



T
W. Willis,
Acornhoek

Ceci est une conférence qui Alexandre avait prononcée devant la Société des Beaux Arts à Loham-
merburg.

Si vous ne pensez pas qu'elle puisse vous servir, voudriez-vous me la renvoyer. Je la déposerai au Musée Africain de Lohammerburg où est la collection d'oreilles.

Malheureusement certaines des photographies se sont décollées, malau-
gées et perdues. Mais ce serait facile de les remplacer.

JOHANNESBURG ART GALLERY
ARCHIVE SHEET II
PROVENANCE

ARTIST:

ACC. NO.:

Collected by Rev. A. A. Jaques
Lent to the Africana Museum in 1950

JOHANNESBURG ART GALLERY
ARCHIVE SHEET III
EXHIBITIONS

ARTIST:

ACC. NO.:

JOHANNESBURG ART GALLERY
ARCHIVE SHEET IV
REFERENCE

ARTIST:

ACC. NO.:

Wanless, A Africana Notes and News, see acc. card
for vol. and page no.

JOHANNESBURG ART GALLERY
ARCHIVE SHEET V
LOANS / LOCATIONS REGISTER

ARTIST:

ACC. NO.:

Placed in art store October 1988, formerly on display
Aficana Museum

✓ 174 50/900

Size: Height 130 mm
Length 320 mm
Width 60 mm

Description: *Crossbar:* Rectangular, curved and flattened at the narrow ends.

Lugs: None.

Legs: Two rectangular pillars decorated at the front and the back with vertical pleats bisected by a raised rectangle. From the top of one leg there extends at right angles a carved head on a thin, flat neck. It has a headdress, ears and a nose, carved in relief, incised circles with central dots form the eyes and a slit indicates the mouth. Below the neck is a flat outwardly curved piece. On the other side there is a series of five triangular protrusions. Between the legs is a flat piece carved to form linked open-work rectangles decorated with random incised circles with central dots.

Comments: Mrs. L. Jaques, widow of the collector, stated that this piece shows Arabic influence.

✓ 175 50/901

Size: Height 135 mm
Length 285 mm
Width 50 mm

Description: *Crossbar:* Rectangular and curved with flattened, blackened ends.

Lugs: None.

Column: Four rectangular, pleated legs, joined on outer sides by narrow, rectangular vertical bars, pierced at their tops, and on the inside by a flat piece carved to form a row of circular openings above three rows of roughly square openings. The whole column is blackened.

Base: Two flat rectangular bars join the front and back legs.

Comments: Like 50/900, this piece is said to show Arabic influence.

✓ 176 50/902

Size: Height 110 mm
Length 295 mm
Width 65 mm

Description: *Crossbar:* Rectangular, straight, and decorated at the narrow ends with three rows of squares carved in relief.

Lugs: None.

Legs: Three, namely two rectangular blocks at sides decorated at front and back, with two vertical grooves below a horizontal groove, and one

rectangular block at centre decorated with two vertical rows of raised rectangles at front and back.

Comments: This piece was classified as Swazi or Zulu.

177 59/2112

Place: Elim.
Tribe: Swazi.
Date: c. 1930.
Source: Loaned by the Swiss Mission, Elim, 1959.
Size: Height 135 mm
Length 270 mm
Width 55 mm

Description: *Crossbar:* Rectangular and curved on top, rounded on bottom. Decorated at sides on top with a rectangle carved in relief, at the front with one row of incised and blackened down-pointed triangles, and at the back with two similar rows.

Lugs: One short blackened cylinder suspended from centre of crossbar.

Legs: Two, pleated at front and back, and indented at sides. From the outer sides at the top protrude small "L" shaped pieces.

178 74/2610

Place: Swaziland.
Tribe: Swazi.
Date: c. 1910.
Source: Donated by Dr. G. Theiler, Pretoria.
Size: Height 120 mm
Length 435 mm
Width 60 mm

Description: *Crossbar:* Rectangular, slightly concave at top and rounded at the lower side.

Lugs: One blackened cylinder pendant from the centre of the crossbar.

Legs: Two rectangular blocks, blackened and pleated at front and back. Small "L" shaped pieces protrude from the outer sides at the top.

Comments: Collected by donor's brother in Swaziland c. 1910-1915.

179 79/27

Place: Unknown.
Tribe: Swazi.
Date: c. 1970.
Source: Donated by Marievale Mine when they closed down their own Museum.

