphasis is on the cradling hands which in form dominate the piece's base. Though fraternal in nature, *Brothers* suggests a placid bond between people regardless of gender. Mukomberanwa's angular incisions are precise. The line work is straight, curving out at the edges to create a smooth accolade between line and shape. The *Brothers* wear expressions equivalent to relief; their eyes are at rest whilst their lips curl contentedly.

Sultan (1999:22) posits that Mukomberanwa "first cuts the serpentine block into small smoother blocks in order to impose his own inspiration, as if to convince the stone that the artist does, in the final analysis, decide on which way to go". Mukomberanwa, therefore, saw in a stone a shape that he had to free. His style was constantly renewed, from soft, round shapes to angular, geometric ones, marrying sharp edges to organic forms. Mukomberanwa favoured symmetry, hard edges, stylisation, a highly polished surface, and an exaggeration of features (**Figs 40-43**). It is the conviction of Sultan (1999:22) that Mukomberanwa's "sculptures sometimes suggest African masks and radiate a magnetism that is almost magical".

Though presented with modernist facade, Mukomberanwa's sculptures express African ideals and mannerisms. This was, for example, articulated through his rendering of anatomy and posture. Most of the figures are stooped, seated or kneeling in typical Shona style. The amplification of African ideals and mannerisms has been viewed by Oguibe (2002:243-259) as an expression of nationalism in African modernism. The nature of this struggle resided not in direct confrontation with the structures of colonialism, nor the tropes of imaging and representation, but in a strategy of appropriation of the forms of imperial culture. In Mukomberanwa's artistic modernism, the advent of colonialism did not necessarily mean the end of African art (or artistic independence) as the pre-colonial art models were richly adapted to the new era in some form of liberation art. Mudibe (1994:163-164) argues that the new adaptations ensured that many new works reflect "a drive to say ... something new, to transcend the crisis of tribal societies and art disorganised by the impact of the European culture". Mukomberanwa's work over the years reveals a consistent search for new ways of expressing himself and a progressive reduction to minimalist statement. Though the Serima one-third convention of proportion is betrayed in some works, technically Mukomberanwa's control of three-dimensional viewpoints and interplay of forms, coupled with asymmetrical rhythm of curves and angles in his best work, reveals his use of both intuition and formal Serima sculptural intelligence.

In the late 1980s and 1990s Mukomberanwa looked at new forms and subject matter, injecting anthropomorphic qualities into figures, animals and fantasy figures through a much more abstract combination of shapes and shallow lines. Mukomberanwa found inspiration in his Shona heritage and in his deep respect for the natural and spiritual worlds. In *Madora (Mupani Worms)*, (1990s, **Fig 44**), a figure emerges from within a rounded Springstone boulder holding mupani worms, a

traditional food source in Zimbabwe, in each hand. In his carving in the 1990s, the essential spirit is released from the stone with extraordinary power. He, therefore, highlighted what already had been achieved by nature. His mother's death, followed by the death by drowning of his seventh child (which gave to his 'water spirit' theme a deeper personal significance) affected him profoundly. As Winter-Irving (1991:110) notes, "Unlike many other sculptors, Mukomberanwa speaks from personal experience rather than recounting what he has heard or been told. To him beliefs must be personally held rather than customarily observed". In *Nzuzu (Water Spirit)*, (1990s, **Fig 45**), a mythical spirit evokes its transforming and healing power. Mukomberanwa used the lines of the hair and placement of the beautifully rendered hands and feet to accentuate the graceful flow of the horizontal figure and capture the feel of water. Therefore, over the years, his work showed a sense of increasing spiritual support which nourished and sustained his art.

In the stone carving *The Law Givers* (1998/99, **Fig 46**) the continuity of Shona culture is articulated by the loving and powerful embrace of the elders. Recognized by their wavy beards, they may be receiving guidance from an ancestor spirit to assist them in their leadership (<http://www.imamuseum.org>). As such, it is Mukomberanwa's conviction in *The Law Givers*, that elders' decisions must be accepted as common laws in African communities. On the road from Harare to his farm in Ruwa, Mukomberanwa saw an elephant in the shape of a large granite kopje that sits a few hundred metres from the road. He camped under the rock for many months, working this tremendously hard stone (Mukomberanwa 2016). The end result was the monumental sculpture of the *Elephant Kopje* (1990s, **Fig 47**). It was created by an artist with vision and perseverance, working for personal creative satisfaction rather than financial reward, on a monumental scale.

Mukomberanwa's artistic expressions are at variance with Fagg and Plass's (1964:6) conception of African modernism as "an extension of European art by a kind of involuntary cultural colonialism". As much as Mukomberanwa appropriated techniques or expressive media often associated with European art, he created something different, authentic and sometimes even unique in his response to the exigencies and vagaries of colonial and post-colonial experiences. In light of Mukomberanwa's output, the pernicious denial of any possibility of agency in African modern art and contemporary art is unfortunate and no longer tenable. Mukomberanwa's artistic expressions are reflective of his great ingenuity in appropriation and adaptation to exude what Moxey (2009:1) calls 'multiple modernities' over a long period stretching from the late 1950s to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Arguably, African modernism must never be viewed as a belated copy of Western art, and neither should the African artworks produced in colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe be considered as 'weak copies' of European modernism. Not surprisingly, when interrogated in the early 1970s as to why he did not run a workshop for the Europeans, McEwen stressed that "art's a question of quality not politics, and the African work is much better. I only wish there was a European artist of this standard" (quoted from Joosten 2001:19).

By and large, in the 1990s Mukomberanwa explored variations in texture, creating chisel marks in some parts of a piece, which he juxtaposed to his routinely smoothed surfaces. Linearization, flattening, abstraction and varying textures were markers of his mature work in the 1990s. Its increasing two-dimensionality is testimony of Mukomberanwa's return to the stylistic basis of sculpture at Serima. According to Tapfuma Gutsa (2015) whose artistic style was shaped by Serima style at Driefontein, "towards the end of his life, Mukomberanwa slowed his production

of art to enjoy farming and cattle ranching on his Ruwa farm. In his reduced production and creation of more personal sculptures, he seems to have been thinking and learning from Manguma”. It is noteworthy that despite becoming one of the most prominent first generation artists in Zimbabwe, Mukomberanwa, like Groeber and Manguma, never commercialised art. Not surprisingly, he made money not so much as an artist but as a successful farmer and rancher. Mukomberanwa was infatuated with his pieces and parted with them contritely, feeling dispossessed. Sultan (1999:22) posits that, Mukomberanwa sometimes talked about his dream of “one day, being able to buy back all my sculptures”.

Undoubtedly, Nicholas Mukomberanwa is considered to have been one of Zimbabwe’s most gifted and successful sculptors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and was highly regarded internationally. After joining the workshop school of the NGZ in the early 1960s, Mukomberanwa was described by its Director, Frank McEwen, as “one of the greatest hard stone sculptors of our times” (Monda 2015). His great talent lay in his ability to express human emotion with deep accuracy and clarity. At his exhibitions in London's Commonwealth institute in 1983, Michael Shepherd of the *Sunday Telegraph* wrote:

A carver at the very top of his form-full of ideas and exhibiting all the sculptural and artistic virtues one could hope to see together. His name is Nicholas Mukomberanwa from Zimbabwe, but you can forget the word ethnic, for this is sculpture of world quality and interest, deeply human, spirited in every sense, and superbly skilled (<http://www.chapungusculpturepark.com/muk-nya.php>).

Mukomberanwa was also compared to Epstein, Picasso, Gill and Klee and described as a ‘genius’ and ‘a great African sculptor’. According to Sibanda (2012), NGZ information and public relations officer, Taremeredzwa Chirewa, remarked that Mukomberanwa “brought together the traditional folklore symbols of his cultural identity with the abstract style of his imagination, to produce a body of works which has left an indelible mark on Zimbabwe’s contemporary art history”.

