

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF FOUR
PAINTERS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF
CONTEMPORARY ZAMBIAN PAINTING FROM
1950 to 1997

RESEARCH ESSAY

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ABSTRACT

This study presents an analysis of the contribution of four painters to the development of contemporary Zambian painting, from 1950 to 1997.

This is preceded by a brief history of Zambian painting, including Bushmen rock painting and early Bantu art, which is followed by an account of the way western influence, introduced by the white man, started changing the style of painting in the country as it began to affect indigenous artists. In the work of artists who began painting from about 1900 to 1950, both western and traditional stylistic influences can be seen.

While the painters whose work is analysed in this thesis had some knowledge of Zambian art before 1950, they were mainly influenced by western ideas of painting. From a list of more than ten painters of this period from 1950 to 1997, I selected: Gabriel Ellison, Cynthia Zukas, Henry Tayali and Stephen Kappata because I know them personally and therefore had access to them and their work, which facilitated my analysis of their work and its contribution to Zambian painting.

This analysis takes the form of four chapters, one for each artist, in which relevant biographical and educational background is outlined, followed by an analysis of examples of work. Finally, ways in which each painter, through exposure to the Zambian public and artistic community, contributed to further development in Zambian painting, are emphasised.

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INTRODUCTION

The history of westernised Zambian painting starts from about the middle of the 20th Century, with the arrival of Europeans, who formed the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. This does not mean that before this, there was no painting in Zambia, nor that Zambia had, prior to this, been uninhabited. Fagan (1966, p.1) mentions that the country was inhabited by Bantu people who had settled there in the 17th Century, having displaced Stone Age Bushmen and Pygmies. The later had left behind them a legacy of rock painting, while the Bantu groups had developed various arts and crafts of their own.

Literature on Zambian painting includes material published in the mid 1960s and the 1970s by Fagan (1966) and Willett (1971), who both focused on rock painting and traditional craft. Willett for instance, gives us an example of rock painting of the Chifumbwa stream shelter in Zambia being *covered with highly schematic engravings of parallel lines, of inverted U's with a downline down the centre and some traces of paint* (pp. 58 to 59). Painting here, he says is a *single stone industry, called the Nachikufan I, was found in the deposit, which was covered with sterile sand which hid the engraving: the radiocarbon date was 4357 ± 250 BC (± 663)* (pp. 58 to 59). Willett refers to rock painting at Nakapapula, in Serenje which dates back to AD 770± 100, where there are walls painted with naturalistic painting overlaid by schematic motifs.

Fagan gives us more details of the sites of rock painting in Zambia, while Gillon (1984) mentions paintings and engravings in caves and open shelters in Zambia as non-representational and abstract in design (p. 50).

More recently, however, Zambian rock painting has been researched by Benjamin Smith, and his findings were published in 1997. Smith's field of study is mainly the rock painting of Kasama consisting of naturalistic and abstract motifs (1997).

Contemporary Zambian painting is not native to Zambia. Zambian artists learned this style of painting from scratch, when it was introduced into Zambia by Europeans, who convinced local artists that this was the type of art they ought to emulate. This necessitated some sort of formal art training and the adoption of western media, such as oil paints, acrylic paints and so on.

Prior to this, painting in Zambia had been tribal. Materials used and training were indigenous. Training was through apprenticeship and traditions were carried over from parents and relatives to younger generations of artists. Local, raw materials used included yellow ochre. White and red came from riverside clay, green from crushed leaves, black from soot and charcoal, brown from the bark of trees and grey from ash. These pigments were completely different from many western pigments.

Tribal art consisted mainly of mural painting and carving, much of which was done for utility and decorative purposes as well as for leisure activities. These were images painted on huts and other architectural structures.

In addition to mural painting, body painting, which was for ceremonial and ritual purposes, was practiced. The main features of mural and body painting are vertical and horizontal black and white or coloured lines both regular and irregular.

Contemporary painting in Zambia emerged soon after the beginning of the Federation. This can partly be attributed to the fact that some Zambian artists were of European origin and this heritage formed a natural basis for their art. Two of these artists who are to be discussed in this essay belong in this category: Gabriel Ellison, and Cynthia S. Zukas.

But, during this same period, following federation, a number of tribal Zambian painters began to show the influence of European art in their work. These include Henry Tayali, Mutumweno Yeta, Patson Lombe, Kafungulwa Mubitana, Dafton Nyondo, John Kasapo, Remmy Sichalwe, Akwila Thompson Simpasa and Stephen Kappata. Of these, the contribution to Zambian art by Henry Tayali and Stephen Kappata will be discussed in this essay.

My intention in this essay is to analyse contemporary Zambian painting of the period 1950 to 1997 in order to show how the four painters selected for discussion adapted imported media and concepts to satisfy their individual needs, within their Zambian contexts, as well as to satisfy their market needs. In the process, all four artists made significant contributions to the development of the art emerging during and after the period of the Federation.

My own interest in this topic began during the late 1970s and early 1980s when I became a practicing painter, and I became interested in writing about painting in Zambia when I discovered what a paucity of information there was on this subject. What information was to be found was that published in national newspapers and magazines in the form of profiles on artists and their activities. At that time, nothing in book form had yet been published. Such publications have been very recent and include Macmillan's 1997 writing about Zambian painting, focusing on Stephen Kappata's career (Macmillan, 1997, from p.20 to 32) and Cameron's 1988 publication *women= masks - Initiation Arts in North Western Province, Zambia* (Cameron, 1988).

Meanwhile, early in 1980, when I started teaching art in a primary school and exhibiting my paintings and meeting artists, I began collecting data about painting in Zambia. By 1991, I had started collating this data, much of which consisted of newspaper cuttings and magazine features and focused on individual artists who were exhibiting their work or were involved in workshops.

My access to information improved after 1987, while teaching art in a secondary school, and after 1991, when I became a part-time gallery assistant at Mpapa Gallery and, in 1992 when Mpapa Gallery became a trust: *Mpapa Art Trust Committee*, and I became a member of the board. These positions brought me into direct contact with artists, their aims and their work. In addition, information kept by the gallery on the artists exhibiting there was available to me, while I continued to collect data from sources such as catalogues and newspapers. Being on the board of the Trust also involved me in the selection of artists and work for exhibitions. This process included interviewing artists and discussing art issues with collectors and members of the public in general.

Further involvement included my appointment, in 1994, to the position of lecturer in painting and

History of Art at Evelyn Hone College in Lusaka, conferring upon me some kind of expert status, as well as assisting in the organisation of international art workshops in Zambia from 1993 to 1995, to which Zambian and other artists were invited for the purpose of providing them with more opportunity to work with other painters.

With regard to my selection of artists who have contributed to Zambian art, my choice was narrowed down to the four already mentioned, as I took a particular interest in them and also found it relatively easy to gain access to information about them. In the late 1980s, I became aware of Kappata's work and also got to know him personally. In 1991, while in England, Kappata stayed with me and I interviewed him, as I had already decided to write about painting in Zambia. During this period, Kappata was a well - known painter and known in Zambia for his naive painting.

I had heard about Ellison as far back as the late 1960s, having seen her paintings reproduced in newspapers and magazines. Later I saw her actual paintings in Lusaka where she has been exhibiting from the late 1940s to the present. I have followed her progress during the last twelve years and have come to appreciate her work, as have the people of Zambia.

The work of both Kappata and Ellison has proved popular, making their exhibitions successful from a sales point of view as well as from a critical point of view.

I heard about Tayali at about the same time as I heard about Gabriel. I became familiar with his paintings in the 1970s, and met him in 1982 after which we became friends. This meant that I got to know a lot about him and his paintings, which I appreciated. For over a decade and half, he was appreciated by Zambians as the *giant* of art in Zambia. As is the case of Kappata and Ellison, his work was popular and sold well.

I heard about Zukas in the late 1970s when Mpapa had just opened. Later, in 1982, I met her during an art workshop in Lusaka. From that time, I got to know her work, read about her and heard about the role she had played in Zambian painting circles which included a long spell teaching art to secondary school students and membership of a number of founding committees

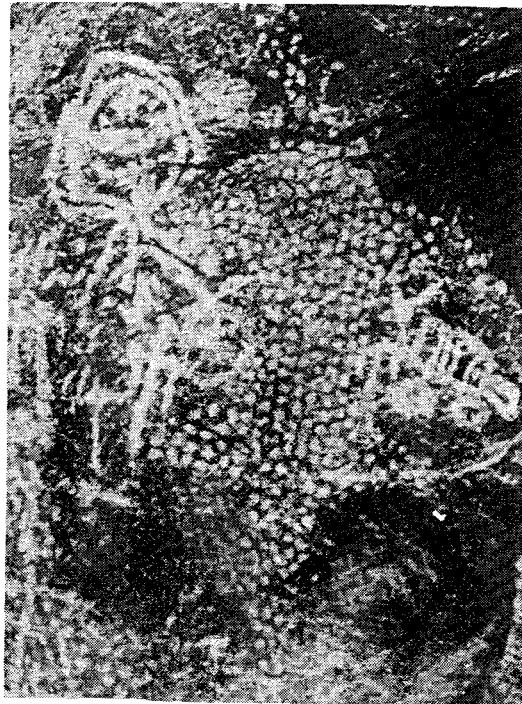
which promote art.

Another reason for my decision to write about these four artists was that their paintings and careers have several things in common. Their paintings show meticulous draftsmanship, striking compositions and effective use of colour. They have all presented art to the Zambian and international public for over a decade through exhibitions, and their work forms part of both public and private collections. Their paintings are original as well as successful in the sense of selling well. In their work generally, they have displayed intellect and they have seen themselves as historians and teachers of art. Their styles and techniques have evolved from realism to semi-
abstraction and abstraction and back again. They have all inspired other artists in Zambia.

BACKGROUND

To fully appreciate the development of contemporary westernised painting in Zambia, it is necessary to mention earlier Zambian art forms, such as rock painting and the art of the Bantu people. The contrast between these indigenous art forms and the work to be discussed in the other chapters of this analysis will highlight the significant contributions made by Gabriel Ellison, Cynthia Zukas, Henry Tayali and Stephen Kappata to recent Zambian art.

According to Fagan (1966, p. 63 to 80), rock painting was humans earliest known artistic expression in Zambia and dates as far back as the late stone age of between 11,350 B.C. and 7,700 B.C. and according to Phillipson (1983, p. 14), the rock painting executed by Iron Age people were associated with ritual and religious ceremonies. These were mainly schematic designs whose meaning and purpose are not clearly understood as they are abstract. One example given here by Phillipson is a *white painting* at Makoma and Thakwe, in Eastern Province which was done in connection with puberty ceremonies. (Fig. 1)



- Fig. 1. *White painting* at Makoma and Thandwe. Phillipson W.D. (1983, p.56)

Fagan (p. 63) mentions that the people who executed rock painting were mainly Bushmen and Pygmies, locally known as *ba mwambwenakwi* or *bakafula - Bemba* (meaning little people), and the distribution of these paintings, as explained by Fagan, is limited to areas where there are suitable rock surfaces on which to paint, that is rocks which are not directly exposed to wind, sunlight and rain because they would weather, stain, roughen or their surfaces would be covered with lichen and be destroyed. Such surfaces would therefore be found in caves or rock shelters or overhangs. The map in Fig. 2 shows the distribution of Zambian rock painting. (Fagan, 1966, p. 58).