ELIM HOSPITAL

SENIOR MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT

DR. P.H. JAQUES

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(FOUNDED 1899)



P.O. BOX 12

ELIM HOSPITAL 0960
NORTHERN TRANSVAAL

1993/04/14

Mr C. Till
Director
The Johannesburg Art Museum
Klein Street
Joubert Park
2001

Dear Mr Till

While sorting some of our old papers, I came across these notes which my father made for a lecture which he gave on Shangaan headrest.

I thought they might give some information regarding the provenance of some of the headrest. Unfortunately, some of the photographs have come unstuck and some have been lost but hopefully, some use can be made of them.

I also have a monograph with illustrations of the collection of headrests originating from the then Belgium Congo. This collection is, as you know, housed in the "Musee de l'Homme in Leuven, Belgium". If you are interested in having these, I will try to bring it down with me (it is quite heavy) when ^{we} our next come down to Johannesburg.

With best greetings.

Yours sincerely.

DR. P. H. JAQUES

pp: SENIOR MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT

/hjb

SHANGAAN HEAD-RESTS.

=====

The use of head-rests is very ancient. The Egyptians already slept on them. Numerous specimens of these have been found, of various kinds, from the very simple ones carved out of wood, to the beautifully decorated pillows of ivory and gold belonging to the Kings.

It is a remarkable thing to see how the head-rests have spread right through the continent, from North to South, through the tremendous distances of space and time. I have in my collection a specimen from the Valley of Kings, some 3000 years old, which is not very different from the head-rests on which still sleep to-day some of our South African Natives.

I am not in a position to discuss the extent of diffusion of these pillows through Africa. It will be enough to mention that the "Musée du Congo belge" has published an album of photographs of head-rests from the Belgian Congo. The head-rests also exist among the tribes of Northern Rhodesia and P.E.A. The Shangaan, the Swazi and the Zulu have them, although I have not been able to ascertain to what extent the Zulu still use them. On the other hand, they seem to be totally absent among the Sotho tribes.

The present collection consists almost exclusively of Shangaan (Tonga) head-rests, which have been gathered in the Pilgrim's Rest District, in the North Eastern Transvaal. More exactly, they are found among the Nguni and Shangaan sections of the tribe, which immigrated from P.E.A. after the ~~destruction~~ in 1895 annihilation of Ngungunyane's empire. The Hlanganu section which has been in the Transvaal for a longer time, does not seem to have them, apart from a few exceptions which may be due to the neighbouring influences.

We shall see that the Swazi and Zulu have a different type of head-rest. I would therefore suggest that the variety of ~~the designs of the~~ Shangaan designs is due to the fact that Ngungunyane and his people were much in contact with the Ndau and ~~the~~ other tribes north of the Sabie River, which seem to have superior artistic gifts. Frequent intermarriage took place with the women of these tribes, and the Ndau language is still spoken by a number of them in the Pilgrim's Rest District.

~~becoming~~ a
The head-rests are ~~getting~~ very scarce nowadys. Only a few old men and women still possess one and they ^{only} very reluctantly consent to part with it. At their death, the head-rest is not kept by their heirs, but is, according to Native custom, buried in the grave, with the other personal belongings of the deceased. As few new head-rests are being made, the number of those in existence is rapidly vanishing.

There are still however, a few artisans who carve these pillows, but they work only very occasionally. The demand is decreasing, and even if it were greater, the craft would hardly allow a man to make a living out of it, under modern conditions. A good number of the pillows still turned out are for European consumption, ~~to be~~ ^{and} sold as curios, but they are carved out of cheap soft wood which is rapidly destroyed by borers, whereas the old head-rests were made of the various kinds of ~~extive~~ hard or semi-hard Native timber, to which time only brought a beautiful lustre.

The Shangaan do not possess an artistic genius comparable to that of some of the West Coast or Central African tribes, where the influence of higher civilizations has pro-

bably been at work. They have not evolved a plastic art such as the bronze figures of the Benin, the wonderful masks and sculptures of the Congo. Nevertheless, they are undoubtedly endowed with a remarkable gift for decoration, which is too often ignored, and which has not been able to express itself sufficiently on account of the circumstances created both by the unsettled life and low economic level of the tribe, and by the disturbing impact of European civilization.

It is hoped that this collection of pillows, as well as other examples of decorative art which may be published later on, will help to bring to light the talents dormant in the soul of this, and no doubt, of other South African tribes.