While McEwen should be credited for marketing Mukomberanwa's work through exhibitions in colonial Zimbabwe and abroad in the period 1962-1973, this must never erase the historical fact that his talent was a product of natural synthesis of indigenous art and Western art ingrained with his personal ingenuity. In spite of his national and international acclaim, Mukomberanwa never failed to acknowledge the influence of his humble upbringing in the rural district of Buhera, coupled with a structured art education at Serima Mission School (Sibanda 2012). In similar vein of invoking art as a medium, Mudimbe (1994:156) argues that African artworks must be considered "as we do literary texts" – that is, as linguistic phenomena, as well as "discursive" circuits. That during a time when it was commonplace to maintain that no contemporary artistic expression of merit had its origin in Africa, Mukomberanwa's powerful sculpture had proved otherwise, must be credited more to the combined influence of Serima artistic style, traditional African art and Mukomberanwa's innovation, than anything else.

Mukomberanwa received considerable accolades during his life time. One of his works, *The Thief*, was portrayed on a Zimbabwean stamp issued to commemorate Commonwealth Day on 14 March 1983. In 1986, the then Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, bequeathed on Nicholas a special award for his tremendous contribution to the visual arts in the country. In 1989, Nicholas was the overall winner in the annual Nedlaw/ Baringa exhibition at the NGZ for his piece *Beggar* and was chosen with Tapfuma Gutsa and Henry Munyaradzi to represent Zimbabwe in the New York exhibition 'Contemporary African Artists – Changing Tradition' (Guthrie, 1989:20). His works are located at Serima, NGZ, and in the permanent collections of many international museums.

As an established artist and with the assistance of his wife, Mukomberanwa was able to mentor his five sons (Anderson, Malachai, Tendai, Laurence and Taguma) and two daughters (Ennica and Netsai) in the art of sculpture. In a manner most likely influenced by missionary preaching of equality of humanity before God at Serima, and against patriarchal and racial prejudice of the time, Mukomberanwa encouraged his wife, Grace, to pursue art and she became a first-generation soapstone sculptor. They both trained in soapstone sculpture and then trained their children in the same craft. She was one of the leading female sculptors in Zimbabwe. As such, Nicholas Mukomberanwa was not only able to impart some semblance of natural synthesis of indigenous art and Serima artistic style to his family members but also promote gender equality and equity, let alone women's emancipation from the vicissitudes of patriarchy and racial oppression in colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe. Nicholas was also uncle and teacher of Nesbert Mukomberanwa and mentor to African-American sculptor M. Scott Johnson. He also offered hospitality to many other young enthusiasts, who visited from abroad (The Cape Gallery 2009).

All in all, Nicholas constantly set himself the challenge to seek a greater simplicity in his work. In the process he reached out to every person, communicating across cultural, religious and social boundaries. A foreword in Winter-Irving (2003) provides an apt quote by the eldest son, Anderson, which serves as Mukomberanwa's best memorial: "... a sage, a sculptor, a father to me, a father-figure to many, many sculptors working in stone in Zimbabwe. Although gone, he remains with us because his wisdom guides the sculptures we make and the actions we take". As such, the natural synthesis artistic creativity that Mukomberanwa popularised continues to have a strong impact on the development of contemporary art in Zimbabwe beyond his death.

### **4.3 JOSEPH NDANDARIKA (1940-1991)**

Ndandarika was born in 1940, the son of a Malawian father who had settled in Umtali (now Mutare) in Eastern Zimbabwe and a Shona mother ([www.guruve.com](http://www.guruve.com)). He grew up in Mutare where he went to school until Standard Six. Here, he showed great talent in drawing, painting and carving at Old Mutare Mission School. His maternal lineage was his strongest influence - his mother's uncle was a traditional doctor (*n'anga*) and her sister was possessed by an ancestral spirit (*mudzimu*). His mother and grandmother were also skilled at modelling clay into pots. Joseph grew up immersed in rural Shona culture and spiritual beliefs, and spent much time with people who lived in both the physical and spiritual spheres, and this deeply influenced his later work. Monda (2015) posits that Ndandarika developed his skill for clay moulding following in the footsteps of his mother and grandmother who made clay pots for brewing traditional beer. As a grandson of a highly respected traditional healer, Ndandarika spent some time as a neophyte training to become a young traditional healer – prior to becoming a professional visual artist.

After completing primary school, Ndandarika enrolled at a Catholic boarding school, Serima Mission, in 1957. Ndandarika's artistic talent was identified by Groeber and Manguma who nurtured and perfected his drawing and woodcarving skills. For the two years he spent at Serima, Ndandarika was part of a group of young artists chosen by Groeber to paint several murals inside St. Mary's church depicting biblical scenes (Joosten, 2001:60). Subsequent to his departure from Serima, Ndandarika moved to Salisbury (Harare) in 1959 where he quickly gravitated to Mukarobgwa and other artists associated with the nascent McEwen workshop school at the National Gallery (Kuhn, 1978:82). As McEwen's Head Gallery Attendant, Mukarobgwa had been mandated with finding and screening potentially talented young artists for his patron. In light of

McEwen's open condescension for Africans with either formal or mission arts backgrounds, Ndandarika concealed his Serima secret until the late 1980s. McEwen emphasised that the artists' work should talk about their own stories, traditions, culture and religion.

Initially, Ndandarika became one of McEwen's leading painters and his works were routinely exhibited in the major exhibitions of the time, along with those by Sambo and Mukarobgwa. His painting at the workshop school was overall different from anything at Serima. The biblical subjects were conspicuous by their absence, as his work featured humans and animals in wild landscape settings. The humans were more realistic, and therefore more detached from the standardised mask-like figures of Serima. His palette of pinks, blues and greens was remarkably divergent from the brown earth tones of Serima. Ndandarika mixed paints on the canvas rather than the palette, a technique that created a highly uneven surface unlike the smooth texture of Serima (McEwen, 1968:21). Indeed, Ndandarika became an accomplished and expressive painter.

Other than painting, Ndandarika also worked in limestone as early as 1960, which had been discovered by Joram Mariga (who later taught him stone carving techniques). He crafted a number of unremarkable small heads and statues in this stone in the early 1960s. In a manner reminiscent of Groeber who relied on a huge, community-built kiln to make bricks and artworks, Ndandarika also introduced clay sculptures to the workshop, producing a considerable number of small terracotta pieces which were pit-fired like those at Serima (Joosten 2001:60-61). However, in an additive technique quite distinct to the wood carving and clay casting at Serima, Ndandarika moulded his clay pieces, many of which were heads. Above all, these heads were also less mask-

like, with fuller, more rounded shapes and softer features. Furthermore, Ndandarika worked in mixed media and did wood carving in the early 1960s (McEwen 1968:21).

According to Morton (2013a:24), having been forced to keep his mundane mission background quiet, Ndandarika developed a new persona that he retained his entire life. He reinvented himself as coming from a family of traditional doctors. The *Magic Bird* (1962, **Fig 48**) is one of the first artistic efforts in this vein comprising a large-scale, fantastic composition of painted wood and canvas. Equally important was a mixed-media wood carving piece, *Witch* (1962), that was exhibited at the *New African Talent* show in 1963 (McEwen 1963:7). McEwen (1968:25) described Ndandarika in the 1960s as “a prolific painter and carver ... devoted to witchcraft scenes and objects”. Ndandarika’s major impact was perhaps convincing McEwen that in Shona mythology, spirits inhabited rock formations. This formulation, as Zilberg (1996:285-286) argues, had a great impact on McEwen’s marketing of his sculpture, leading him to claim that his sculptors were unleashing “the spirit in the stone” in the course of their work.

With art supplies becoming increasingly difficult to obtain after the imposition of international trade sanctions consequent of Smith’s UDI, Ndandarika began to move away from painting after 1966. He also had a flirtation with Joram Mariga whose stylistic, technical and subject related rules that he believed were derived from Shona aesthetics (Mariga and Mawdsley 1994:14), enriched and broadened Ndandarika’s artistic style. Ndandarika absorbed some of Mariga’s techniques, most notably by letting the piece of stone dictate the shape of the work. He also began to make large-scale, hard-stone sculptures.

Indeed, he derived inspiration from Shona tradition and culture. His themes were taken from Shona tradition and history, while other contemporary subjects alluded to the liberation struggle. He also drew extensively from dream imagery which he transformed into stone in simple body gestures. Some of the sculptures were rendered in postures such as *kupfugamira vakuru* (genuflecting in respect), *kutyora mizura* (bending of legs at knee level in respect, **Fig 51**), *kuombera* (clapping of hands in respect), and so on – all reflecting the cultural body gestures of traditional Shona etiquette (Monda 2015). As already noted above, the supernatural was also an important theme in his work.