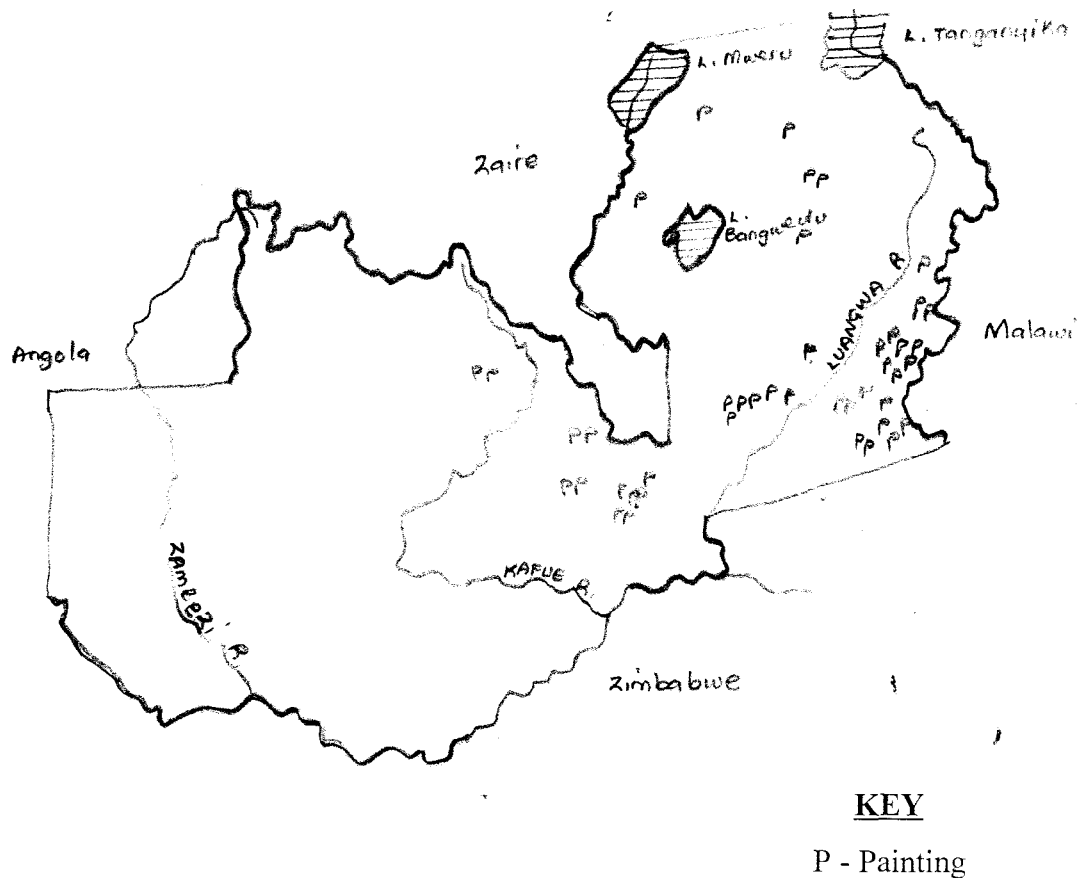


Fig. 2. Known sites of rock paintings in Zambia. (Fagan 1966, p.58)

According to Fagan (pp 65 to 66) and Phillipson (p. 14) rock painting in Zambia falls into two groups: a naturalistic group, consisting of recognizable representations of men, animals and inanimate objects, and the other group, by far the larger of the two, consisting of motifs generally known as schematic. Examples of these can be seen in Fig. 3 and Fig. 4.

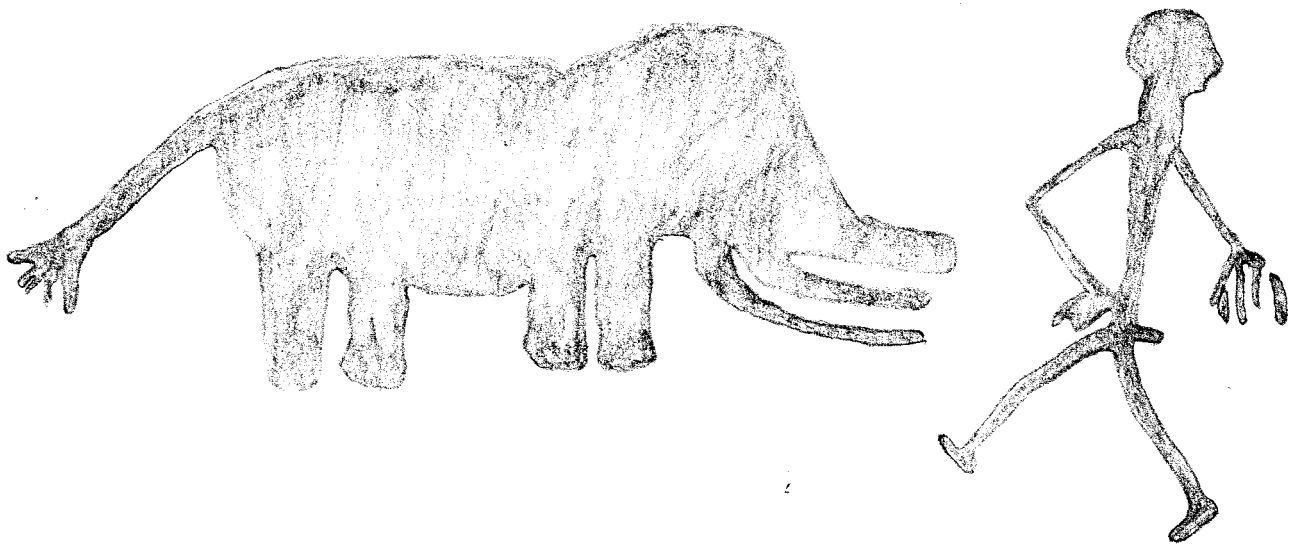


Fig. 3. Black naturalistic painting at Nachikufu - After J.D. Clark, 1959
(Fagan, 1966, p. 68).

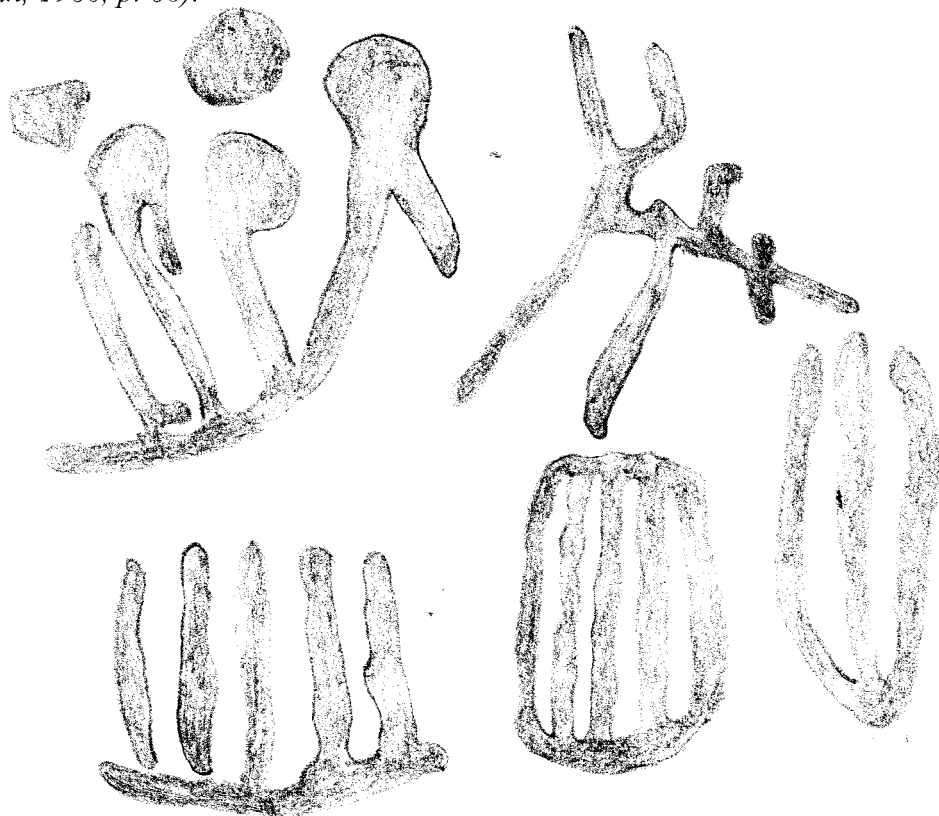


Fig. 4. Schematic art west of the Luangwa: a. red 'boat shaped' grid at Nakapapula. The dots are later than the main motif; b. abstract red motif at Miyenje, 2 miles west of Nakapapula; c. red 'open' grid at Miyenje; d. red 'open' grid at Nsalu cave; e. red 'closed' grid at Nsalu (Fagan, 1966, p. 71).

It seems that, in some cases, the earliest paintings were naturalistic and were followed by schematic works - possibly as a result of a gradual transition brought about by increased stylisation (p.66). In other cases there is evidence that the reverse occurred. (Fagan, p. 77)

As already mentioned, most of these paintings were done by Bushmen and Pygmies as well as by some very early Bantu people whose appearance in Zambia brought considerable change and affected rock painting.

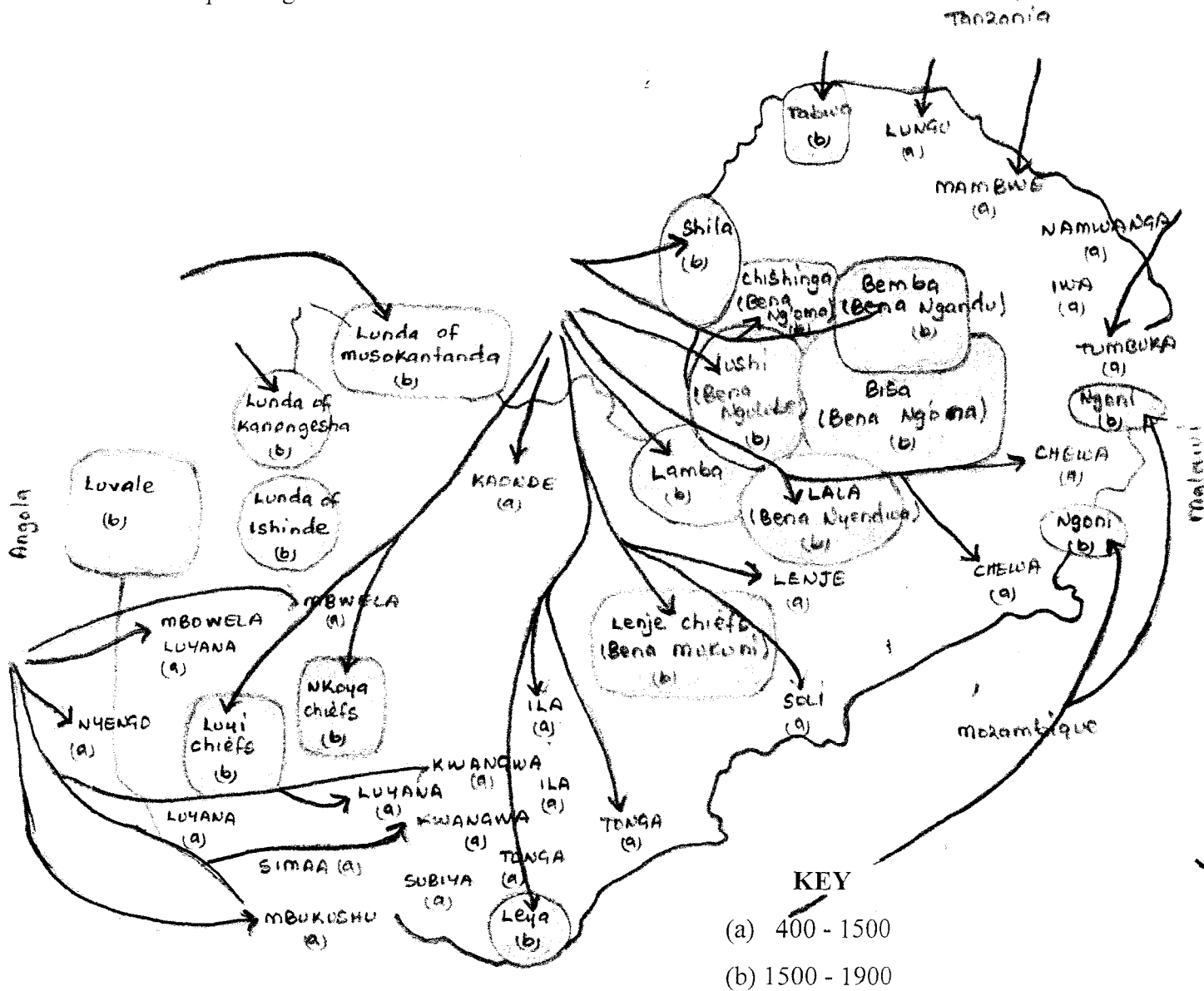


Fig. 5, Bantu Bo 73 - Origins of Zambian tribes (Zambian Heritage News, 1994)

