

## Etnologie-Aanwinste: OUTENTIEK OF REPLIKA?

In die afdeling Etnologie word die mense en kulture van die nie-Europese volkere in Suider-Afrika bestudeer. Aangesien die Boesman feitlik van die toneel verdwyn het en die Bantoe in so 'n groot mate deur die blanke beskawing beïnvloed is, raak dit al hoe moeiliker om egte stoflike kultuurgoedere van hierdie volkere te versamel. Weliswaar word die moderne weergawes van sodanige voorwerpe ook versamel, maar dit het nie dieselfde waarde as die outentieke artikels nie.

Die versameling kleipotte, waarvan 'n gedeelte op die foto hiernaas afgebeeld is, is deur wyle mev. Wiley van Bloemfontein aan die Museum bemaak. Dit het meer as dertig jaar gelede tydens 'n tydperk van verblyf in Lesotho in besit van die Wiley-gesin gekom. Hoewel die Europese invloed wel in sommige van die potte merkbaar is, is die tradisionele kenmerke nog duidelik in hierdie belangwekkende versameling waarneembaar.



## ONE OF THE RAREST OF MAMMALS — Carl Lynch

There is one specimen of the peculiar and rare aye-aye in the collection of the National Museum. In the very first catalogue of the collection this specimen is listed as number five. No mention is made of the date on which it was collected or obtained. Presumably this is one of the mounted animals purchased in Europe for this Museum by the late F. W. Fitzsimons, founder of the snake park in Port Elizabeth.

The aye-aye, *Daubentonia madagascariensis*, which is endemic to Malagasy, is certainly one of the rarest and most endangered mammals in the world. It is doubtful whether more than about fifty individuals remain in the wild state. The giant aye-aye, *D. robusta*, became extinct in about 1930. In a final attempt to safeguard the aye-aye from extinction, four males were translocated in 1967 to the small island reserve of Nosy Mangabé, off the north-east coast of Malagasy.

The aye-aye is very different from the traditional concept of a primate. Gmelin, who first described the animal, believed it to be related to the squirrels and classified it among the Rodentia. Almost a century passed before Owen, in 1860, finally established it as an aberrant type of lemur.

Characteristics of particular interest are its curved rodentlike incisors which are very

large in relation to its skull, its canine teeth which are absent in the permanent dentition, and the skull which is rather like that of a squirrel but possesses structural affinities with the primates'. Its brain, which is relatively large but of very primitive structure, also contains features indicating a link between the primates and other animals.

By smell and a highly developed sense of hearing it detects wood-boring larvae by tapping its long thin finger. The larvae are then probed out by the same finger or by use of its rodent-like incisors. This finger is also used for scooping out pulp from fruits, for grooming itself and for drinking. The latter is done by inserting the finger into the liquid and drawing it rapidly sideways through its mouth.

The aye-aye is essentially nocturnal and lives either singly or in pairs in the north-eastern coastal forests of Malagasy. The female constructs a spherical nest in a tree consisting of rolled-up leaves and lined with twigs and dry leaves. The nest has a single opening at the side. The female is believed to give birth to a single young.

*Die aye-aye of vingerdier van Madagaskar is een van die skaarste soogdiersoorte in die wêreld. Slegs ongeveer vyftig leef nog in 'n natuurlike staat. Die vingerdier is 'n lemur ('n aapaguge soort soogdier) en is 'n insekvreter. Deur middel van sy knaagdieragtige voortande en die lang dun middelvinger word houtborende insekte uit verrottende hout gegrawe.*