Nowhere is the Shona culture and tradition more explicitly expressed than in Ndandarika's green spring stone carving, *The Mudzimu Bull* (1977, **Fig 49**). A *midzumu* is an ancestral spirit in Shona belief. When a *sekuru* (elder) has died, his spirit is passed over to a young bull after a year. The spirit is kept inside the bull and when it gets old, it is killed and the spirit is either transferred to another young bull or released and united with the spirits of his ancestors. Joseph Ndandarika exposed this story in one stone. When looking at the figures behind the bull, the outer left one holds a pot full of beer. The outer right figure holds a gourd which is used to get beer from the clay pot in order to pour over the bull. The middle figures are ululating at the installation of the spirit into the bull. This ululation usually happens after the bull has shaken its body after the pouring of beer and spraying of snuff on its back, and recitation of some words to the ancestors informing them of the installation. Though the ancestors are seen to exist in a spiritual world, they are venerated by the living through beer and snuff offering. The bull's shaking of its body is regarded as its acceptance by the ancestors. Ndandarika's sculpture lacks the snuff ingredient that often accompanies the installation of the ancestral spirit in a young bull. All the same, *The Mudzimu Bull* shows a level of sophistication of subject complexity, scale and execution rare for the period.

As in the case of Mukomberanwa, rich myths of the ancestral spirits culture that are still deeply ingrained in the minds of rural people in Zimbabwe, acted often as compelling sources of inspiration to Ndandarika. Both Mukomberanwa and Ndandarika were driven by their concern that these traditional beliefs, hitherto passed on from one generation to the next by the stories told by grandmothers to their grandchildren, risk being lost in the rapid transition to modern life styles and that they must give them permanence through visual expression. Arguably, the assertion of cultural traditions and artistic styles by African modern artists, like Ndandarika, must be viewed as an expression of their dissatisfaction with colonialism, its emasculation of their culture, and its deferment of their freedom. An art lecturer at Great Zimbabwe University, Dziva (2017), stressed that the increasing nationalist fervour in colonial Zimbabwe in the late 1970s strengthened the resolve of some artists to seek out aspects of their culture discredited by the logic of colonialism. The artistic works of Ndandarika show both a deep connection with local artistic traditions and the stylistic sophistication of twentieth century modernist art, revealing how he translated Zimbabwe's colonial experience into artistic modernism. In essence it is part of liberation art invoking the permanence of a rich cultural heritage which was under threat of erosion by colonialism. In light of the space and visibility of African traditions and culture in African modernism, Fagg and Plass's (1964:5-7) perception of African art as one of the global shadows that sets off the brilliance attributed to the Euro-American trajectory as it moved from cubism to abstract expressionism and beyond is no longer justifiable.

However, not all of Ndandarika's work was based on traditional beliefs; many depicted everyday life, the bonding between man and animal, friendship, love and unity as reflected by *Together*

(1973, **Fig 50**) and maternal and filial bonding as seen in *Mother and Child* (**Fig 52**). He was also a social critic who revealed the general hardships faced by Zimbabwean people after the imposition of international embargoes following UDI through his artwork, *Beggar Woman* (1973, **Fig 51**). The mask-like faces and oversized cylindrical fingers (**Figs 50, 51, 52**) are aspects that bear resemblance to works done at Serima and are characteristic of Ndandarika's mature style of stone sculpting in the 1970s. They show similarities with Mukomberanwa's pre-1980 work, and indicate his training under Manguma and Groeber. Moreover, their facial style is very similar to Serima, with almond shaped eyes, protruding lower faces, and double-arched brow lines running into the outline of the nose. In addition, hands are emphasised and cylindrical features (**Figs 49, 50**). All these qualities common in sculpture at Serima became hallmarks of Ndandarika's works until his death.

As much as Ndandarika was the inventor of African spirituality themes in modern Zimbabwean art, his work failed to develop once he returned to Serima-derived conventions. All the same, his innovative artistic skills and an unusual ability to materialise fantasy enabled him to respond to patrons' demands. This is clearly illustrated in a description of a 1978 meeting with potential buyers. After arriving at a meeting with a serpentine bust that met with their disapproval, Ndandarika promised to instantly improve the work. According to Kuhn (1978:82), Ndandarika took a file from his pocket,

And, squatting on the floor in that small room, he promptly sculpted the green head into a crouching eagle – in Shona, the *chapungu* bird. 'We call it a spirit bird', says Joseph, getting into the conversation again, 'you know when we are going in the forest we could see it going up – the wings ... It shows us that something is dangerous – that maybe a lion or snake is waiting for us ....

Similarly, Steiner (2001) presents a wealth of information on how contemporary artefacts are marketed in Cote d'Ivoire, how genres can be virtually invented, and how the preconceptions of

Westers are exploited by clever salesmen. As such, African artists cleverly played European buyers in terms of making what they wanted, not necessarily in a passive mimicking way but in a clever way that played with the often absurd way value is created.

Ndandarika was able to keep selling through the hard times of the 1970s following McEwen's departure from Rhodesia, and during the 1980s Zimbabwean arts revival he was one of the country's most prominent first generation sculptors (Joosten 2001:60). While he was remarkable both as an artistic talent and charismatic, self-aware persona, his work was stunted by the demands of the Southern African art market. His example also demonstrates why mission-derived art has been given so little recognition. Like many mission artists, he found it more advantageous to hide his background than to acknowledge it.

It is also noteworthy that in the period 1961-1962 Ndandarika ran a studio in Hatfield in Harare where he employed and mentored many young aspiring artists (Monda 2015). His works always radiated a finishing sheen, elegance and perfection. He was very particular in the finish and presentation of his work – a trait that distinguished him among his peers and placed him in high esteem with collectors, gallerists and art connoisseurs. Ndandarika's influence can still be seen in the works of several younger artists of the following generations for whom he served as a teacher and mentor (Monda 2015). He died in May 1991 and is much missed to this day by all those interested in Shona sculpture. Zimbabwe lost one of its greatest talents – described by McEwen as “a great and universal genius who worked in every possible medium” (Sultan 1999:26).

Ndandarika's preoccupation with tradition and culture led to his several attempts to suppress his wife's interest in art in the period 1945-1978. It was through herculean efforts and ultimately sacrifice of marriage that his wife, Locardia, asserted her artistic emancipation (*News Day*. 2011; Ndandarika 2016). In 1990, Michelina Andreucci described Ndandarika as a perceptive visionary who recognised the importance of preserving his culture in stone. "His art has the classicism of timeless universal figurative sculpture which can be read and easily deciphered today", Andreucci remarked. "It delves into the deepest recesses of our unique African memory, and instils in our indigenous society a cultural identity, a meaning, sense of self" (quoted in Monde 2015). As asserted by former Deputy Minister of Education and Culture, Machinga (1993:2), "[h]is art embraced our concepts of religion, morality, family and community". Through his work, Ndandarika reminds us that in spite of the encounter with colonialism or Western culture, traditional Shona beliefs have remained dynamic and relevant today as of old.

Up to the end of his career, Ndandarika remained profoundly spiritual and troubled by the prospect of traditional cultural ties being threatened by modernity in Zimbabwean society. He expressed unique forms of African modernism using traditional methods and materials and at times appropriating Western styles for new purposes and new patrons. He was a colourful and entertaining personality; but above all an artist with deep integrity and an increasingly determined drive to portray the spiritual beliefs and customs so vital to the lives of previous generations. What may well have caused Ndandarika much anguish and struggle also resulted in the portrayal of the gamut of human experience – both physical and metaphysical. His sculpture is capable of expressing searing grief and loss; the fragility of our earth-bound existence; the humour and love

that are possible in human relations; and the constant presence of spiritual powers and links with previous generations.