The way in which the early Bantu people affected rock painting was a result of their lifestyle which was different from that of the Bushmen and Pygmies. The Bantu people introduced farming, domestication of animals and new methods of food production. In the process, Bushmen and Pygmies were often displaced and sometimes killed. Thus, their art could not continue as before. This occurred around the 17th and 18th centuries. (Phillipson, p. 15)

According to Phillipson (p. 16), the culture of these early Bantu people appeared to have lasted for over fifteen hundred years until many new Bantu groups arrived and settled in their present areas, as a result of mass migration from the Lunda and Luba Empires of Southern Zaire, from 1500 to 1750. Coming from different parts of the continent, these later Bantu people formed what is now Zambia. (Fig. 5)

Phillipson (pp 16 to 17) shows that these migrations were on a small scale and in fact generally included small groups of individuals, each of which established itself as a ruling clan or lineage over a section of the indigenous early Bantu people and Bushmen and Pygmies. Thus, new political, economic and cultural systems were established. In the process, Bushman and Pygmy rock painting declined, yet, because intermarriage took place, there was some assimilation of their artistic style into that of the newcomers, in spite of the introduction of new cultural patterns which included the powerful association of chiefs with the welfare of their people and with fertility of men, animals and the land.

Roberts, (Fagan, p. 109), cites the Bemba as a link between the newcomers and the older inhabitants. The Bemba settled in a country already populated, including Bushmen-type hunters who had continued to survive on the nearby plateau. The Bemba spoke of finding people who lived along river banks and cultivated crops in mounds, and a way of life resembling that of the early Bantu people. Thus, it appears, that, in this case, three groups interacted with one another.

The new Bantu groups in Zambia thus found existing rock painting, and because they were influenced and amused by the style, did not destroy but emulated this art, but, at the same time, they adapted it, as can be seen in examples given later in this chapter. Thus, rock painting was not lost or destroyed. In fact many sites were discovered by accident as migration continued.

The arrival of new groups of Bantu during the nineteenth century in Zambia coincided with the arrival of diverse people including the white man, who came in the role of missionary, explorer, and doctor. Arab slave traders arrived as well.

According to Phillipson, (p. 17) traders from Mozambique reached Kazembe's town on the Luapula in 1778. The Ngoni arrived from the South-east during the 1830s and raided extensively in the eastern half of the country before settling in the Chipata area several decades later. Kololo from the South ruled in Lozi country for almost a century before being overthrown in 1864. In 1851 the Scottish missionary - explorer David Livingstone became the first European to visit the upper Zambezi valley and his explorations continued until his death in 1873, and brought this part of Central Africa to the attention of the British Government and public. During the time of Livingstone's explorations, Arabs and Swahili raided for slaves and ivory in what are now the Northern, Eastern and Copperbelt Provinces of Zambia, while the Portuguese and Chikunda penetrated the middle Zambezi valley on similar raids during the 1870s and 1880s. Traders from Angola also reached the Western areas of the country at approximately the same time, while British and South African hunters, traders and prospectors began to arrive from the South in steadily increasing numbers.

One of these groups was headed, in 1890, by Cecil Rhodes of the British South African Company, which sent agents North of the Zambezi to seek concessions or ties with African rulers.

This process of discovery and acquisition, then political administration, finally created Northern Rhodesia as a single territory, in 1911, with Livingstone as capital. Meanwhile, between the arrival of the Bantu and the formation of Northern Rhodesia, traditional painting came to include murals and decorations of utensils and clothes. The arrival of the white man introduced another influence into Zambian art - that of western painting.

Prior to this, Bantu art had been mainly associated with ceremonial functions such as initiation rites as well as the decoration of utility objects. Examples of this traditional art included

sculptural objects, clay models, body art and mural painting, as can be seen in Fig. 6 to 11, ranging from an elaborate plaited hairdo, to pots with specific functions related to their decoration, a wall painting with symbols, a figure without arms, and a mask. (Corbeil, 1982, p. 19 to 44)



Fig. 6. Woman's hair coiffure. The drawing above shows a woman who has dressed her hair in a tradition practiced by Bantu continued by women today. Mothers and daughters spend hours plaiting this sort of hair style patterning it in intricate designs. Girls too, both in villages and towns spend much of their free time plaiting each other's hair. The main function of such a hairdo was aesthetic. (Homes, 1988, P. 91)

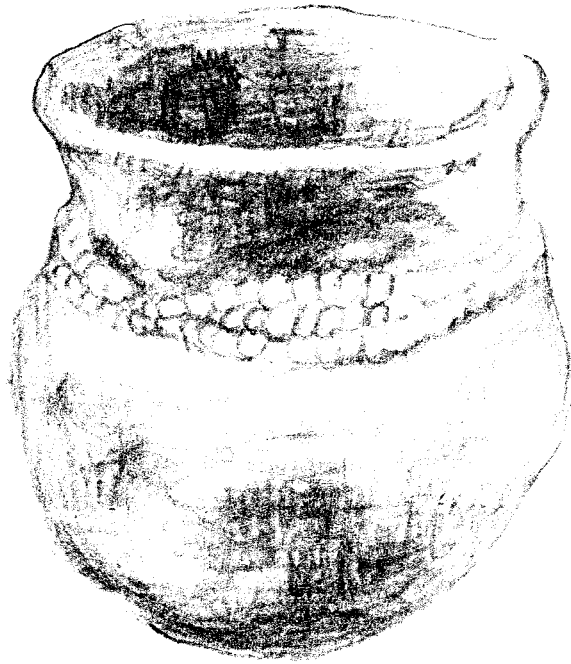


Fig. 7. Nsonge. A small clay pot with white beads round its neck. 'Nsonge,' is a kind of millet symbolising an offering to the ancestors, who are being asked for favours or being thanked for what has been obtained from them. (Corbeil, 1982, p.19)



Fig. 8. Lelo tulebucsha. The pot is customarily made from clay, and for aesthetic purposes, is decorated with conventional lines. It is utilitarian, but is also used as a symbol during initiation ceremonies. (Corbeil, 1982, p. 26)

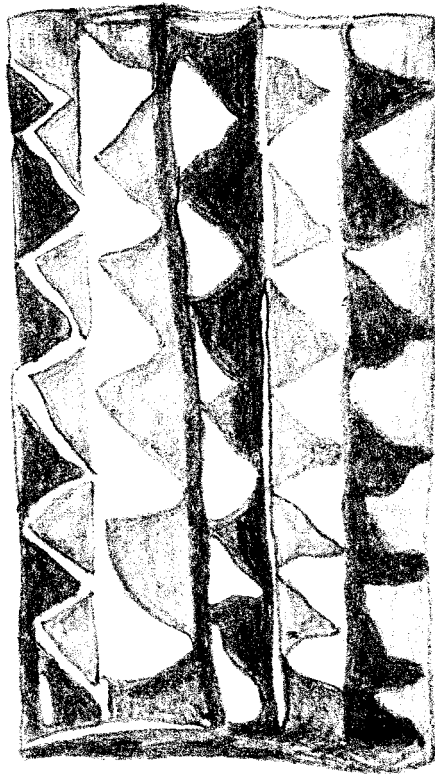
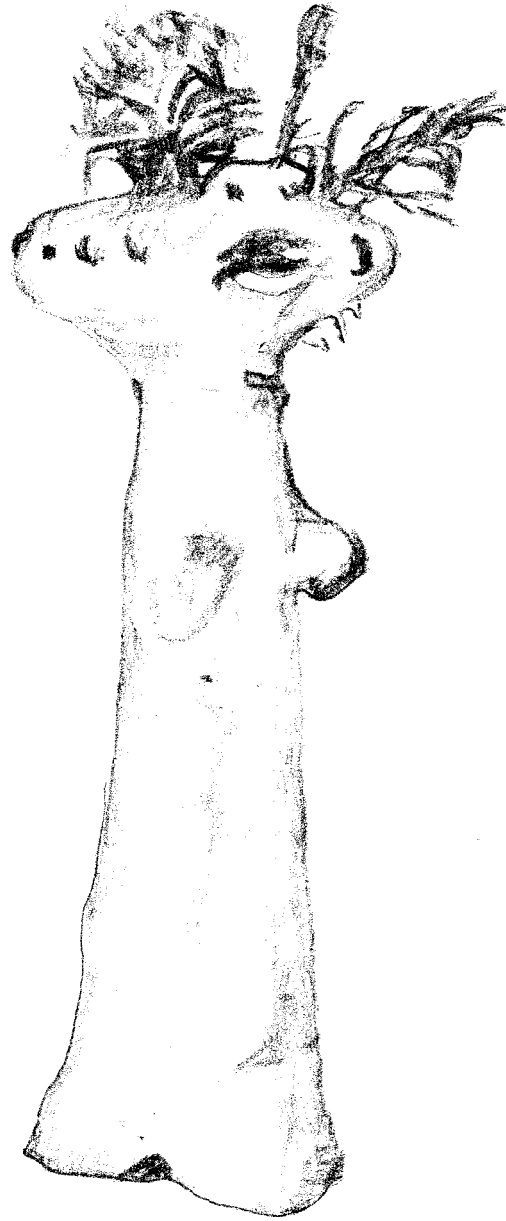


Fig. 9. Mushintililo, the Target. Meaning the colours, from left to right: first column, black and red; second column, white and red; third column, white and black; fourth column, white and red and fifth column, black and red. Wall paintings such as this were used as decorations for any newly built house or for redecoration. Sometimes, as with the Bemba tribe, it is also used as a ceremonial symbol by the mid-wife as a call for the future husband. All the colours had meanings and they meant as follows: cipau, white clay found at the river side means fertility, life, health, rebirth and sexual purity; Nkaka, red earth found on dry land means masculinity, sickness and menstrual blood; Kafisha, black mud means blackness, symbolic or ritual death and sexual impurity; and Mutuntula, yellow earth from a river means bufuba (jealousy). (Corbel, 1982, p. 40)



*Fig. 10. **Cilume cipuba, the stupid husband.** This is a figure of a man with his head covered with beautiful feathers, but with no arms. A sculpture like this was used for various purposes, magical or ceremonial, or for decoration as well as for girls' marriage ceremonies meaning "a man who does not work during the day and want his wife at night is a fool". it is made of clay or curved in wood. (Corbeil, 1982, p.44)*



*Fig. 11. This mask is called a **Makisi** and is made by the Lunda. These masks were meant to be used in ceremonies, one of them being boys' initiation. Materials used are bark cloth supported by a stick frame and painted in black, brown or white. Colours and designs used on the mask are typical of Bantu traditional art. (Zambia Heritage News, back cover, 1994)*

After 1911, Northern Rhodesia remained under the control of the British South African Company, until 1924, when it was handed over to the British Government. Painting still remained traditional but was slowly influenced by the western painting style of resident white painters, about whom little is known. (Phillipson, 1983, p. 18)

From 1924, when Northern Rhodesia became a protectorate, under direct colonial official rule, the country's artistic output was overshadowed as a result of the wealth exploited from the country

being diverted for the improvement of Southern Rhodesia. Art education in Northern Rhodesia suffered because of the limited attention being given to it. Thus, painters who were born during this time and who later created the backbone of present Zambian painting, went to Southern Rhodesia and South Africa, and overseas for art education while some blacks trained in art as apprentices or, if lucky left the country to receive art education. This was when artistic traits confronted each other and influenced each other. But, in the end, western ideas predominated.