It is thought that this collection will particularly interest the student of ornamental composition, may he be European or Native, and that it will prove a source of inspiration to those who seek designs and patterns representative of South African Bantu art.

What strikes the attention in this collection, is the extraordinary variety of designs. The richness of artistic imagination thus revealed is so ~~the~~ more remarkable that the creators of these patterns did not apparently have much opportunity for comparing their compositions. A European artist can study the collections of a museum or the collective work of a master. He can both enrich and diversify his talent by the observation of the models displayed. He is thus enabled to ~~copy~~ ~~thick~~ imitate the best achievements and, at the same time, to give life to new creations, different from those already in existence. He receives an inspiration which preserves him from repetition and duplication.

None of these facilities exist among our South African tribes. These patterns have come to life here and there

haphazardly, as the wind of artistic creation blew. There are
~~no~~ and there were, no schools this art was ~~taught~~^a. The artisans were in no way specialized or distinguished from the rest of the tribe. They were only part-time workers, producing their goods now and then, under the urge of a playful inspiration or of economic necessity. ~~they were~~ We would call them "amateurs", unless we should call them real artists, the instruments of an impersonal creative force. A man would be transmitted from an unknown tradition able to carve only one or two patterns. Even to-day, a man *I do not* *Leswi a molji* will say: "This kind of pillow I can do, but ^a know that one". *swi tivi* "Leši a ndi ſi tivi." Thus the individual contribution, the personal creative element, seems to be very small, and these designs appear as the crude, instinctive and spontaneous expression of the artistic soul ~~is~~ of a primitive people, emerging from the darkness of a mysterious past.

-o- x -o- x -o- x -o-

The visitor who wanders through the kraals of Bantu people very will usually be struck by the primitive aspect of everything. He sees mostly want, poverty, unattractive ways of life. And suddenly, in the midst of the untidiness and squalor of the surroundings, his eye will catch sight ~~of~~ of a thing of beauty, which will thrill his whole being with the delight that is given by the vision of perfection. It may be the colourful fancy of bead-work, the exquisite form of a water ^a pot, the balance ~~of~~ of carved head-rest, or the bold pattern engraved on a calabash or a snuff box. Or it may be also the grace of people dancing, young and old, expressing the wonderful rhythm which underlies Native life and which here and there emerges, taking the shape of a humble but beautiful object of art. The contrast with the miserable and pitiful setting fills the heart of the visitor with wonder at the

irrump in invisible world of beauty, which no material cause can explain? Whence, if not from the divine spark smouldering in the soul of every creature called Man, whaever his colour or his mental development may be. Man! glorious and wretched, partaker of two natures, ange et bête, as says Pascal. Let us greet with reverence and paise every manifestation of the heavenly fire which slumbers or flames within him and which, ~~irreversible as the physical associations~~, out of the animal, makes a Man, the image of God.

As for whom has a sense for values not purely material, he can entertain no doubts about the future destinies of a race which shows such promises of artistic expression.

COMMENTARY.

I

I SWAZI HEAD-RESTS.

=====

The first series of head-rests is Swazi. It is interesting to observe that their designs reflect the cattle complex which is ~~so~~ so prominent a feature of Swazi society. By cattle complex is meant the paramount value, religious, sociological as well as economic, placed on cattle, so that the greater part of the life of the tribe is centered round these domestic animals.

No 1 clearly shows a characterization of a bull or an ox, with double head. The double head still appears in No 2, although the sexual organ has become a third leg. In Nos 3, 4, ~~5~~ & 5, the head has disappeared or become very conventionalized, but the central ornament leaves no doubt as to the real meaning of the designs. They ^{are} variations on the original theme of the ox.

All the Swazi head-rests I have seen do not depart from this general shape and size. They are all much longer than the Shangaan head-rests.

The structural shape ~~is~~ being fixed, the artistic ^{of the craftsman} imagination expresses itself in two different ways. In the first place, by deep fluting on the legs which either falls in parallel lines from the top, or which follows the curve of the leg, as in No 4. These flutes give a beautiful sculptural aspect, to which the photographs hardly do justice. In the second place, both top ends bear geometrical designs in white and black, the black being produced by burning. No 6 is a somewhat more evolved form, and the horizontal decorations on the central leg seem to reveal a Zulu influence.

II SHANGAAN HEAD-RESTS.