Arguably, Ndandarika's attempt to establish and affirm African art as a singular, remarkable, worthy and commendable human endeavour is a reminder of an earlier generation's need for nationalist response to colonialism. It represented a natural synthesis - the selective use of artistic resources and forms from African and European traditions, thereby fostering African modernism in colonial Zimbabwe. Okeke-Agulu (2015:89) argues that colonial and post colonial modernism resisted both "uncritical nativism" and undue Western artistic influences. He coins the term "compound consciousness" to explain the tensions and oppositional ideological influences on African artistic modernism. As such, African artistic modernism constantly reconstituted itself by selective incorporation of diverse, oppositional, or complementary elements.

By and large, Joseph Ndandarika's works reflect a distinct form of African modernism that gives visibility to African artistic traditions and culture. He made aesthetically informed objects using traditional methods and materials, but in new and modernised forms, for new purposes and new patrons. Despite his training at Serima art workshop, Ndandarika returned to the formal properties of African arts of the past for inspiration, and in so doing generated a recognisable African modernism. Such African modernism was not solely restricted to traditional African artistic expressions as Ndandarika at times appropriated indigenous art and Serima sculptural styles with the consequent display of heterogeneity and liberation art in African modernism.

#### 4.4 CONCLUSION

In Zimbabwe, as in many other African countries, missions provided the only formal training for African artists during the colonial period.<sup>18</sup> Not surprisingly, artists who left the missions and entered the secular art world were at the forefront in creating new forms of modern art. At times these artists continued to use the exact same media, techniques and styles that they had learnt during their training, exporting these methods far beyond their initial location. At other times, mission trained artists consciously hid their background in order to promote a more ‘authentic’ image to the international art market. Manguma is an example of a modern artist who retained the style created by his mission patron Groeber at Serima. Nicholas Mukomberanwa adapted the style to a different medium but maintained and imparted its sculptural style to the Mukomberanwa dynasty that has continued to use it with modifications to the present day. Nicholas Mukomberanwa must also be commended for creating an artistic dynasty and promoting gender equity in the artistic canon. Mukomberanwa’s artistic expressions were a product of appropriation, hybridisation and adaptation, while Ndandarika hid his missionary training and adopted a new type of afro-expressionism. It was largely because of Serima and Cyrene Missions that McEwen’s celebrated ‘workshop school’ achieved great success. Not only has Serima produced brilliant first generation artists, but it has also produced prominent second generation and third generation artists that continue to strive for innovation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The crucial role of Serima, just as that of Cyrene reflected in the last chapter, must not be omitted or marginalised in the history of modern Zimbabwean art. While the outright rejection of the impact of missionaries on the formation of modern art is unacceptable, its novelty as the only source is equally unacceptable as African artistic

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<sup>18</sup> There were some exceptions where missionary-trained artists like Job Kekana, Joseph Ndandarika, Sam Songo and Lazarus Khumalo (to mention only a few) ended up running art training institutions which, except for Kekana’s, were not comparable to Cyrene and Serima.

modernism was a product of a natural synthesis. All in all, the chapter has unravelled the heterogeneity of African modernism that gave space and visibility to both Western and African cultures.

## CHAPTER 5

### **Conclusion**

The study examined missionaries' impact on the formation of modern art in Zimbabwe, specifically focusing on Cyrene and Serima art workshops. While acknowledging missionaries' impact in laying the foundation of modern art in Zimbabwe, the study has revealed the broad dimensions of African modern art shaped by the artists' political and socio-economic experiences due to the encounter of Western and African cultures, and the subsequent appropriation and hybridisation of the cultures in artistic expressions. The study has shown that in their endeavour to spread Christianity, both Paterson and Groeber deliberately introduced African art workshops at Cyrene and Serima mission centres respectively. The art workshops brought masters and apprentices, teachers and pupils, and also artists of the same status together and thus provided opportunities to learn from each other, to develop a shared style, or to distinguish the members as a group from other artists. Cyrene and Serima Missions became famous for their localised art of Christian content which was developed first in the workshops and then extended to decorate the respective chapels and school rooms so that they became suitable to their function as centres of worship and education in rural African communities. This study, therefore, acknowledges the foundational importance of Paterson and Groeber from the late 1930s up to the 1960s in the complex and evolving art world.

Through an examination of the Cyrene and Serima mission art workshops, the study outlined the pedagogical philosophy, tutorial methods, limits on artistic freedom, commercial (or non-commercial) nature of the mission art enterprises under Paterson and Groeber. Paterson's 'withholding' of training, censorship of students' work and imposition of restrictions on his

students' viewing of outside art meant that a distinctive and technically limited school style emerged. A similar conservative form of art emerged from Serima, more so because of Groeber's approval of works that had to be placed in the church. Both Paterson and Groeber entrenched cultural constructs of male artistic genius. The study has provided evidence that mission stations such as Cyrene generally stunted the development of their artists. Morton (2003:108) has been less sympathetic to the impact of Cyrene mission asserting that "Paterson's chief legacy is in tourist art - which Zimbabwe has come to completely dominate in Southern Africa". In spite of limitations, it is noteworthy that relationships between tradition and modernity were explored in particular, but quite essentialising ways, assuming a similar set of formal elements as appropriate for African artists. Cyrene and Serima art workshops catered specifically for aspiring African artists who had no other access to formal arts training. As much as students received little instruction in art history or theoretical issues, they all the same acquired certain technical expertise. Paterson and Groeber generated immense publicity for Cyrene and Serima, their artists, and their ideas, and laid the foundation for the development of modern art in Zimbabwe. It has been shown that from the late 1930s modern Zimbabwean artists (acknowledged by name as artists of considerable merit) were carving in stone and wood, painting murals and producing very fine linocuts. They were also carving church commissions for furniture and ecclesiastical art. It is noteworthy that the main subject matter of Cyrene art was not religious as the majority of paintings (Figs 1-8, 14-15) are landscapes or village scenes and many of them recorded scenes from the students' lives and their observation of the changes in society going on at the time.

I have demonstrated that artists who emerged from Cyrene and Serima art workshops became the first modern artists and art teachers in Zimbabwe. Cyrene mission produced the first formal Black

art teacher in Southern Africa, Joseph Ndhlovu, who went to work in South Africa as the first art teacher in that country, and Richard Rashidi and Crispin Chindongo, who became the first African art teachers in Malawi (Walker 1985: 38, 58-59). Several other students became notable artists, namely, Adomech Mbenge Moyo, Samuel Songo, Lazarus Khumalo, Livingstone Sango, William Mariwi, James Ratumu, Randford Sililo and Kingsley Sambo, among others. While several factors contributed to Songo, Khumalo and Sambo's artistic brilliance and imagination, care must be taken to give credit to the foundations of such artistic excellence and innovation that were laid at Cyrene by none other than Paterson. Similarly, while John Groeber was pre-occupied with creating art for his church at Serima, it is undeniable that he trained two of Zimbabwe's first generation of black artists, namely Mukomberanwa and Ndandarika, who came to dominate Zimbabwe's stone sculpture from the 1960s onwards. Nicholas Mukomberanwa's own confession that the seed of art was sown in his heart at Serima (<http://www.capegallery.co.za/mukomberanwa.cv.htm>) is reflective of the importance of missionaries in igniting an artistic career that saw him later become one of the internationally most successful sculptors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Fundamentally, Cyrene and Serima art workshops laid the foundation for and defined the direction of the development of modern art in colonial Zimbabwe. It were these mission art workshops that inaugurated the blending of Christian iconography with traditional African forms and styles which became a permanent feature of modern art in Zimbabwe. Under the tutelage of Paterson and Groeber, there was deliberate fusion of traditional art into mission mainstream education to produce Christian art forms with a strong Africanised identity. The genesis and explosion of stone sculpture, wood carving and painting is traceable to the Cyrene and Serima art workshops, and so were art demonstrations and exhibitions, with McEwen only later broadening the marketing of

something already in existence since the late 1930s and 1940s. The students that gave credence to McEwen's workshop and exhibitions and who became the most proficient and creative first generation artists, were first nurtured at mission workshops. Although McEwen relegated Paterson and Groeber to a sideshow in the late 1960s, by no means should scholars conceal the pivotal role that Cyrene and Serima mission workshops played in the development of African modernism.