Amongst the painters of this generation, who contributed to the development of contemporary Zambian painting, were Gabriel, Cynthia, Henry and Stephen.

CHAPTER 1

GABRIEL ELLISON

Gabriel Ellison, who is of European origin, was born in Lusaka on 23 September, 1930, in Northern Rhodesia when it was a protectorate under the direct rule of the British colonial government. Because her family traveled extensively during Gabriel's school years she was fortunate enough to attend school in both Northern and Southern Rhodesia. But, during this time, art education received very little attention, and artists had to go to other countries to study art. Therefore, although, as a young artist to be, Gabriel was inspired by rural Zambia, where her parents had made their home, she left for Britain after completing her matric. There, she enrolled in private studios in order to study art.

Gabriel had, as a child, developed a particular attachment to the district between Mumbwa and Namwala at a gold mine called Matala where her family lived for many years among the indigenous Ila tribe, and where she learnt about the Ila way of life, learning to speak Ila, which she has now lost as this is not a language widely spoken in Lusaka where she now lives and works. Likewise, she no longer lives close to the Ila people. But, the seeds of her life-long interest in rural Zambia were sown in Namwala and became the inspiration for her landscape painting.

Gabriel's artistic career started with portrait painting, progressing later into other subjects such as landscape and living natural objects. On her return to Zambia after her studies in Britain, she renewed her rural contacts while working for the Zambia Information Service, which required extensive travel all over Zambia. Once again, she visited several rural areas and liked the landscapes there, making drawings of them and painting them later. She also developed an interest in animals and birds.

In her landscapes Gabriel uses a conventional Western landscape style, but applies it to her Zambian subject-matter which had not been represented before. Thus, although this style is not particularly original in Europe, it has provided Gabriel with a means of expression for the wealth of subject-matter surrounding her in Zambia. Her paintings expressively represent the unspoiled

Zambian rural bush and its inhabitants. Although these landscapes and her paintings of animals and birds are more realistic in style than her earlier British examples, they retain an element of the expressionism she developed in Britain.

An example of her earlier, British, approach is her 1961 *Suffolk*, (Fig. 12) which was painted, during or shortly after her apprenticeship. This work distinctly shows her interest in the rhythms of nature. Gabriel says that she made sketches of this scene and then completed the rest of the painting in the studio, which can be seen in her expressionistic treatment of a typical English village landscape. In both composition and technique, Gabriel has created a sense of unease, even desolation, of a bleak, wintry day, with the only signs of human activity being in the form of two vaguely defined figures who do little to relieve the solitude of the scene. The main building shows white-washed walls with greyish patches suggesting age and neglect and this adds to the expressiveness of the work. Other elements which complete this expression include the vegetation which is suggestive of the cold weather. The carpet of the grass is stiff as a result of the cold.



Fig. 12. *Suffolk*. 1961. Oil on canvas. About 60cm by 45cm. Artist's Collection. Lusaka.

In this composition, the main focus of attention is the area towards the centre. This has been achieved with devices which draw the viewer's eye away from the edges and corners of the

painting, and devices which concentrate the attention towards the central area.

Devices which draw the eye away from the edges are linear ones like the zig zag of the road, which starts in the right hand corner, makes a sharp bend in the middle of the painting passing in front of the *Rose Inn*, the red building next to the *Rose Inn*, and stops at the foot of the house in the far background. The orthogonals of the buildings on either side of the road converge towards the centre. The strong diagonals of the tree, together with the gable and corner of the *Rose Inn* form framing devices. The diagonal foreground plane, and the horizontal line of the trees and the buildings in the distance, also bring the viewer's attention back to the centre. The heightened luminosity is concentrated towards the centre, forming a rough oval of light surrounded by gloom.

The main building has been complemented with other buildings on the right. They have been made small to distinguish them from the more important Inn. They lean over so that the eye concentrates on the main features in the middle of the painting.

The foreground in the front of the Inn has been painted dramatically to enhance its visual impact. This sense of drama has been reinforced by other devices, such as the few, unevenly placed, poles. The whole painting has been executed in a rough technique. The way Gabriel applied the strokes of colour, such as the streak of vermilion, lends spontaneity, and expressiveness to the work. Even the way she has drawn and painted the dark silhouettes of the poles or the dark shadows along the border of the buildings, the road and the light poles, is quite rough, rather like sketching, and has an effect of an expressionistic painting, or like the beginning of a painting. The dark blue area which moves jaggedly up towards the corner of the *Rose Inn* adds to this rough impression, and to the expression of the painting.

The crude expressionism of *Suffolk*, was abandoned by Gabriel in her later, *Zambian* landscapes. Two later examples of her work show a refinement in the use of expressionistic devices. Compositions are more subtle, drawing more thoughtfully considered, colours subtly nuanced and technique more suave.

Although *Zambian* artists, since the 1950s, had painted rural *Zambian* subjects, portraying

observed scenes and stories, Gabriel's contemporaries emulated the descriptive and free style of her painting, once her style became well-known in Zambia.

A typical example of a Zambian rural landscape showing Gabriel's mature development of this genre, is *Early Morning*, Fig.13, (1983). It should be noted that Gabriel made sketches of the scene and completed the painting in her studio. Although many Zambian landscape painters



Fig. 13. Early Morning. 1983. Oil on Board. About 110cm by 80cm. Artist's Collection. Lusaka.

prefer to work from photographs, Gabriel prefers to have actual knowledge and emotional input from the subject.

The mood is characteristic of an early morning scene. Every feature looks fresh. The viewer feels drawn into this rural scene, to *walk* alongside this old fence, which has been created with a few tree branches. The fence, which seems disorderly, demarcates a measured perimeter of land. One line of barbed wire runs from pole to pole.

The underlying structure of this painting is subtle, compared with that of *Suffolk*. The fence serves

as an eye-catching foreground feature, which leads the eye to the pale, horizontal, middle ground, flanked by the grouped tree and huts on the left and the graceful tree on the right which serve to keep the viewer's attention within the frame. Delicate aerial perspective enhances the soft morning mood of the painting, as does the harmonious colour range.

An even more recent example of Gabriel's landscape painting is *The Red Earth In Zambia near Chalimbana*, Fig. 14, (1997). Fire had just passed through this bush with its dry grass, leaving bare the red earth. The burning took place to facilitate the hunting of rats and to prepare the land for cultivation before the first rains. The presence of people with dogs and a bird - probably a black-shouldered kite - suggests this.



Fig. 14. *The Red Earth In Zambia Near Chalimbana*. 1997. Acrylic on Board. 110cm by 80cm. Artist's Collection. Lusaka.

The main focus is the group of hunters and their dogs, placed almost in the centre of the painting, in a clearing. They are illuminated more than the other elements in the painting, and are placed as though passing along the edges of the burnt bush, which suggests that it is here that they may make a catch, since rats and other living creatures would be running away from the burning bushes to safety.

This focal point has been enhanced by the hill and the smokiness at its foot, as well as the brightly lit, curved, edge of the burnt earth, cradling the hunters. Darker features of bushes and trees on both sides of the composition create framing devices which focus the attention of the viewer towards the centre.

In this painting there is an angry atmosphere, a mood of pain for the grass, animals, and air in the foreground. But this painting also suggests that the ecosystem will resuscitate itself in the foreground suggestion of new shoots which will appear after a while.

This painting shows Gabriel's effective application of traditional European landscape conventions and techniques to Zambian subject-matter, which includes the landscape itself and a narrative about human and animal interaction with this landscape.

Landscape scenes have not been Gabriel's only subject-matter. She oscillates between landscapes and imaginative subject-matter. *Mad Child With Dandelions* Fig. 15, (1970), is an example of free expression in which her style and technique have been adapted to express a less literal subject.

This painting is a blend of observation and imagination. The title reinforces the fancifulness of the subject-matter, in which a child, a fairy and plants are strangely associated with one another. Such free association suggests symbolic meaning or Gabriel's personal vision. This can first of all be seen in the composition, in which neither plants nor child dominate. Instead, they float across a dreamlike surface and have been given equal attention. Secondly, the visionary nature of the subject can be seen in the conception of child, plants and fairy. The child consists of a disembodied head with wild strands of hair and an expression which is a cross between wonder and anxiety, and hands merely suggested with a few loose lines. The plants also seem disembodied and are too large in relation to the child. The presence of the small, barely defined fairy is perhaps the clue to the real subject of this painting - the world of the child, in which fantasy and reality mingle freely. Gabriel's technique and use of a softly nuanced harmonious colour range complement the dreaminess of this painting. Finally, this little painting shows how, with ordinary Western means at her disposal, Gabriel has been able to vary her approach towards subject-matter.



Fig. 15. *Mad Child With Dandelions*. 1970. Oil on Board. About 70cm by 40cm. Artist's Collection. Lusaka.

Gabriel's *Flower*, Fig.16, (1980), is another striking example of her fanciful style. It also shows her adventurous use of sand and cement with oil paint, instead of the straightforward use of oil or acrylics in the examples discussed so far.

The subject of this painting is a passiflora and two naturalistic ladybird beetles. Again, this painting reflects Gabriel's personal vision. Unlike *Mad Child With Dandelions*, there is hardly a composition. The large, dreamlike flower dominates almost the entire surface, with no indication of naturalistic environment. The background, stippled with sand, is a dense, murky neutral tone from which the wispy flower struggles to emerge. The petals of the flower have been almost modeled, with lots of texture, and tinted delicately with a blend of red, green and brown. The centre of the flower is the focal point of this painting, with its sensitively modeled, threadlike stamens and the two beetles. The application of pale blue over the texture modeling is dreamlike.