In these head-rests, the imagination of the ~~craftsmen~~ ^{artists} has exercised itself not only in the decoration of the pillow, but in the form of the head-rest itself. Let us admire the richness of invention of the devices adopted for solving the problem of joining the ^{two} parts of the pillow: the upper ledge on which the head rests and the pedestal.

An attempt has been made to classify the pillows according to the manner in which the difficulty has been overcome.

In the first instance we have pillows in which the top ledge rests upon a single broad pillar. The simplest example of this is offered by No 1, where this supporting pillar is a flat plain rectangle. But even in this head-rest where decoration has been reduced to a minimum, one must notice the two kind of "ears" hanging on both sides of the upper ledge.

This peculiarity is found on all the pillows, with hardly an exception, so that it would seems to be a truly characteristic feature of Shangaan style. One can speculate as to the meaning of these little appendixes, whether they have a symbolic signification, or whether they just have a decorative value. I would incline for the second view.

The Shangaan taste cannot be satisfied with an empty and bare surface as in No 1, and very soon ornamental transformations are introduced. In Nos 2 & 3, the plain face is broken by horizontal lines. In No 4, the stand itself is pierced with a series of symmetrical square ~~maxx~~ apertures are cut. In No 5, deep perpendicular groves in the middle of the rectangular support and a semi-circle added on one side.

It is not by accident that this ornament is lacking on the

other side. It was apparently so designed by the artist. We have here an example of the ~~playful~~^{fangy} lack of symmetry and logic which often characterizes Native patterns.

In No 6, these curves have taken a greater development, and with the central hole and horizontal lines on the stand, provide, with simple means, an effective decorative ensemble. In No 7, a cross formed of 4 equal blocks, strengthened by 2 slender perpendicular columns on each side, produce a beautiful effect, completed by the two ornamental "ears" hanging from the top ledge.

In the following series, the single support between the pedestal and the upper ledge has taken a slanting position, which makes it necessary to reduce its width, as in Nos 8 & 9. The slant in No 10 has taken such an angle as to make it ~~unbelievable~~ a feat of craftsmanship, ~~as~~ when it is considered that the pillow is carved of a single piece and that it must be strong enough to bear the weight of a head. The purpose of No 11 seems to be to demonstrate the extreme positions which can be given to the stand.

In No 12, the slant has taken a more reasonable angle than in No 10. The grooves slightly outlined in Nos 8 & 9 are here deeply cut and a decorative semi-circle is added for purposes of balance on one side of the pedestal, as it is also on the top ledge of No 10.

Nos 13, 14 & 15 are variations on the theme provided counterbalanced by the slanting stand by ornamental buttresses. No 16 offers a transition to the next series, where two perpendicular columns join the top part to the pedestal.

Nos 16, 17 & 18 are simple examples of this style. An easy variation is offered by linking the two pillars, as in Nos 19, 20, 21 & 22.

The link between the two columns assumes sometimes proportions which make it become an important structural and

feature of the pillow, as in Nos 23, 24 & 25. In 26, the link is double and is prolonged by semi-circles on both sides, which does not particularly improve its appearance. No 27 a better balance is obtained, No 28 is a beautiful composition where the opposition of curves is richly underlined by the deep parallel grooves cut in the shining black wood.

The fancy of the craftsman splits now in two ^{again} the two vertical columns. We have a queer example in No 29. ~~an interesting effect is obtained in No 29.~~ The bridge has been retained within each of the two ~~in~~ pairs of pillars and has become a prominent decorative element. An interesting effect of balance is obtained in No 31.

Another combination of upright lines and curves results in pattern No 32, which takes a more elaborate form in No 33. A female sexual symbol is carved at the bottom of the pedestal, on both sides of this head-rest.

The theme of the two pillars linked by several cross pices and set within a circle gives a very beautiful design, No 34.

No 35, partly damaged by fire, is ~~remarkable~~ not only ^{Kable} for its shape, but ~~by~~ ^{also for} the patterns closely engraved on the whole surface of the two columns and the bridge. The "ear" motif is treated in the same angular style as the form of the pillow and the engravings. This kind of work would make one think that we have here the product of some Northern influence. Compare with the same type of decorative work on No 35 bis, which comes from the neighbourhood of Beira.

In the next specimens, the two columns are linked by a slanting bridge. The maker of No 36 seems to have been inspired by the sight of forking branches. Note the two perfect circles forming the pedestal.

No 38 is of red timber, whilst the two vertical pillars

and the horizontal lines have been burnt black.