Arguably, as in many other African countries, missions provided the only formal training for African artists during the colonial period. Not surprisingly, artists who left the missions and entered the secular art world were at the forefront in creating new forms of modern art. At times these artists continued to use the exact same media, techniques and styles that they had learnt during their training, exporting these methods far beyond their initial location. Manguma and Hatugari are examples of modern artists who retained the style created by their mission patron Groeber at Serima. Nicholas Mukomberanwa maintained the sculptural style of Serima but adapted it to a different medium. The Mukomberanwa dynasty has continued to use it with modifications to the present day. Indirectly Groeber's training methods produced one of Zimbabwe's finest second generation artists, namely Tapfumanei Gutsa whose work has continued to have an imposing influence on Zimbabwean art to the present day. Similarly, the first generation of Cyrene artists such as Songo, Khumalo, Moyo and Sango transmitted methods of painting, and stone and woodcarving to their students (second generation artists) who in turn produced similar murals, and figures with thick legs in a state of action. The minor differences were only caused by different political and socio-economic experiences of the first and second generation artists. Industrial development during the colonial period induced the appropriation and invention of

artistic styles or expressive media in metal sculpture by second generation artists, while brutal colonial rule fostered liberation art in colonial Zimbabwe.

Yet sound as this might appear, it is important to note that the formation of modern art in Zimbabwe transcended the mission centres. While acknowledging that art in Zimbabwe pre-dates colonialism, it is my argument that the formalisation of Zimbabwe's visual arts is a by-product of the colonial establishment. Modern African art became a reality not so much because of Western education as because of individuals to whom art as an autonomous practice became a medium for expressing their subjectivity and coming to terms with their political and socio-economic circumstances – with their own emergent modernities. As such, African modernism was tied to the rise of modernity in Zimbabwe (as elsewhere in the African continent), which was connected to the colonial experience. The study has shown that as much as mission workshops aimed at the implantation of homogeneous modern African artistic expressions stripped of any western influence, heterogeneous artistic expressions shaped by artists' political and socio-economic experiences triumphed. Kingsley Sambo, with an urban background and a predilection for realism and the depiction of modern themes, was a classic mission rebel, whose admiration of Pablo Picasso and Vincent Van Gogh greatly influenced his modern expressionism and his technical and stylistic sophistry. A considerable sense of cultural freedom that prevailed in the early 1960s in Southern Rhodesia before the darkening of the political and social landscape and the onset of the war which raged through the 1970s culminating in independence in 1980 (McCloughlin 1987:85-104) induced Sambo to embrace art and the city for the creative doors which were flung open for him. Consequently his joyous depictions of urban township life and the impact of music became hallmarks of his artistic expressions.

As colonialism made European material culture and ideas more available, artists from the colonies invented new artistic expressions that reflected Africa's encounter with Europe, and also with the global world (Okeke 2001:30-31). Zimbabwean artists were no exceptions to this continental phenomenon. Whether through an essentialist traditionalism as in the case of Ndandarika or progressive adoption of patently European aesthetic styles (as in the case of Songo, Khumalo, Sambo and Mukomberanwa), the resulting work bore the unmistakable mark of the artists' heterogeneity rather than homogeneity. Nowhere is this heterogeneity more explicitly expressed than in the works of Mukomberanwa and Ndandarika, who in spite of training at Serima art workshop adopted different approaches in their artistic expressions. Mukomberanwa maintained the sculptural style of Serima but through appropriation and hybridisation of Western and African cultures, adapted it to a different medium. On the contrary, Ndandarika hid his missionary training and developed a new type of Afro-Expressionism.

Yet in spite of their differences, both Mukomberanwa and Ndandarika were driven by their concern that traditional beliefs, hitherto passed on from one generation to the next by the stories told by grandmothers to their grandchildren, risked being lost in the rapid transition to modern life styles and subsequently gave them permanence through visual expression. Arguably, the assertion of cultural traditions and artistic styles by African modern artists, like Ndandarika, Mukomberanwa and Khumalo must be viewed as an expression of their dissatisfaction with colonialism, its emasculation of their culture and its deferment of their freedom. The amplification of African ideals and mannerisms by Mukomberanwa is explained in this study as an expression of nationalism in African modernism. As reflected in the study, the increasing nationalist fervour in colonial Zimbabwe in the late 1970s strengthened the resolve of some artists to seek out aspects

of their culture discredited by the logic of colonialism (Dziva 2017). Conversely, African modernism evolved out of diverse colonial conditions, past the ravages of colonialism, and finally through the dramatic experience of decolonisation in the post-colonial period (Okeke 2001:31).

It is accurate that because of Paterson and Groeber's training of art at Cyrene and Serima missions Zimbabwe today is a nation of artists whose talents are recognised far and wide. However, this must not override modernist innovators who rejected Paterson and Groeber's artistic limitations or improved it through a natural synthesis thereby bringing to light the diverse and active engagements of artists living under colonial and postcolonial regimes. An examination of African artistic production in this study challenges long held values of authenticity and value, and appreciates choices of materials and artistic methods that are often distinctive in relation to Western art and presents highly adept mixes of the local and the global. Songo, Sambo, Khumalo, Mukomberanwa and Ndandarika's works focus our attention on the varied and unique ways in which African artists negotiated local experiences of modernity, often providing links between the so called 'traditional' and contemporary aesthetic practices and counteracting pat narratives of erasure, loss, and contamination.

By and large, the study attested that the formation of modern art in Zimbabwe was a product of converging experiences of history and modernisation. Only by attempting to follow the complex narrative of the movements, appropriations, rejections and transformations of diverse Western and African traditions and cultural contexts can African modernism be understood in the nation's art-historical life. African modernism in Zimbabwe was, therefore, not a homogeneous entity but a variegated one that emerged from, survived, and transcended European colonialism. Yet sound as

this narrative may appear, by no means should it exclude or undermine the mission precedents in the formation of modern art in Zimbabwe. Equally, no historically accurate art history of Zimbabwe should underplay the foundational importance of the role of Paterson and Groeber, and those they trained at Cyrene and Serima, respectively never mind the myriad of others involved from the late 1950s in this complex and evolving imbricated art world. Conversely, by affirming the multiplicity and unique value of African modernism and by simultaneously acknowledging diversities within it, this study has gone beyond the mission precedents in the formation and growth of modern art in Zimbabwe and established a new level of respect of African artistic modernism.

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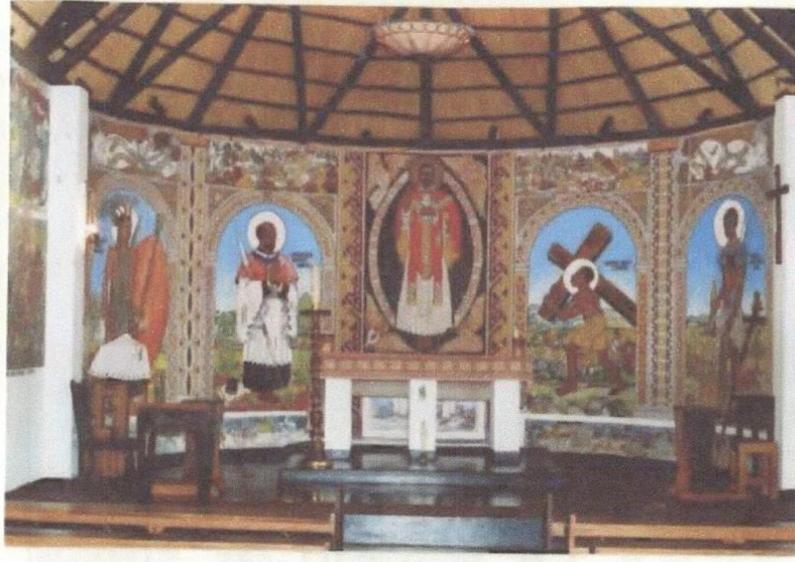
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## ILLUSTRATIONS