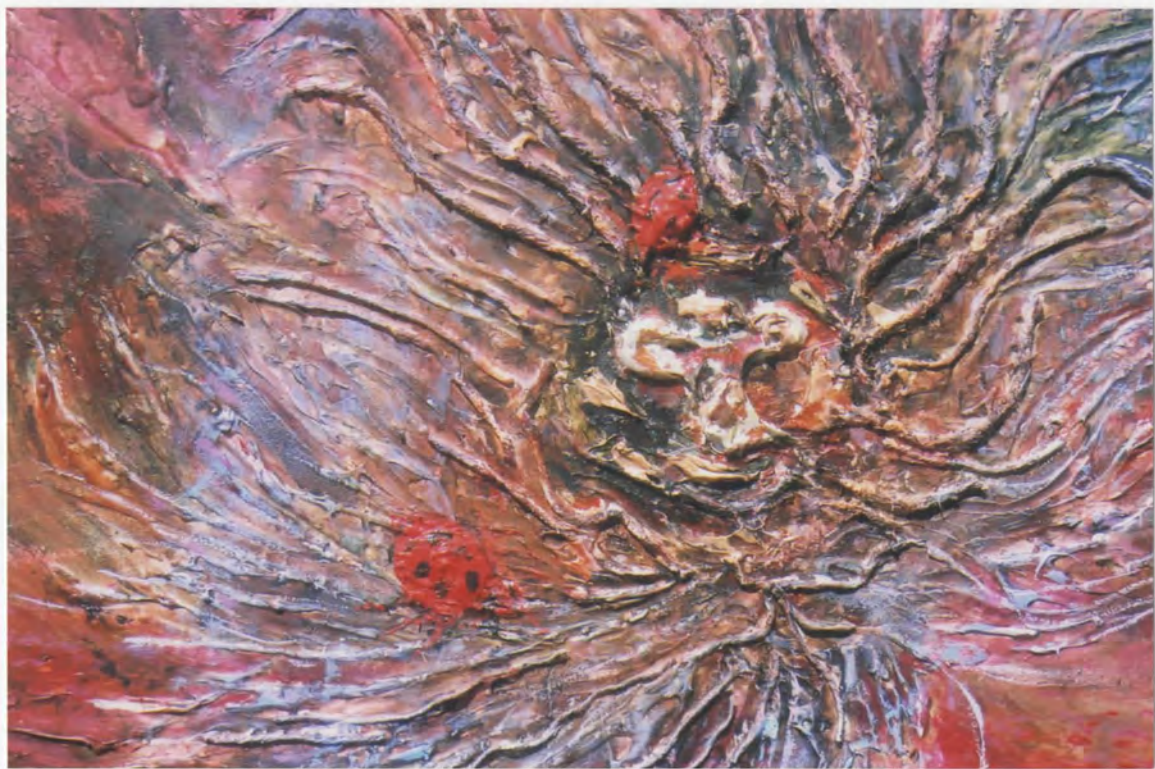


Fig.16. *The Passion Flower*. 1980s. Oil on Board. About 45cm by 30cm. Artists's Collection.
Lusaka.

It has been through her development of two artistic approaches that Gabriel has made a contribution to the development of painting in Zambia, dating back as far as 1948. It has also been her involvement with Zambian art institutions that has made her art known to other Zambian artists. She was involved in pioneering the Art Society in Zambia in 1948. Since then she has collaborated with other painters, especially her contemporaries.

During the existence of the Art Society, Gabriel exhibited with other painters, not only those from Zambia, but artists from all over the then Rhodesia and Nyasaland. These exhibitions were competitive - a factor Gabriel delighted in. Examples of some contemporaries she exhibited with and might have inspired, include: the late Tubayi Dube, Thompson Simpasa, the late Henry Tayali, and Patson Lombe. Recently, many younger painters have shown the influence of Gabriel's technique and style in their paintings. Style Kunda, Elisha Zulu and Maurice Musonda, are among these. This has been as a result of their seeing a lot of her exhibitions and sometimes receiving tutorials from her.

CHAPTER 2

CYNTHIA S. ZUKAS.

Cynthia Zukas was born on 19 March, 1931 in Cape Town of South African parents, but most of her childhood was spent in Johannesburg. Cynthia's natural talent as an artist emerged early while she attended primary and secondary school at Kingsmead in Johannesburg. Her enjoyment of practical art lessons at Kingsmead encouraged her to pursue art as her profession.

This resulted in Cynthia enrolling at the Michaelis School of Art, at the University of Cape Town, for a four year BA Fine Art course in 1948. Cynthia enjoyed her art training but, in response to the South African political environment at the start of apartheid era, with its racial inequalities, she developed a political consciousness which was later reflected in her paintings.

At the end of her training at Michaelis in 1952, Cynthia enrolled for a one year teachers' training course in London. While in London, she met Simon Zukas, a Zambian, whom she married in 1954, after which she settled down to become a full time house-wife and mother but had stopped painting. Cynthia arrived in Zambia, in 1964, after eleven years in London, to find a scene very different from the one she had left behind in South Africa. In Zambia, the political and social environment was free. Racial inequalities such as those in South Africa were diminishing, allowing social interaction between races.

In Zambia, Cynthia met a few fellow painters, especially Zambians, who had been to college in East Africa, and who had been drawn into jobs in the Zambian government, limiting the amount of painting they were able to do. With the exception of Gabriel Ellison, the painters in the Lusaka Art Society were amateurs or expatriate art teachers, mainly from Britain. Thus, Cynthia, as a trained artist, brought to the Zambian art scene a new range of skills and concepts.

Cynthia was thrilled to be back in Africa, and, inspired by the bright colours of African landscapes, the bright sub-tropical plants, the people and their customs, she immediately made up her mind to get back to painting and to depict scenes of everyday life in Lusaka. She carried

her sketch book wherever she went, to the market, to the parks, to the countryside, in her own garden, and on trips out of Lusaka, to Ndola, Mbala, Luapula, and Kariba. These experiences, as well as her political involvement, both in Zambia and South Africa, were reflected later in her paintings.

Cynthia also made up her mind to make a contribution to the development of Zambia in the way in which she felt best equipped, namely through her art knowledge and skills. She participated in, and contributed to, the development of art and artists in Zambia, by becoming involved in the Lusaka Art Society. She served on various boards whose aim was to promote Zambian art. She had her first solo exhibition of paintings in September 1971 at the City Library in Lusaka. Her second solo exhibition was held at the British Council, Lusaka in November, 1975. She had 4 altogether. Cynthia's exhibitions contributed to the development of young Zambian artists who saw her paintings. This inspired them to paint too and to emulate her style and technique. These skills began to be developed very early in Cynthia's artistic career. But, in addition, Cynthia early on manifested a lively and sympathetic response to her subject-matter, a factor which must have attracted the attention of other artists in Zambia.

An analysis of *The Portrait*, Fig. 17, (1952), will show how Cynthia developed her characteristic style during her early training period in Cape Town.

The subject was a model who posed for the painting class attended by Cynthia during the latter part of her training at the University of Cape Town, in the early 1950s. Cynthia captured the features and character of her model, in whom she had shown interest to the extent of befriending her and offering her lifts home on occasions. This exposed Cynthia to a glimpse of living conditions in the squatter camp, where the model lived in a tin shack the size of the toilet in her own home. Having become attached to her model in this way, Cynthia was able to produce an effective, strong portrait of her, in which she tried to express the model's typical South African Xhosa character.

After two or more weeks, Cynthia felt she had captured the model's character, this in spite of the fact that the art school's approach to such training projects tended to be according to a formula,

and that the lecturers usually decided what the model was to wear and the class decided on her pose. The only choice Cynthia had for a composition was the position she took in order to view the model, facing her directly, with her body slightly twisted in an interesting posture.



Fig. 17. *Portrait*. 1952. Oil on canvas. About 40cm by 30cm. Artist's Collection. Lusaka.

Having selected her position in relation to the model, Cynthia decided to focus on the model alone, reducing background details to a bare minimum, and almost crowding the canvas with a close-up, intimate, view of the woman she had come to know. In this way, Cynthia's empathy with the model dominates the composition.

Cynthia has made the most of the posed model, emphasizing her own response to the model's posture, with its sense of patient resignation, in the angles of the shoulders, arms and neck. These angles help to direct the viewer's attention to the model's face. Cynthia's drawing ability has enabled her to capture a good likeness of the model as well as to introduce slight, but expressive, distortions to the subject. For instance, the model's hunched right shoulder has been exaggerated,

enhancing its symbolic protective gesture in contrast with the too small, slumped, left shoulder which leaves that side of the model's face symbolically open, or vulnerable.

Simplification was another characteristic developed by Cynthia during this early period, as can be seen in the rendering of the background and the red sweater under the model's brown jacket, itself simplified to form an almost flat shape, broken only by a few essential folds. By contrast, the face and hands are more detailed. This, together with Cynthia's choice of warm colours for the model and her garments, contrasted with the cool complementary green of the beret and cool background tones, draws the viewer's attention towards the face and hands.

The qualities developed in this early example of Cynthia's work served her well when she resumed her painting career in Zambia.

The painting *Women*, Fig.18, (mid 1980s), is an example which shows Cynthia's visual excitement when confronted with Zambian subject-matter. It depicts women sitting patiently waiting to buy cooking oil during the days of shortages and hardships in Zambia. As in the earlier portrait, Cynthia's expression is one of sympathy towards the women, who had to wait for hours outside shops to buy scarce commodities.

On this particular day, Cynthia took a sketch book and parked the car behind what was then ZOK shop (now Shoprite) in Lusaka. She did a lot of sketches of these women sitting on the pavement. Two things concerned her. One was simply to make a social comment about how hard life was for these women. The other was to express her fascination with their natural dignity. She enjoyed looking at the way the women were sitting, the way they were chatting to each other, feeding their babies. She appreciated their shapes, postures and positions. All the women were clad in chitenge material, suggesting that most of them were housewives. She made a lot of sketches and worked finally on two paintings at home, trying to turn sketches into interesting compositions.



Fig. 18. *Women*. Mid 1980s. Acrylic on canvas. 90cm by 60cm. Private collection. Ndola.

Cynthia had sketched each Woman individually, after which she used them to make interesting combinations within the overall composition. As can be seen, she rhythmically arranged most of the women in pairs to form a two-tiered frieze of U shapes. Cynthia seems to have arranged her figures in this way so that they face one another, in conversation, possibly indicating that they were discussing a critical period in Zambia. The mother and the baby group on the right adds an interesting variation to the composition.

The simplicity of the composition, the drawing, the colour and the technique serve to integrate these figures into an effective record of Cynthia's involvement in everyday life in Zambia.

In her portraits and figure paintings Cynthia has tended to focus on subject-matter with which she has closely identified and has observed closely. The same tendency can be seen in another example of her work, *Leaves*, Fig. 19, (about 1984 or 1985).



Fig. 19. Leaves. 1984/5. Acrylic on canvas. 90cm by 30cm. Private collection by Helens Chabe. England.

This time, Cynthia set up her easel in her own garden, completing the painting on the spot. (Interview - GS/CZ, 1998). Focusing on the heliconia plant and the way its foliage and flowers contrast with the surrounding plant forms, Cynthia has once again shown her ability to simplify well-observed subject-matter to create an effective composition.

She has also, as in her early *Portrait*, selected a viewpoint of this part of her garden which has provided her with an effective composition based on the oval structure at its centre, formed by the lower edge of the flower bed and crown of foliage of the heliconia. Thus, the focal point of the

painting is the brightly painted plant with its dramatic flowers and the ferns fronds painted bright yellow-green. The rest of the plants have been treated with less detail and in muted colours, so that the viewer's attention is drawn to the focal point. Balanced diagonals serve the same purpose. The diagonal of the garden wall is complemented by the parallel left-hand edge of the bed. Balancing these are the diagonal of the right-hand edge of the bed and a parallel one in the heliconia leaves to the left. Aerial perspective gives some sense of depth, with the soft blues in the background, forming a foil for the clearly defined, bright focal point. Lastly, Cynthia's broad unfussy technique and varied simplifications complete the freshness of this painting.