In Nos 39 and 40, we have ~~xxxxxx~~ head-rests which rank among the most beautiful specimens of the collections. The photograph unfortunately, does not bring out enough the slender grace of the thin black and shining columns of No 39. In No 40, the opposition of curves and straight slanting lines, the balance of the volumes and the perfect proportions make it a real object of art.

The motif of the two pillars now develops into a crossing of the uprights, so ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ as to assume the shape of an X. (No 41). In No 42, this takes the form of double straight lines, crossing each other at a distance, without touching.

The X shape inspires Nos 43 & 44. The latter one is Chopi, and has brass studs embedded on its centre.

Now come, grouped together, a series of ~~xxxx~~ specimens where the stand of the top ledge is composed of two parts, an upper and a lower one, which are usually executed in a different manner.

In the following head-rest, Nos 45- 50, the stand ~~xx~~
ix consists of 3 or even 4 pillars aligned in a row.

In Nos 51 & 52. & 53, an inverted curve rests upon another curve. In Nos 51 & 52, the point of attach^{ment} is given either by a straight piece or by a ring, which securely binds the two convex surfaces. No 53 shows two curves resting on a hollow horizontal cylinder., the curve theme being thus treated in width an in depth.

The motif of Nos 54, 55,-56-59 is a curve supporting 1, 2,3, or 4 pillars. The full and heavy curved base of 54 has been made lighter by a square void in its centre.

In No 59 we may see another interpretation of No 58, the curves being replaced by straight lines and squares. We note however that this pillow has 4 legs, which permits^{it} to do

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In No 59 we may see another interpretation of No 58, the curves being replaced by straight lines and squares. We note

without a pedestal.

Nos 60 & 61 continue in a crude fashion the same idea as No 59, and show 3 columns standing on 2. Only these columns are so thick that the volumes take more importance than the voids.

The sharp angular sides of the upper part of 61 have have been modelled into curved lines again in No 62. This upper motif is lifted on a higher base in No 63, where a former bridge between the pillars becomes a transversal decorative feature. The same process has taken place in No 71, unfortunately damaged. The bridge here has become a beautiful belt of deep, sharp-edged grooves which encircles the pillars.

No 63 is another rendering of the pillar-on-pillar theme. This finds a superior expression in No 54, whose style of which is somewhat reminiscent of Egyptian art.

On the other hand, we have in No 70 a queer and unsuccessful treatment of the same idea. The pillow (which is badly damaged), is most irregular. It has 4 pillars at the bottom, and three, asymmetrically placed on the top. Is it the ~~work~~ first attempt of a beginner or the fanciful work of an eccentric carver, with more ingenuity than taste?

In No 66 we discover again No 23, only the top pillars have come nearer to each other and the bridge has become a floor separating the ~~the~~ upper and the lower storey.

No 67 is probably the prototype of No 68. The top ledge has been ~~extended~~ raised on a row of columns which rest on the two original blocks forming the base. Three square blocks form the essential part of the substructure, remarkably well balanced, of No 69. One would hardly have expected to find this design among the Shangaan, who are not a race of stone builders.

In No 81, the blocks of Nos 68 have been balanced on and their exterior wall only retained.

The peculiarity of Nos 72 & 73 is that they have 4
legs, although this does not appear in the photograph. No 77

has also 4 legs or pillars, which however, do not reach to the ground. How clumsy this effort when compared to graceful ~~treats~~
No 72 which renders exactly the same idea.

It seems impossible to classify No 78. The serpentine shape is unique and does not seem related to anything else.

No 80, although not of great artistic value, is an ~~able~~ example of remarkable craftsmanship. The complicated curves forming the stand are beautifully executed in hard ~~wood~~ timber.

No 79 is a double-bed pillow, where one will admire the clear-cut style and the perfect disposition. It is one of the gems of the collection.

No 76 has the crude image of an animal as stand. This reflects probably also a Northern influence, as the Shangaans ~~do not have~~ ^{not} made serious attempts at representation of figures. ^{the plastic}

Nos 74 & 75 are copies made by a Shangaan carver of Belgian Congo head-rests. They have been included here for the sake of comparison.

Lecture delivered by Rev. A.A. Jaques
to the Fine Arts Society of Johannesburg
circa 1941

SHANGAAN HEAD-RESTS

The use of head-rests is very ancient. The Egyptians already slept on them. Numerous specimens of these have been found, of various kinds, from the very simple ones carved out of wood, to the beautifully decorated pillows of ivory and gold belonging to the Kings.