**Fig 1**



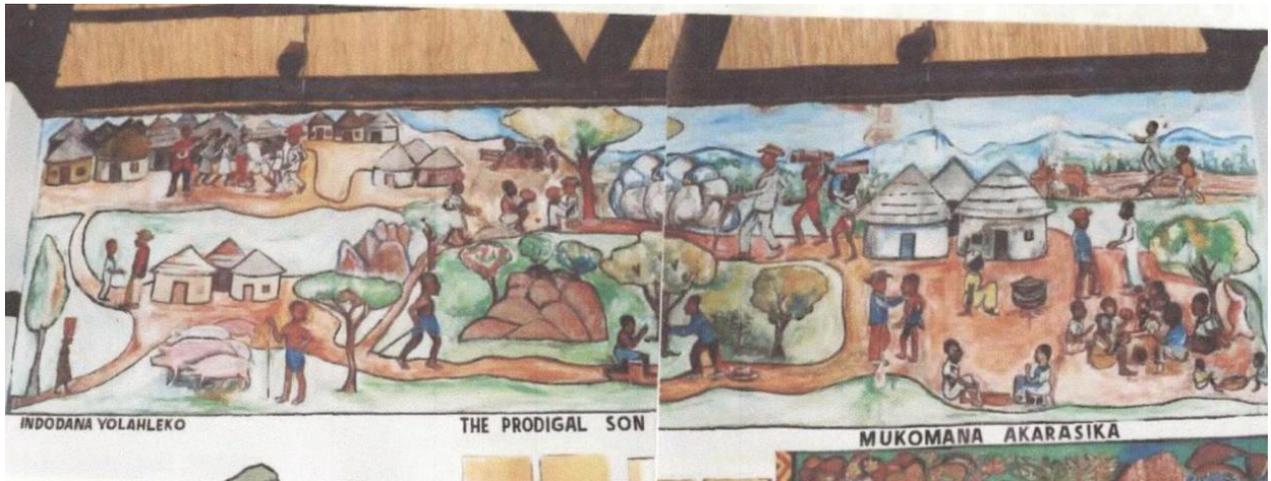
Edward Paterson, *The Ascended Christ Blesses his Disciples* (1939).

**Fig 2**



Students doing handwork.

Fig 3



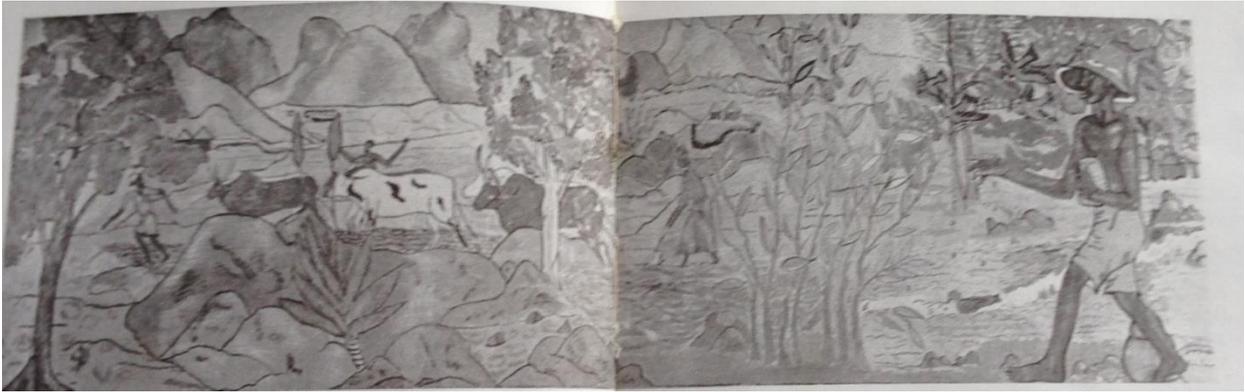
Elliot Dhlula, *The Prodigal Son* [n.d].

Fig 4



[Anon], *Good Samaritan* [n.d].

**Fig 5**



Abiathar Simangola, *The Sower* (1946).

**Fig 6**



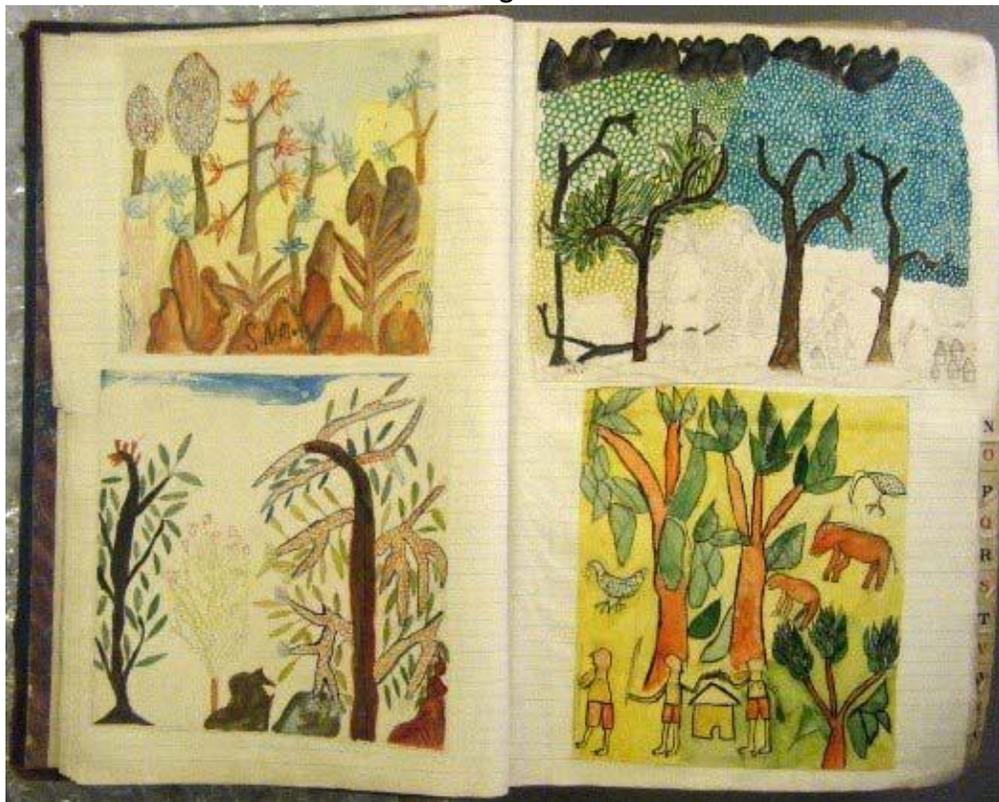
Anon, untitled Cyrene painting (1939-1945)

**Fig 7**



Anon, untitled Cyrene painting [n.d. but in 1939-1945 folios]

**Fig 8**



Anon, untitled Cyrene student art [n.d.]

**Fig 9**



Photographed Serima church (2016).

**Fig 10**



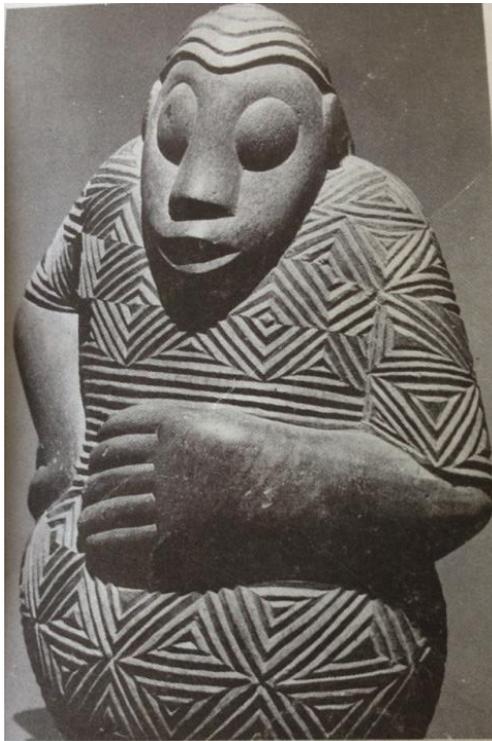
One of the carvings in the sanctuary with scenes from the old and new testament [late 1950s]

**Fig 11**



Lady's altar showing the arches and part of the wall paintings depicting the Last Supper [early 1960s]