Cynthia has been painting in these styles since the start of her painting career. She has always painted and sketched for her own pleasure and still does so, but she feels very strongly that her best work was done in the 1960s and 1970s, in the first flush of enthusiasm for her and her family's life in Zambia. She now seldom paints large paintings on canvas, but does sketches on paper, mainly in mixed media, acrylics and pastel. (Interview - GS/CZ, 1998)

Cynthia's paintings have been exhibited many times. In this way she has contributed to the development of painting in Zambia. Contemporary and young painters have been able to see Cynthia's work, on exhibitions, since 1971. The skills which are evident in the examples discussed above, in oils as well as acrylics, have influenced young painters who have emulated her style and technique. Adam Mwansa is an example of a young artist to whom this applies. Lawrence Yombwe once told her that he was inspired to start painting after seeing her exhibition at the Copperbelt Museum, in Ndola. (Cynthia Zukas, 1999, Letter, p. 2)

Cynthia thinks that the most useful exhibitions have been group exhibitions organised every year. This provides new painters with opportunities to look at their work alongside that of other more experienced painters. As Cynthia says, *as there is no Art School in Zambia, exhibitions are another marvellous way to inspire up and coming artists. Another role of a good exhibition is to get the government or city council interested in supporting the arts.* (p. 3)

Cynthia's contribution towards the development of Zambian painting has also been through assisting and encouraging some painters to experiment. She has observed that artists like Peter

Maibwe or Stephen Kappata have a tendency to repeat themselves to survive, while only a few like Patrick Mumba, Lawrence Yombwe, Shadreck Simukanga and Style Kunda, are more determined to experiment and develop their art in new directions. Where she has been able, she has encouraged the latter. As Cynthia says, *in the early days I did try to show that local artists should try to paint everyday life. In the later days, when there were quite few Zambian artists having exhibitions, I tried to stress the importance of only selecting one's best work, not re-exhibiting old works, and the importance of good framing, thoughtful hanging and professional presentation.* (p. 3)

Cynthia has continued to help younger Zambian artists through her membership of the National Arts Council of Zambia and as Chairperson of Lechwe Trust. She has taught art at Matero Girls Secondary School, conducted workshops, written articles about art and artists and has several times informally advised individual artists.

CHAPTER 3

HENRY TAYALI

Henry Tayali was born in Serenje, Northern Rhodesia, in 1943. He began to show artistic talent at an early age. At the age of 12 he moved with his family to Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia, where his talent was soon noticed by Mr. Alex Lambeth, an artist who ran a small art center on behalf of the African Affairs Department of the Bulawayo City Council. Like other families, Henry's family had migrated from Zambia along the traditional route to the prosperous jobs on the mines in South Africa, but, instead, his father found employment in Bulawayo. (Henry Tayali 1943 to 87, Mpapa Gallery, 1988, p.1)

At the time the circumstances in Southern Rhodesia were not favourable to the development of artistic talent. Gibbs, recalls that 1958 saw the beginning of changes in the Federation, which would include the realization that the economic prosperity enjoyed by whites would be shared with the majority of Rhodesian citizens. The time of total political and economical control by the white government was coming to an end. Blacks, who were in the majority, were now forming political parties, which claimed majority rule. There was talk of the break-up of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, whose constituent countries were to have self-determination. However, fears regarding a new black government caused a withdrawal of investment from the region and the consequent evaporation of national confidence. Unemployment became a reality for some, including Henry's father, which is why he and his family migrated to Bulawayo. (p. 1)

The first few years in Bulawayo were a time of deprivation for Henry's family. Henry, being the youngest of the family ended up in beer halls where his father spent much of his time. The time Henry spent in these beer halls influenced his future paintings of beer hall scenes and crowds.

During the time Henry's family was trying to settle down, little is known of Henry's artistic activities. But, being a young boy, he was attending school. According to his wife, Rose, Henry painted secretly at night under the street light for fear that his father would throw him out, together with his paints and brushes, which he did regularly, once Henry was found to be painting. Clearly,

Henry's father did not encourage him to become a painter. After leaving high school, Henry discovered Mzilikazi Art Centre, joining other boys from the streets and townships who went there in order to paint. (p. 1)

Both Gibbs' recollection and an article by Zukas and Kabungo (1988) indicate that Henry's talent was noticed in 1958, in Bulawayo, by Mr. Alex Lambeth of Mzilikazi Art Center. Lambeth had just been appointed by the Bulawayo City Council's Director of Townships, Dr Hugh Ashton, to start a welfare project to develop artistic talent in young people who were roaming the streets. Henry was in due course selected by Lambeth for this welfare project. Although it is not known how long Henry was at Mzilikazi, he, together with other boys, learnt painting techniques, Lambeth's favourite medium, and attended tutorials about art under Lambeth, who then assisted Henry to exhibit his paintings for the first time. In the same year, Mzilikazi Center held its first exhibition of work produced by these young painters and Henry was one of the many exhibitors. According to Gibbs (1991), the paintings at this exhibition were childish, cheerful and colourful. Lambeth, however, remarked that Henry's talent would develop in future. (Gibbs, 1991 - personal communication with Henry; Zukas and Kabungo, 1988, p. 2)

Between 1958 and 1966, Henry continued to exhibit his paintings in Southern and Northern Rhodesia. According to Zukas and Kabungo (1988), Henry was also developing his social conscience, which began to emerge in his art. Strong political commitment to African liberation and the welfare of *the common man* and his intense feelings against racial prejudice, injustice and poverty found expression in his work. Gibbs (1991) also recalls that Henry was working in a political climate of rising emotions among the people from the townships, in which demonstrations against white *divide and rule* policies took place. These moods and scenes inspired Henry to make them his main subject matter. Thus, at Lambeth's exhibitions, Henry's paintings mostly depicted scenes of beer halls, bus stops, markets and political rallies. Zukas and Kabungo, point out that Henry returned to these themes again and again. (Henry Tayali 1943 to 87, Mpapa Gallery, 1988)

Owing to his political consciousness, Henry returned to Zambia soon after his secondary school education in Southern Rhodesia and took part, for the first time, in a group exhibition, with the

Lusaka Art Society, at Evelyn Hone College in 1966. Although it is unclear whether Henry had a matric or not, he was able to take up his scholarship to pursue a degree in Fine Art, from 1967 to 1971 at Makerere University in Uganda. Henry continued to work hard at his paintings while at Makerere. He experimented with different techniques and materials and learned Art History, Philosophy and African Culture and exhibited at the Uganda National Museum in Kampala. He returned to Zambia soon after completion of his degree.

While in Zambia, Henry worked with the cultural Services, a job in which he helped promote visual Arts in Zambia, during which time he painted a lot himself. Hard work won him a German Scholarship to complete a Master of Fine Art degree at Dusseldorf in Germany in 1972. Henry's painting experiments led, according to Zukas and Kabungo, to the development of his distinct mature style. Part of this development was in the use of colour. His earlier colour schemes of violet, purple and orange gave way to more subtle combinations of yellows, greens and blues. He developed a style resembling abstract expressionism and broadened his knowledge of the history and theory of aesthetics, developing his own ideas on the similarities and differences between the *Western* and the *African* cultural heritage. (p. 2)

Henry returned again to Zambia in 1976 and was then appointed University Artist at the University of Zambia. For the next ten years, the last decade of his life, he devoted a large part of his time to the development of the arts in Zambia, through workshops, research projects and the continual motivation for the establishment of a Zambian School of Fine Art.

The story of Henry's career shows an unpromising start for a prominent artist. However, despite his discouraging family background, he had the good fortune to have his talent nurtured at a young age and, from this, went from strength to strength, in the end occupying a position in Zambia which made it possible for him to exhibit widely, in Zambia and overseas, and to influence other, younger Zambian artists, such as Vincentio Phiri, his apprentice. Today, Henry's influence on Phiri's work can still be seen.

Henry's works reflect what he saw, thought and felt and they evoke powerful responses from observers. His social consciousness led him to express abstract human emotions in most of his

paintings, whether representational or not.

Henry's painting, *Destiny*, Fig. 20, (Late 1950s), a large painting crowded with figures, includes references to his own experiences. According to Zukas (1993), *Destiny* was painted in Bulawayo in the late 1950. Gibbs (1991) recollects that this painting was first exhibited in 1964 during a major exhibition of work held by Mzilikazi Center. It was exhibited again the following year and returned to him unsold after which, he added to it more details. On 12 November, 1965, Henry was again changing *Destiny*, painting the windows to the left of the picture shut, instead of open. Prior to that, the curtains had all been blowing in the wind, Henry's explanation to Gibbs was that with U.D.I. *Something* had been shut out of his life.



Fig. 20. *Destiny*. Late 1950s. Oil on canvas. About 2.5m by 1.5m. Lechwe Trust Collection. Lusaka.

This is an example of the way in which Henry symbolised his experiences. (Gibbs, 1991, p. 1)

According to Gibbs's statistics, the whole picture depicts 293 people black as well as white. One or two of those figures portrayed were social workers known in the township, while one person (on the middle right) has managed to *get away from the painting*. (p. 1)

According to Zukas, *this is a painting that Zambia can be proud of* - (p. 1), as Henry showed, on a monumental scale, that he could depict his deep sympathy for his fellow human beings and his anxieties about the future as well as saying *something about the world* (p. 1). His dedication to hard work is evident in the complex composition, the painstaking attention to detail and the observation of figures translated into paint.

Although *Destiny* was painted before Henry had received formal art training, it is a powerful, expressive work. This has been made possible by a remarkably ambitious composition of a city space, opening out in the foreground to reveal a wide plane accommodating most of the figures and the activities in which they are engaged. This plane is flanked by a semi-circular arrangement of modernistic buildings. The whole scene conveys a sense of energy and drama. In the background, a dramatic storm seems to be impending, and this casts shadows around the buildings, which, themselves, show a naive understanding of perspectival arrangement. The buildings are crammed into a small space and seem jumbled together, but this enhances the sense of tension as does the dramatic lighting. By contrast, the open space is flooded with a bright light which brings the figures into sharp focus thus attracting the viewer's attention to their varied poses and activities, as well as the huge, shadowy statue representing a winged figure in tethers - a piece of imaginative fantasy in a fantasy scene. This statue symbolises an angel, who has brought a message of peace to the city.

Close scrutiny of the figures in the painting shows that they consist mainly of small groups engaged in a number of activities, either referring directly to Henry's own experiences or symbolising his ideas and ideals. In some ways, therefore, these figures do not form a homogeneous crowd. Stylistically, this can be seen in scale discrepancies as well as inconsistent chiaroscuro. But nevertheless, there is a common thread binding this teeming multitude - Henry's idealism for a bright and busy future.

In conclusion, this is a painting by an artist with an ambitious vision, using a style which shows that part of this ambition was to master a form of European illustrative naturalism. On the surface, the work looks purely representational, but, in fact, is rich in built-in ideals and symbolic expressions.

Henry's early paintings tended to be representational, but, during his study period in Germany, he was encouraged to produce abstract paintings. This development underwent two phases, the first characterised by blue paintings, expressing his response to the Northern atmosphere and climate, the second by red paintings expressing his longing for home. It should be noted, however, that such abstract paintings alternated with representational work in Henry's oeuvre.

An example of a red painting is *Red Abstract*, painted in the mid 1970s, (Fig. 21), in which



Fig. 21. *Red Abstract*. Mid. 1970s. Oil on canvas. About 66cm by 45cm. National Collection. Lusaka.

Henry's use of predominantly warm, bright colours, characteristic of Africa, reflects his mood of longing, prior to his return home. Such emotionally inspired abstract paintings also show that

Henry was, at the time, experimenting with a form of free expression, in contrast to his earlier, representational, style. This painting bears a superficial resemblance to the all-over painting of Abstract Expressionists like Jackson Pollock, but it is unlikely that Henry was motivated by the same personal or philosophical developments which explain Pollock's paintings. Henry seems to have adopted the ideal of using spontaneous, gestural brush strokes, layered over one another, across shallow space, as a simple, spontaneous means of expressing a passing mood, probably encouraged by his German teachers. In *Red Abstract*, this spontaneity, in turn, is tempered by a sense of underlying order in the overall distribution of similar, curved, strokes and colours which, on close inspection, bear a resemblance to the distribution of figures in *Destiny*.