It is a remarkable thing to see how the head-rests have spread right through the continent, from North to South, through the tremendous distance of space and time. I have in my collection a specimen from the Valley of Kings, some 3000 years old, which is not very different from the head-rests on which still sleep to-day some of our South African Natives.

I am not in a position to discuss the extent of diffusion of these pillows through Africa. It will be enough to mention that the "Musée du Congo belge" has published an album of photographs of head-rests from the Belgian Congo. The head-rests also exist among the tribes of Northern Rhodesia and P.E.A. The Shangaan, the Swazi and the Zulu have them, although I have not been able to ascertain to what extent the Zulu still use them. On the other hand, they seem to be totally absent among the Sotho tribes.

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the Ndau language is still spoken by a number of them in the Pilgrim's Rest district.

The head-rests are becoming very scarce nowadays. Only a few old men and women still possess one and they only very reluctantly consent to part with it. At their death, the head-rest is not kept by their heirs, but is, according to Native custom, buried in the grave, with the other personal belongings of the deceased. As few new head-rests are being made, the number of those in existence is rapidly vanishing.

There are still however, a few artisans who carve these pillows, but they work only very occasionally. The demand is decreasing, and even if it were greater, the craft would hardly allow a man to make a living out of it, under modern conditions. A good number of the pillows still turned out are for European consumption, and sold as curios, but they are carved out of cheap soft wood which is rapidly destroyed by borers, whereas the old head-rests were made of the various kinds of hard or semi-hard Native timber, to which time only brought a beautiful lustre.

The Shangaan do not possess an artistic genius comparable to that of some of the West Coast or Central African Native tribes, where the influence of higher civilizations has probably been at work. They have not evolved a plastic art such as the bronze figures of the Benin, the wonderful masks and sculptures of the Congo. Nevertheless, they are undoubtedly endowed with a remarkable gift for decoration, which is too often ignored, and which has not been able to express itself sufficiently on account of the circumstances created both by the unsettled life and low economic level of the tribe, and by the disturbing impact of European civilization.

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What strikes the attention in this collection, is the extraordinary variety of designs. The richness of artistic imagination thus revealed is so the more remarkable that the creators of these patterns did not apparently have much opportunity for comparing their compositions. A European artist can study the collections of a museum or the collective work of a master. He can both enrich and diversify his talent by the observation of the models displayed. He is thus enabled to imitate the best achievements and, at the same time, to give life to new creations, different from those already in existence. He receives an inspiration which preserves him from repetition and duplication. None of these facilities exist among our South African tribes. These patterns have come to life here and there haphazardly, as the wind of artistic creation blew. There are and there were, no schools where this art was taught. The artisans were in no way specialized or distinguished from the rest of the tribe. They were only part-time workers, producing their goods now and then, under the urge of a playful inspiration or of economic necessity. We would call them "amateurs", - unless we should call them real artists, the instruments of an impersonal creative force. A man would be able to carve only one or two patterns transmitted from an unknown tradition. Even today, a man will say: "This kind of pillow I can do, but I do not know that one." "Leswi a ndzi swi tivi." Thus the individual contribution, the personal creative element, seems to be very small, and these designs appear as the crude, instinctive and spontaneous expression of the artistic soul of a primitive people, emerging from the darkness of a mysterious past.

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The visitor who wanders through the kraals of Bantu people will usually be struck by the very primitive aspect of everything. He sees mostly want, poverty, unattractive ways of life. And suddenly, in the midst of the untidiness and squalor of the surroundings, his eye will catch sight of a thing of beauty, which will thrill his whole being with the delight that is given by the vision of perfection. It may be the colourful fancy of bead-work, the exquisite form of a water pot, the balance of a carved head-rest, or the bold pattern engraved on a calabash or a snuff box. Or it may be also

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COMMENTARY

I SWAZI HEAD-RESTS

The first series of head-rests is Swazi. It is interesting to observe that their designs reflect the cattle complex which is so prominent a feature of Swazi society. By cattle complex is meant the paramount value, religious, sociological as well as economic, placed on cattle, so that the greater part of the life of the tribe is centered round these domestic animals.

No. 1 clearly shows a characterisation of a bull or an ox, with double head. The double head still appears in No. 2, although the sexual organ has become a third leg. In Nos. 3, 4 and 5, the head has disappeared or become very conventionalized, but the central ornament leaves no doubt as to the real meaning of the designs. They are variations on the original theme of the ox.