**Fig 12**



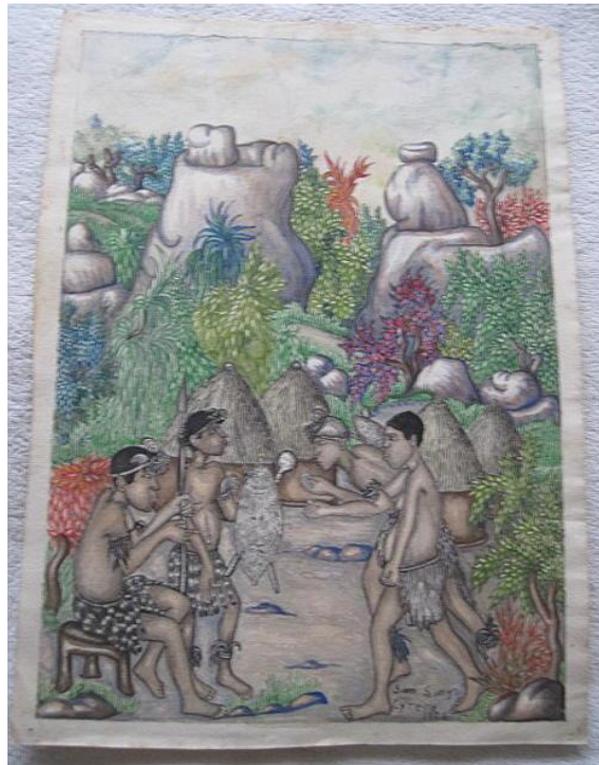
Nicholas Mukomberanwa, *Man* (1969).

Fig 13



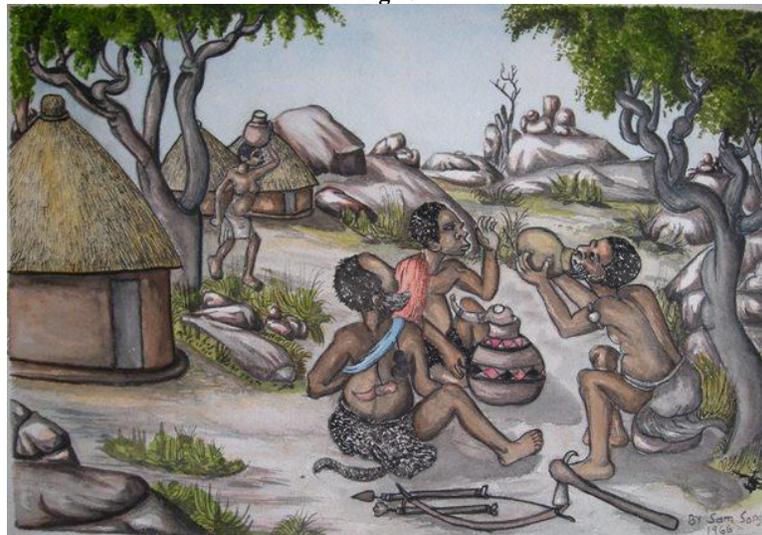
View of the chapel dedicated to the Martyrs of Uganda [early 1960s]

**Fig 14**



Samuel Songo, Untitled (1956).

**Fig 15**



Samuel Songo, Untitled (1966)

**Fig 16**



Samuel Songo, *Mother and child* (1948).

**Fig 17**



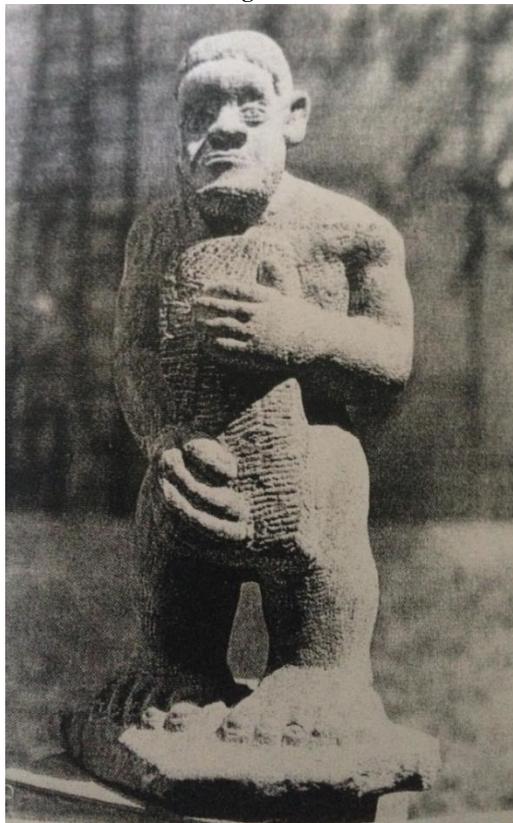
From left to right, Lazarus Khumalo, *Ndebele Warrior*; Sam Songo, *Man with a thorn & Good Shepherd* (1950/51).

**Fig 18**



Samuel Songo, *The Prodigal Son* (1954).

**Fig 19**



Lazarus Khumalo, *Moses with the commandments* (1960).

**Fig 20**



Lazarus Khumalo, *Witch Doctor* [n. d].

**Fig 21**



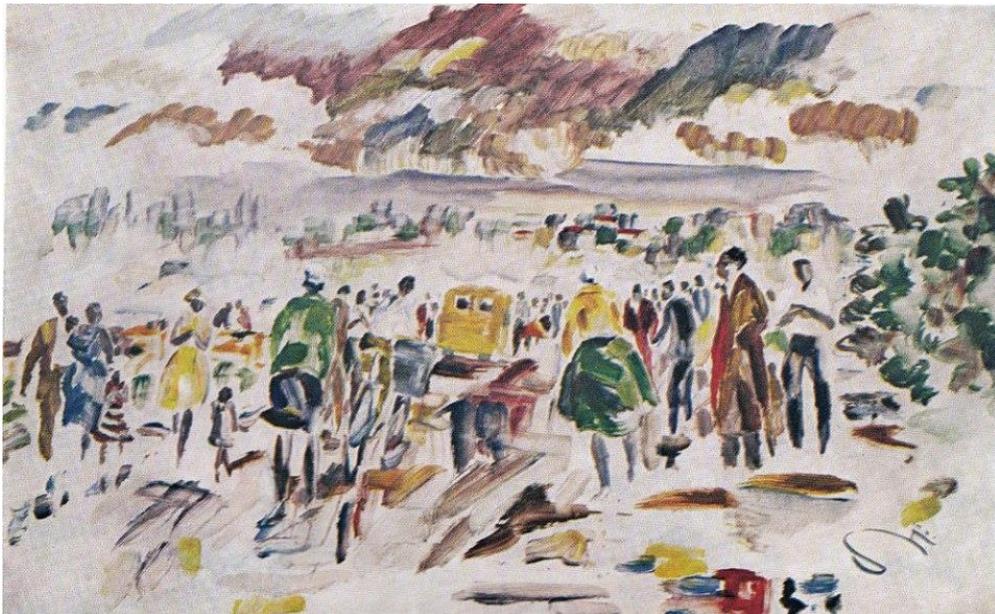
Kingsley Sambo, *Dancers* (1962).

Fig 22



Kingsley Sambo, *City Night Life* (n. d.).

Fig 23



Kingsley Sambo, *After the Rain, Township* (1962)

**Fig 24**



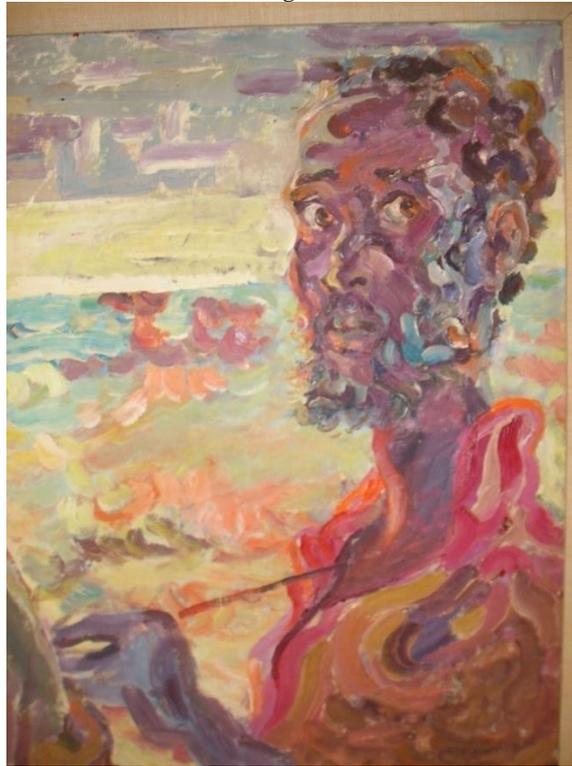
Kingsley Sambo, *Sipo and Nandi* (1965).

