



### **A Healer's Touch**

To the traditional people of Africa, the nganga, or village shaman, is believed to have the power to heal those who are physically ill, suffering misfortune or spiritually weak. To become an nganga, a person must offer evidence that he or she is guided by a healing spirit. Often this is the spirit of an ancestor who had been a healer or shaman, and wishes to continue their work through the living descendant. By legend, a child is chosen by the njuzu or water spirit and taught the ancient and mystical healing arts. Once the elders have accepted the prospective nganga's experience as genuine, they hold an initiation ceremony and brew the sacred chibuku beer to honor this new healing spirit.

The vigilance and kindness of the healers, their skill with medicines, and the ways in which they council, comfort and care for the afflicted, endear them to all they serve. Healers, whether male or female, are affectionately regarded as treasures by those they care for, and the well being and safety of the healer is of community-wide importance.

### **The Story of Your Sculpture**

This sculpture is hand carved by an African sculptor of the Shona Tribe of Zimbabwe.

Most of the self taught sculptors of Zimbabwe have never seen the art of the west. They gather their own carving stone from the mountains and plateaus where they live and farm, and most still make their own tools from found objects.

This style, while seemingly very modern and contemporary, is from the Eastern Highland region, where, since before time began, mists and clouds have been twisted into intriguingly sinuous, sensuous abstract shapes by the hot dry winds that blow eastward from the Kalahari Desert. Most of us can remember watching clouds as youngsters, and seeing amazing shapes and objects in the sky-born vapors. But most of us no longer have the imagination to discern the fantastical, often mythical shapes we saw as youngsters. Luckily for us all, and for the world of art, the people of the Mutari mountains still gaze skyward, and to the mountains where the mists writhe and resolve themselves into spiritual and fanciful chimeras. This phenomenon, not modern art, is the origin and inspiration for the gentle, intricate style of the artists of that region. The flowing, connectedness of the sculpture also reminds us of the bond of care and trust that exists between healer and patient, unbroken, one flowing into the other in the unique, caring reliance.