All the Swazi head-rests I have seen do not depart from this general shape and size. They are all much longer than the Shangaan head-rests. The structural shape being fixed, the artistic imagination of the craftsman expresses itself in two different ways. In the first place, by deep fluting on the legs which either falls in parallel lines from the top, or which follows the curve of the leg, as in No. 4. These flutes give a beautiful sculptural aspect, to which the photographs hardly do justice. In the second place, both top ends bear geometrical designs in white and black, the black being produced by burning. No. 6 is a somewhat more evolved form, and the horizontal decorations on the central leg seem to reveal a Zulu influence.

II SHANGAAN HEAD-RESTS

In these head-rests, the imagination of the artists has exercised itself not only in the decoration of the pillow, but in the form of the head-rest itself. Let us admire the richness of invention of the devices adopted for solving the problem of joining the two parts of the pillow: the upper ledge on which the head rests and the pedestal.

An attempt has been made to classify the pillows according to the manner in which the difficulty has been overcome.

In the first instance we have pillows in which the top ledge rests upon a single broad pillar. The simplest example of this is offered by No. 1, where this supporting pillar is a flat plain rectangle. But even in this head-rest where decoration has been reduced to a minimum, one must notice the two kind of "ears" hanging on both sides of the upper ledge.

This peculiarity is found on all the pillows, with hardly an exception, so that it would seem to be a truly characteristic feature of Shangaan style. One can speculate as to the meaning of these little appendixes, whether they have a symbolic signification, or whether they just have a decorative value. I would incline for the second view.

The Shangaan taste cannot be satisfied with an empty and bare surface as in No. 1, and very soon ornamental transformations are introduced. In Nos. 2 and 3, the plain face is broken by Horizontal lines. In No. 4, the stand itself is pierced with a series of symmetrical square apertures. In No. 5, deep perpendicular grooves are cut in the middle of the rectangular support and a semi-circle is added on the one side. It is not by accident that this ornament is lacking on the other side. It was apparently so designed by the artist. We have here an example of the fanciful lack of symmetry and logic which often characterizes Native patterns.

In No. 6, these curves have taken a greater development, and with the central hole and horizontal lines on the stand, provide, with simple means, an effective decorative ensemble. In No. 7, a cross formed of four equal blocks, strengthened by two slender perpendicular columns on each side, produce a beautiful effect, completed by the two ornamental "ears" hanging from the top ledge.

In the following series, the single support between the pedestal and the upper ledge has taken a slanting position, which makes it necessary to reduce its width, as in Nos. 8 and 9. The slant in No. 10 has taken such an angle as to make it a feat of craftsmanship, when it is considered that the pillow is carved of a single piece and that it must be strong enough to bear the weight of a head. The purpose of No. 11 seems to be to demonstrate the

extreme positions which can be given to the stand.

In No. 12, the slant has taken a more reasonable angle than in No. 10. The grooves slightly outlined in Nos. 8 and 9 are here deeply cut and a decorative semi-circle is added for purposes of balance on one side of the pedestal, as it is also on the top ledge of No. 10.

Nos. 13, 14 and 15 are variations on the theme provided by the slanting stand counterbalanced by ornamental buttresses. No. 16 offers a transition to the next series, where two perpendicular columns join the top part to the pedestal. Nos. 16, 17 and 18 are simple examples of this style. An easy variation is offered by linking the two pillars, as in Nos. 19, 20, 21 and 22.

The link between the two columns assumes sometimes proportions which make it become an important structural and ornamental feature of the pillow, as in Nos. 23, 24 and 25. In No. 26, the link is double and is prolonged by semi-circles on both sides, which does not particularly improve its appearance.

In No. 27 a better balance of forms and volumes is obtained. No. 27 is a beautiful composition, where the opposition of curves is richly underlined by the deep parallel grooves cut in the shining black wood.

The fancy of the craftsman splits now again in two, the two vertical columns. We have a queer example in No. 29. In No. 30 the bridge has been retained within each of the two pairs of pillars and has become a prominent decorative element. An interesting effect of balance is obtained in No. 31.

Another combination of upright lines and curves results in pattern No. 32, which takes a more elaborate form in No. 33. A female sexual symbol is carved at the bottom of the pedestal, on both sides of this head-rest.

The theme of the two pillars linked by several cross pieces and set within a circle gives a very beautiful design, No. 34.