**Fig 25**



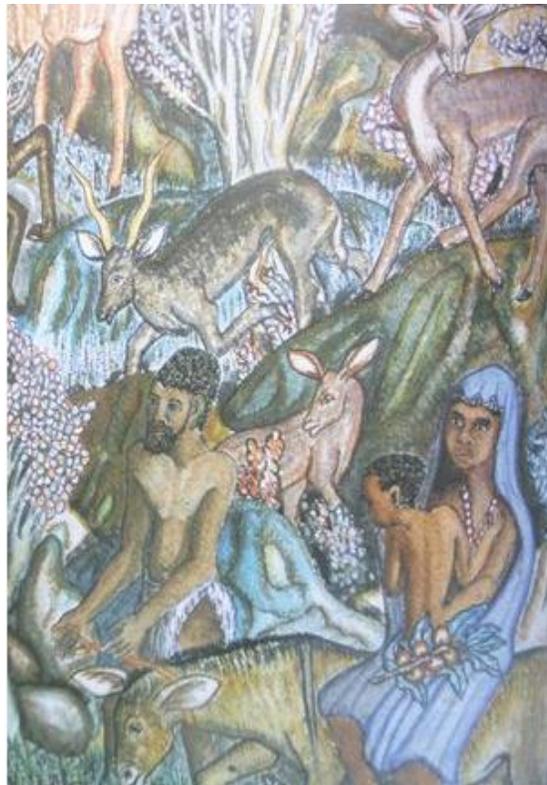
Kingsley Sambo, *At the Mine* (n. d.).

**Fig 26**



Kingsley Sambo, *Self-Portrait* (1974)

**Fig 27**



Livingstone Sango, *Escape into Egypt* (1949).

**Fig 28**



Adam Madebe, *Ploughman* (1993)

**Fig 29**



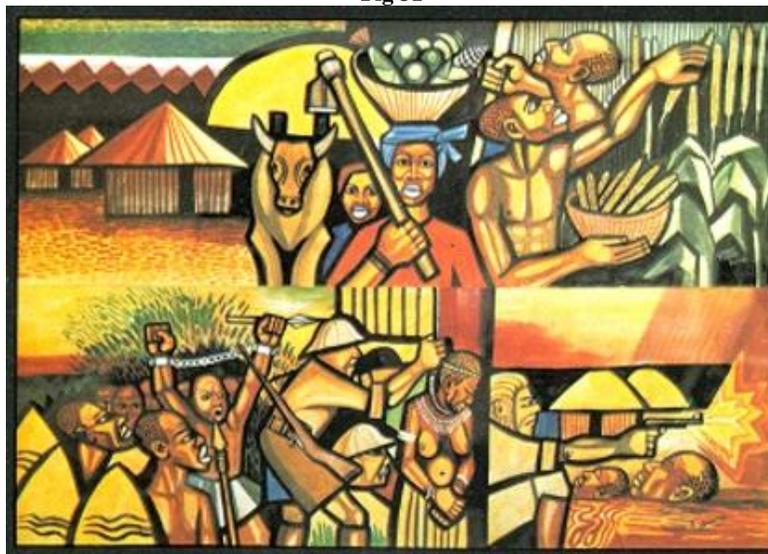
AdamMadebe, *Construction Workers* (1993)

**Fig 30**



DavidNdhlovu, *Tiredman* (1985).

**Fig 31**



GeorgeNene, *Liberation Part Two* (1985).

**Fig 32**



Nicholas Mukomberanwa, Carved angels on the upper part of the church tower (1959).

**Fig 33**



Nicholas Mukomberanwa, Angels in the chapel (1959/1960)

**Fig 34**



Nicholas Mukomberanwa, *Mother and Child* (1965).

**Fig 35**



Nicholas Mukomberanwa, *Two Children* [n. d].

**Fig 36**



Nicholas Mukomberanwa, *Beggar* (1982)

**Fig37**



Nicholas Mukomberanwa, *Corrupting Power of Money* (1985).

**Fig 38**



Nicholas Mukomberanwa, *The Corrupting Power of Money* (1986).

**Fig 39**



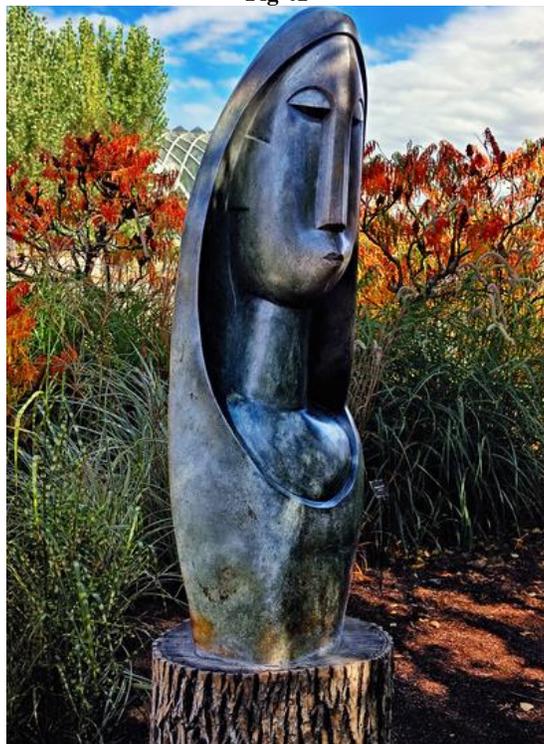
Nicholas Mukomberanwa, *Greed and Too Many Preachers* (1986).

**Fig 40**



Nicholas Mukomberanwa, *Mediator* (1986).

**Fig 41**



Nicholas Mukomberanwa, *Woman of Wisdom* (1987).

**Fig 42**



Nicholas Mukomberanwa, *Brothers* (1986).

**Fig 43**



Nicholas Mukomberanwa, *Widow* (1988).

Fig 44



Nicholas Mukomberanwa, *Madora (Mupani worm)* [1990s]

Fig 45



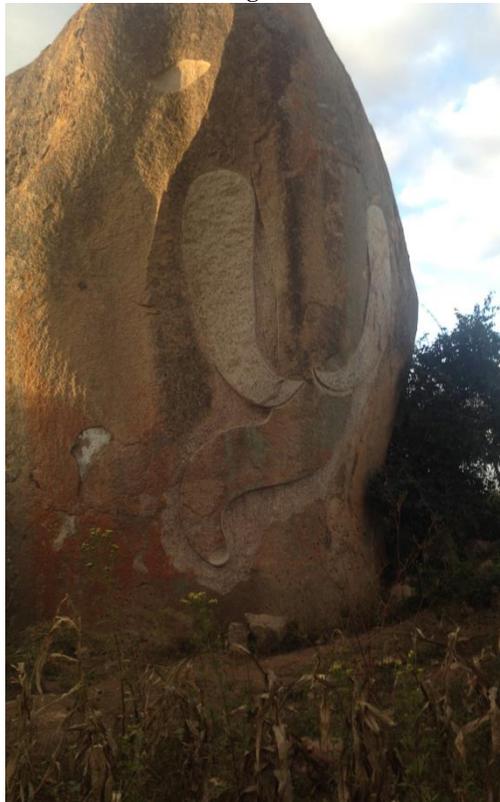
Nicholas Mukomberanwa, *Njuzu (Water Spirit)* [1990s].

**Fig 46**



Nicholas Mukomberanwa, *The Law Givers* (1998/1999).

**Fig 47**



Nicholas Mukomberanwa, *Elephant Kopje* [1990s].

**Fig 48**



Joseph Ndandarika, *Magic Bird* (1962).

**Fig 49**



Joseph Ndandarika *The Mudzimu Bull* (1977).

**Fig 50**



Joseph Ndandarika, *Together* (1973).

**Fig 51**



Joseph Ndandarika, *Beggar Woman* (1973).

**Fig 52**



Joseph Ndandarika, *Mother and Child* [n.d].