One of Henry's last paintings was part of a series. As Henry's wife, Rose, explained, he was in the habit of working on several paintings concurrently. The example illustrated here is an untitled work completed in 1986. (Fig.22). Once again it is an abstract work, this time

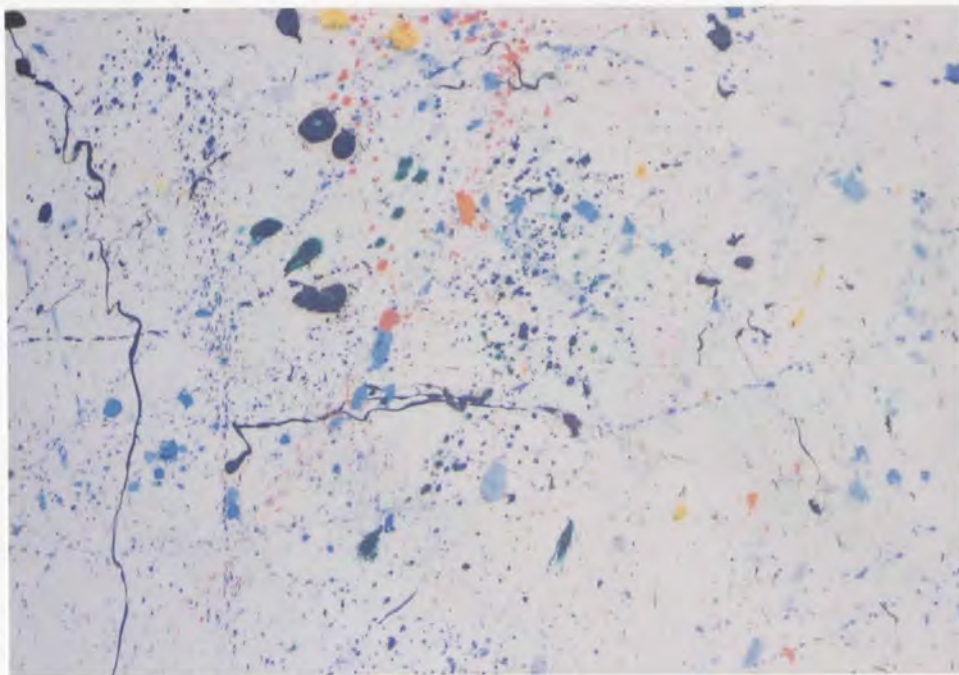


Fig. 22. *Untitled*. 1986. Oil on canvas. 72cm by 60cm (28" by 23"). Rose Tayali's Collection. Lusaka.

Executed using Pollock's well-known drip technique. Unlike *Red Abstract* the abstract splashes

are sparsely distributed and this distribution varies. To the right, there are fewer of these than towards the centre and left. A sense of airiness has been achieved by the large expanse of white canvas across which the drips float. This is enhanced by the generally cool blues that form this composition. A comparison between the two abstract works discussed here shows clearly that, while spontaneous expression was important to Henry, his sense of arrangement has also played a role in the success of these works, which introduced to Zambian audiences and aspiring artists, the possibilities of an abstract idiom.

Henry's remarkable career, from untrained artist to sophisticated, trained, artist, put him in a position of prominence in Zambian art circles. His rigorous standards, when it came to the execution of his own works, set an example to other artists in Zambia. The same can be said of his attitude which lacked sentimentality about the past, compassion about the present and scepticism about the future. Above all, Henry was unselfish when it came to helping young, inexperienced artists through exhibitions in Zambia and abroad, from 1958 to 1986, and through workshops and lectures. As summed up by Cynthia Zukas (letter, 1999), Henry had the energy to paint four canvases at a time and, although he *could also be difficult, rude, aggressive, unkind and wrong, he was a very profound thinker, always reading, always discussing ideas.* (P. 4)

CHAPTER 4

STEPHEN KAPPATA

Stephen Kappata is another well known painter in Zambia. As a *naive*, self-taught painter, Stephen's rapid rise to Zambian and international popularity has only taken place in the last decade and a half. Stephen's approach to his paintings, in terms of technique and subject matter is different from that of the other painters in this analysis, as they had all been trained in the Western tradition. Nevertheless, he has made a significant contribution to Zambian art in his particular, populist, category.

Although Stephen's art can be described as populist and naive, as Macmillan says, his paintings are *anything but artless*. He is impressed by Stephen's *meticulous draftsmanship, striking compositions, and effective use of colour*. (Macmillan, African Arts, 1997. p.20)

Stephen Chipango Kappata was born in May 1936, in Namengo village, about fifty miles from the Zambezi River in the Mongu District of Barotseland, Northern Rhodesia, now the Western Province of Zambia. His parents were migrants from Angola. (GS/SK. Interview. 1991 and Macmillan, 1997. p.20)

Stephen completed his primary school education at Sefula, the Paris Evangelical Mission Headquarters, in 1951. He remembers having enjoyed school and acknowledges the caring influence on him of Zambian teachers and particularly of the Reverend J. P. Burger, the French superintendent of Sefula, who was deeply interested in the history, culture and language of Barotseland. (p.20)

Stephen's interest in art developed while he was young. In the village he always drew images of animals and people on sand. At school, he was privileged to use chalk on slate, later pencils and pens for drawing. But, there was no art education as such at Sefula, so Stephen developed his art in his spare time. His teachers and friends encouraged and recognized his talent. (p.20)

Upon leaving Sefula in 1951, Stephen took up several clerical jobs in and outside of Zambia. In

his spare time, however, he continued to paint. If one studies his paintings it is clear that the many different jobs he did influenced and affected his artistic life. (GS/SK, Interview. 1991)

Some of these jobs include his first appointment at Mulobezi Saw-Mills where he worked as a junior ticket clerk in 1952, but dissatisfaction with this job led to his taking up another job in Livingstone during the same year. These movements affected his art, which suffered, as he could only manage to work at it in his spare time, drawing on found paper. (GS/SK, Interview. 1991)

Stephen however, continued doing a variety of jobs, and it is probable that this instability continued to have an effect on the quality of his art work. He left Livingstone in 1954 to settle at Pemba where he found a job in the General Post Office, in the same year being transferred to Choma. During this time he produced little art. Upon taking up another clerical job which paid him well, he was happy. But his excitement did not last long. He became ill, according to him, as a result of being poisoned by his friends out of jealousy. Other types of clerical jobs he did included working as a store-man with Rhodesia Railways at Pemba, in 1956. In 1957, he worked as a ticket clerk with Pioneer Brick Works. In 1958, he was recruited as a police officer but he left this job to go to South Africa to work with the Witwatersrand Labour Association, WENELA, which had been recruiting labour for the South African mines from Barotseland, Malawi and Mozambique. (Macmillan, 1997, p.20)

In South Africa he was exposed to many new experiences, some of them rough, such as the Soweto social life of single-sex mine hostels, which inspired him to produce paintings of nude women to provide pleasure to the hostel in-mates. The 1960 Sharpsville massacre influenced his political outlook, which is reflected in the element of social commentary in some of his later paintings. In his last post as a ticket officer, he was once again poisoned by his workmates. His private parts became swollen and he spent a month in hospital. After being discharged he decided to quit and return to Zambia. (GS/SK, Interview. 1991)

Upon his return to Zambia in March 1962 Stephen went straight back to his home town of Mongu at Lutembo village because his return coincided with a critical political crisis. The nationalist movement was fighting against the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland and against inequality. Stephen got entangled with these politics and was recruited by the United National Independent

Party (UNIP). But his involvement in politics was short lived owing to his ties, since 1930s, with the Jehovah's Witnesses. (Macmillan, p.20 and GS/SK, Interview. 1991)

In 1965, Stephen revived his artistic life by starting to paint during his spare time. The consistency with which he then produced paintings won him a job as an Audio-Visual Aids Assistant at a farm institute at Namushakende near Mongu, where he produced illustrations for farmers. He continued in this job until 1976 when he was finally transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture Headquarters in Lusaka. His work was to produce posters, brochures and booklet covers. The following year, he was sent to Britain for a four month course in the use of visual aids including work in photography, film and book design. (GS/SK, Interview. 1991)

While Stephen worked as a government officer, his painting was not completely overshadowed by his regular government duties. His artistic output was, however, small, as he continued to paint and draw in his spare time. His paintings, in oils, focused on socially related, day to day activities, like the work of fishermen, village scenes, traditional ceremonies and political scenes depicting colonial activities. He also learned a few techniques from a Zairean painter to whom he was introduced by a friend in 1969 in Livingstone who made a living by producing populist pictures of the Victoria Falls. He learnt from this artist how to mix colours, how to depict perspective and probably a few of the other painting techniques needed for producing paintings for a tourist market. In the years that followed, Stephen painted on cards which he sold to tourists in Livingstone and in a clothing shop of a friend in Mongu. (Macmillan, p.23 and GS/SK, Interview. 1991)

In 1982, Stephen returned to work in Mongu on transfer. This was however, followed by his retirement from government service on 31 July, 1986 (GS/SK, Interview. 1991)

On his return to Mongu during 1982 Stephen was discovered by Anna-Lise Clausen, a Danish woman employed by Norwegian Aid, who was setting up Nayuma Museum at Mongu. She bought Stephen tins of assorted enamel paints so that he could paint and sell his paintings at the Museum. Clausen liked Stephen's paintings because she realised that Kappata's local audience was the expatriate population of development workers mainly from Scandinavia and Netherlands and these patrons bought his works all the time. She also arranged to sell some of his paintings at

Zintu Craft Shop in Lusaka and she sponsored his first one-man exhibition at Mpapa Gallery in August 1986, a show which coincided with Kappata's retirement from his government job. (Macmillan, p. 23)

Stephen's emergence as an artist, occurred as a result of this exhibition. He was 50 years old and from this time on worked as a professional painter, holding a further four exhibitions at Mpapa Gallery and two at Alliance Francaise in Lusaka. His work was first shown overseas in 1989 at the Third Havana Biennial in Cuba, and he has since exhibited and participated in numerous exhibitions outside Africa (Macmillan, p. 23)

Stephen's story shows that, from very humble beginnings, he had increasingly drawn attention to his art. His contribution to art in Zambia began, modestly, in 1965. Yet, by 1982, he was seen as an artist whose work could be exhibited in art galleries. One result of this has been that young artists have had an opportunity of seeing his paintings, and some of them have been influenced by his style and technique. One such painter is his own nephew, who has literally copied his style of painting.

Stephen's prominence as an artist in Zambia can thus be seen to have resulted from his lifelong determination to be an artist, and his success in finding a patron who could successfully market his work. However, it is the work itself which is at the core of Stephen's success. An analysis of selected examples of his work, in the context of this analysis, will demonstrate this.

To start with, Stephen's subject-matter shows three concerns: the Zambian colonial experience, Zambian traditional culture and history, and contemporary social commentary and satire. All these themes reflect Stephen's own ideas and life experiences.

Macmillan, quoting Vail and White, says that Stephen's paintings do not emerge from a cultural artistic vacuum. *He is a rural intellect who sees himself as a historian, teacher and social critic. Using images, words, and humor to make acute comments on Zambia's past and present, Kappata has translated into paint many of the functions of the oral historian, the story teller, and the composer of songs, all of whom were, and to some extent still are licenced critics of the social scene.* (Macmillan, 1967. p.23)

According to Macmillan, Stephen's colonial paintings and his representation of the struggle for independence from colonial rule draw on his own experience. (p.28). An example of colonial experience can be seen in Stephen's *Northern Rhodesian Police Officers On Parade*, 1992/93. (Fig. 23). Like many of his colonial subjects, this painting suggests a nostalgic fascination with the colonial hierarchy, status and rank as displayed in detail such as uniforms. *They imply some regret for the passing of the colonial order. Some pictures are vehicles for the detailed and loving depiction of uniforms and the relationship between officers and soldiers of other ranks. And other paintings are concerned with periodic changes in the style of police and district messengers' uniforms.* (Macmillan, p. 29)

In this painting, Stephen's naivete is apparent, showing his complete lack of formal art training. Yet, it is through this naivete that this work powerfully expresses a particular Zambian reality. This, in turn, is because Stephen has used the means at his disposal to illustrate, as clearly as possible, the anecdotal details of a scene with which he vividly identified, namely his own abortive attempt to become a policeman and his admiration for the orderliness of this profession.