No. 35, partly damaged by fire, is remarkable not only for its shape, but also for the patterns closely engraved on the whole surface of the two columns and the bridge. The "ear" motif is treated in the same angular style as the form of the pillow and the engravings. This kind of work would make one think that we have here the product of some Northern influence. Compare with the same type of decorative work on No. 35 bis, which comes from the neighbourhood of Beira.

In the next specimens, the two columns are linked by a slanting bridge. The maker of No. 36 seems to have been inspired by the sight of forking branches. Note the two perfect circles forming the pedestal.

No. 38 is made of red timber, whilst the two verticular pillars and the horizontal lines have been burnt black.

In Nos. 39 and 40, we have head-rests which rank among the most beautiful specimens of the collection. The photograph unfortunately, does not bring out enough the slender grace of the thin black and shining columns of No. 39.

In No. 40, the opposition of curves and straight slanting lines, the balance of the volumes and the perfect proportions make it a real object of art. The motif of the two pillars now develops into a crossing of the uprights, so as to assume the shape of an X. (No. 41). In No. 42, this takes the form of double straight lines, crossing each other at a distance, without touching. The X shape inspires Nos. 43 and 44. The latter one is Chopi, and has brass studs embedded on its centre.

In the following headrests Nos. 45 - 50, the stand consists of three or even four pillars aligned in a row.

Now come, grouped together, a series of specimens where the stand of the top ledge is composed of two parts, an upper and a lower one, which are usually executed in a different manner.

In Nos. 51 and 52 and 53, an inverted curve rests upon another curve. In Nos. 51 and 52, the point of attachment is given either by a straight piece or by a ring, which securely binds the two convex surfaces. No. 53 shows two curves resting on a hollow horizontal cylinder, the curve theme being thus treated in width and in depth.

The motif of Nos. 54 - 59 is a curve supporting one, two, three or four pillars. The full and heavy curved base of 54 has been made lighter by a square void in its centre.

In No. 59 we may see another interpretation of No. 58, the curves being replaced by straight lines and squares. We note however that this pillow has four legs, which permits to do without a pedestal.

Nos. 60 and 61 continue in a crude fashion the same idea as No. 59, and show

three columns standing on two. Only these columns are so thick that the volumes take more importance than the voids.

The sharp angular sides of the upper part of No. 61 have been modelled into curved lines again in No. 62. This upper motif is lifted on a higher base in No. 63, where a former bridge between the pillars becomes a transversal decorative feature. The same process has taken place in No. 71, unfortunately damaged. The bridge here has become a beautiful belt of deep sharp-edged grooves which encircles the pillars.

No. 63 is another rendering of the pillar-on-pillar theme. This finds a superior expression in No. 54, the style of which is somewhat reminiscent of Egyptian pillows.

On the other hand, we have in No. 70 a queer and unsuccessful treatment of the same idea. The pillow (badly damaged), is most irregular. It has four pillars at the bottom, and three, asymmetrically placed, on the top. Is it the first attempt of a beginner, or the fanciful work of an eccentric carver, with more ingenuity than taste?

In No. 66 we discover again No. 23, only the top pillars have come nearer to each other and the bridge has become a floor separating the upper and the lower storey.

No. 67 is probably the prototype of No. 68. In this specimen the top ledge has been raised on a row of columns which rest on the two original blocks forming the base. In No. 81, the blocks of No. 68 have been hollowed out, and their exterior wall only retained. Three square blocks form the essential part of the substructure, remarkably well balanced, of No. 69. One would hardly have expected to find this design among the Shangaan, who are not a race of stone builders.

The peculiarity of Nos. 72 and 73 is that they have four legs, although this does not appear in the photographs. No. 77 also has four legs or pillars, which however, do not reach to the ground. How clumsy this effort when compared to graceful No. 72 which treats exactly the same idea.

It seems impossible to classify No. 78. The serpentine shape is unique and does not seem related to anything else.

No. 80, although not of great artistic value, is an example of remarkable

craftsmanship. The complicated curves forming the stand are beautifully executed in hard timber.

No. 79 is a double-bed pillow, where one will admire the clear-cut style and the perfect disposition. It is one of the gems of the collection.

No. 76 has the crude image of an animal as stand. This reflects probably also a Northern influence, as the Shangaan have not made serious attempts at the plastic representation of figures.

Nos. 74 and 75 are copies made by a Shangaan carver of Belgian Congo head-rests. They have been included here for the sake of comparison.

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