In spite of his naive understanding of the basic elements of naturalistic painting, Stephen's composition is appropriate to his subject-matter, which portrays two rows of policemen marching on parade, commanded by the officer standing to attention behind them, on the right. The diagonal arrangement of the two rows of men and the way they overlap one another shows a naive attempt at perspective and the result is one of rigid stiffness. The same naive rigidity can be seen in the straight horizon line, the placing of the building, the flag and the officer. Yet, it is obvious that Stephen's arrangement was made in the interests of absolute clarity of his chosen theme. The officer is larger than the policemen, which emphasizes his authority. He

is also compositionally linked to the building and the flag, whereas the men occupy nothing but the parade ground and the sky in the distance. The general stiffness of the composition, together with the sky in which the figures are drawn and painted, emphasizes the rigid nature of such a parade.



Fig. 23. *The Northern Rhodesia Police Officers On Parade*. 1992/93. Oil on canvas. Approximately 54cm by 23cm (20" by 13"). Private collection. Lusaka.

European style naturalism would not have served Stephen's particular type of expression. The stylization of the figures in this painting emphasizes the uniformity of police training. Stephen has limited naturalistic treatment of the figures to his rudimentary perspective, the individualistic depiction of faces, and his obvious attempt at naturalism has been subordinated to stylized design of features such as helmets, skirts, shorts, socks and so on.

Tonal modelling has hardly been applied at all, in this painting. All elements have been conceived as flat shapes, occupying specific pockets of space. Thus, colour, mostly unmodulated, has been given an important role. Stephen's colour scheme is based on the real colours of the uniforms, the skin colour of black men and white officer, the lawn of the parade ground, flag and so on, but these have been simplified into few basic colours, applied in a rhythmic pattern, further enhancing the expressive qualities of the painting.

The qualities, which the above analysis has sought to expose, would have been the result of an intuitive process on Stephen's part, but it is these qualities which make his work effective and which in turn, have contributed to the development of the populist art style in Zambia.

The same qualities can be seen in examples of work in his other themes. Unlike European artists such as Gabriel and Cynthia, Stephen has seen no need to go through stylistically experimental stages. Having established a style suited to his aims, Stephen has simply had to invent appropriate compositions. This can be seen in the next example to be discussed, which is based on a traditional theme. According to *Macmillan*, many of Kappata's traditional scenes relate to the history and culture of the Lozi people of his home area. His most popular set

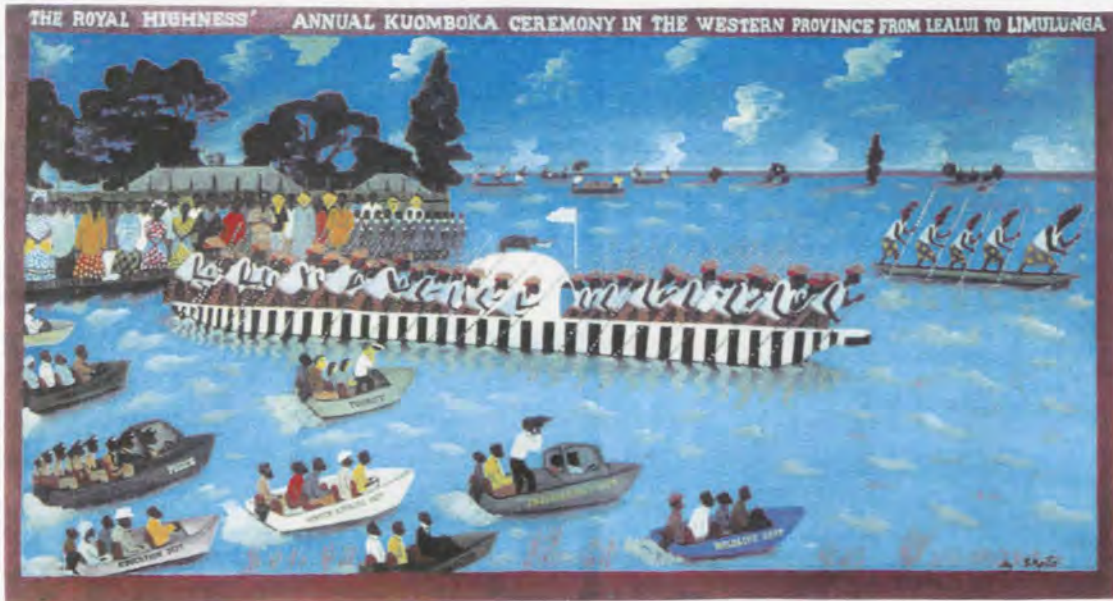


Fig. 24. *The Barotse Royal Establishment Annual Kuomboka Ceremony In The Western Province*. 1994. Approximately 100cm by 60cm (39" by 24"). Private Collection. London.

piece is a painting of the Kuomboka ceremony, 'The Barotse Royal Establishment Annual Kuomboka Ceremony In The Western Province', 1994, which involves the annual movement during the rain season of the Lozi King (Litunga) from his home on the Zambezi flood plain to the margin of the plain. Fig. 24. (p. 29)

As in the first example, this is a story-telling painting. The scene records the annual retreat of the Lozi from the flood plain. The focus of the picture is the royal barge with its white canopy surmounted by a carved elephant; beneath the canopy would sit the Litunga, dressed in a British admiral's uniform as bestowed on his ancestors by Queen Victoria (Macmillan, p.20).

As in the first example discussed, the design of this painting is appropriate to the illustration of the subject, which is derived from tradition as well as from Stephen's awareness of changes in this tradition. Long ago, when the ceremony began, government involvement had been minimal, but, nowadays, government tries to be seen to be involved with such customs. Because of this, the royal barge is accompanied by motorboats carrying the names of government ministries as well as canoes paddled by more traditional participants. As in the previous example, the composition has been designed so that these details are unmistakable. The spectators behind the barge have also been depicted to reflect Kappata's experience of changing customs, as they include traditionally clad Lozi men and women, possibly Lozi royalty, a few white people and a regimented row of uniformed school children. The composition has been devised to show that, while the king's barge is still the focal point of the ceremony, it separates modern government participation from traditional participation, with government activity in the foreground occupying more space on the water than traditional canoes. Formally, the king's barge is still close to the bank on which is represented a blending of cultures.

As in the previous example naturalistic treatment is subordinate to stylized design and conception of figures, and tonal modeling to a pattern of flat shapes. Against the rich blue ground of sea and sky, figures and objects can clearly be distinguished, forming a pattern in a simple colour design.

The type of Zambian experience reflected in this example has been shared by many others of Stephen's generation, who have had to reconcile village education with that of the mission school. (p. 28)

The third example shows Stephen illustrating a contemporary subject. Macmillan suggests that *the contemporary themes of Kappata's traditional and colonial life paintings demonstrate his talents as a social critic and historian. His themes range over most aspects of modern-day life, including health, transportation, and ecology and rural development. His most prominent theme focus on the economy; such as trade, distribution, and production* (Macmillan, p. 29 to 30). This example is *A Blacksmith and his helpers busy working*, 1991, (Fig. 25), showing a centrally-placed blacksmith flanked by his helpers, emphasizing the blacksmith's importance. Stephen's simple, clear spacing, his stylization and limited naturalism, and his flat colours and shapes have produced yet another effective composition, expressing the importance of orderly activity.



Fig. 25. A Blacksmith and His Helpers Busy Working. 1991. Oil on canvas. 17" by 19". Private collection. London.

Macmillan has described Stephen *as a man of his time and generation - as an artist, a graphic historian, and a social critic. At sixty, Kappata is one the few Zambians whose life has been divided more or less equally between the colonial and post-colonial periods. And the tension between the urban and the rural, an important part of Kappata's personal history, is clearly expressed in his art.* Stephen has experienced both rural and town life in Zambia as well as South Africa. In his painting, Stephen has therefore *responded to events and provided a record of the country's ever changing social scene* (Macmillan, p. 31).

Stephen has, in his paintings depicted class distinction, inequality, poverty and the conservative values of order, discipline, and a hierarchy based on status, while rejecting status based solely on wealth.

Stephen's art has been significant to the development of painting in Zambia. This is because his paintings are a genuine expression of popular culture and are a reflection of Zambia's past and present. As is the case with other painters, however, external market forces have priced Stephen's paintings, beyond the means of the people whom they most concern and to whom they were initially directed. When Stephen invented this style, he aimed at the local market. In the turn of events, Stephen found a more lucrative market among the expatriate population which consisted of a small group of development workers who mostly bought his works. Thus, it became a special market. Zambians have not been able to buy his paintings simply because his prices have been rising beyond what they could afford. From the small local community of patronage Stephen's market has kept on expanding within Zambia and now abroad.

CONCLUSION

During the period under analysis in this essay, 1950 to 1977, Zambian art underwent a gradual development, thanks to the contribution of this period's emerging artists. As has been outlined in the background chapter of this essay, traditional art in Zambia had been a continuum, from the rock painting of the late Stone Age Bushmen and Pygmies, to the later Bantu arts and crafts. The strong influence of the art introduced by the white man, in many cases, broke this continuum, although traditional arts have continued to be produced. But these are produced predominantly in the rural areas, whereas European influence inspired painting styles essentially foreign to Zambia, in the urban centres, particularly in Lusaka, where this influence now dominates. Reinforcing this has been the gradual establishment of western style art institutions, such as formal training, associations and societies which support such art production through exhibitions, which are part of the western marketing system. Along with this support system, artists, emerging during the above-mentioned period, grew to prominence in Zambia and further afield.

Even though only four painters have been singled out for discussion here, there are some important points which can be noted about them. The diversity of their backgrounds is one of the most striking of these points. Each of the four has worked independently without directly influencing any of the others. Their influence can be found in the work of younger artists. Because of their independence, each artist developed an individual style, even though the common European origins and training of Gabriel Ellison and Cynthia Zukas can clearly be seen. However, they applied their western skills in individualistic ways showing that a combination of western techniques and Zambian inspiration can produce art which is innovative.

Thus, Gabriel created a style of painting which came to be acknowledged and accepted in the newly fledged Zambian art world. The variation of her approach, as can be seen in the examples discussed have added to the increasing richness of contemporary Zambian painting.

Cynthia, in turn, introduced into western-style Zambian art a warmth and empathy with her subject-matter, to which her free-flowing style has been well-suited.

The two indigenous Zambian artists chosen for discussion, Henry Tayali and Stephen Kappata provide an interesting contrast to the above two women artists. Henry's development truly demonstrates the kind of transition which has occurred in Zambian art. This can be seen in his determination to master western techniques and idioms. As with Gabriel, his work has also introduced into Zambia the possibilities of more than one approach, namely a kind of symbolist representation and total abstraction.

Stephen on the other hand, may be regarded as an artist using western media but retaining an essentially Zambian approach. In his case, the art he has produced has been very original, yet he has inspired other artists to exploit his genre and his naive style. Stephen's work has proved immensely popular and he is, arguably, better known than other artists in Zambia, and his work is also known abroad.

Finally, it is hoped that this analysis has shown how adaptable Zambian artists are. These contemporary artists have broadened the scope of Zambian painting and contributed towards local artistic development as well as going a long way towards establishing Zambian painting internationally.

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