

1992. 11. 62.

figure

Tsonga



locatio



object type: *figure*

acc no

vernacular:

sub-type:

contact
prints

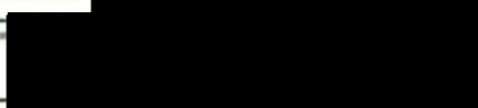
community: *Tsonga*

sub-group:

location:



shelf:



geographical location:

b/w:

c/t:

c/s:

date and place collected:

dimensions:

h: *43*

diam:

w: *11*

mounted:

date executed:

d: *11*

artist name, sex:

medium:

wood, poker work

use:

purchase / donation / bequest: *Udo Harstmann*

price paid:

physical description:

insurance value:

authority: *AGC 1992.11.10
CTR 1992.11.04
MC 1992.08.07*

original collection no:

object type translation:

catalogues:

JOHANNESBURG ART GALLERY

EXHIBITIONS
REGISTER

ARTIST: Tsonga

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1992 . 11 . 52


NAME OF GALLERY	ADDRESS	DATES
1 <u>SHB Gallery</u> <u>The Harstmann Collection</u> <u>of Southern African Art</u>		<u>3 Dec 1992 -</u>
2		
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9		
10		
11		
12		

JOHANNESBURG ART GALLERY

LOCATIONS REGISTER

ARTIST: Tsongeu

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1992.11.52

DATE	LOCATION
1 Nov. 1992	
2	
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JOHANNESBURG ART GALLERY

PROVENANCE

ARTIST:

ACCESSION NUMBER:

1
2
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8
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11
12

THE WITT COLLECTION - DONATION

The Witt Collection comprises 6 objects. Two of the works (numbers 35 and 36) are very unusual in form and style and are not represented in the Brenthurst Collection, nor, from what is known, in other collections in South Africa. The remaining four sculptures are rare and important old Lobedu works, probably from the Modjadji kraal. There is one Lobedu post in the Brenthurst Collection which relates to but is very different from two of the carvings in the Witt Collection (numbers 20 and 37). Number 19 is a field guard, a rare and unusual work. Number 18 is possibly the most important and rare work in the collection, being a roof finial figure. This carving was including in an exhibition entitled "Close-ups" held recently at the Center for African Art, New York, and was published in the accompanying catalogue. This collection will extend the Brenthurst Collection in a very meaningful way as it represents the artistic production of a group not commonly represented or known about in collections in South Africa. The works also display an aesthetic quite different to the majority of works in the Brenthurst Collection, and it is essential that this aesthetic be represented for a broader understanding of material culture in southern Africa.

Di - info from Jurgen Witt 6/11

Spoon + figure are Tsonga. Spoon has been published in an article.

Figure = stylised, of boy in initiati dress. Arms missing. Has a photo of it in original environment taken in \pm 1960. He bought it a few years later. Will look for the reg. for us.

He was the "son" of last Mojadyi so his "sister" (Mogube) is queen now. She has 5H wives.

His Lovedu pieces written up by Patricia in the Donker book. We can borrow anytime.

All coll early 1960s

WITT

1959/60

± 6 yrs later

2 photos
1959 ± 6 yrs later

Mod IV installed 1959. Piece mounted atop one of her private huts

Poles could be put out & taken down

Oldest poles c turn of century.

MOKWERA - roof R initiate - final stage.

Revival

Tsonga fig - collected in Giyani region, to ^N east of Ngobe headkraal

Ears - appear in old carvings.

Spoon

belonged to
Chief Ngobe - ~~near~~ near Giyani Tsonga chief. Coll at his head kraal
110 age 17 died c 1965

near Giyani

(Put thanks to Witt)

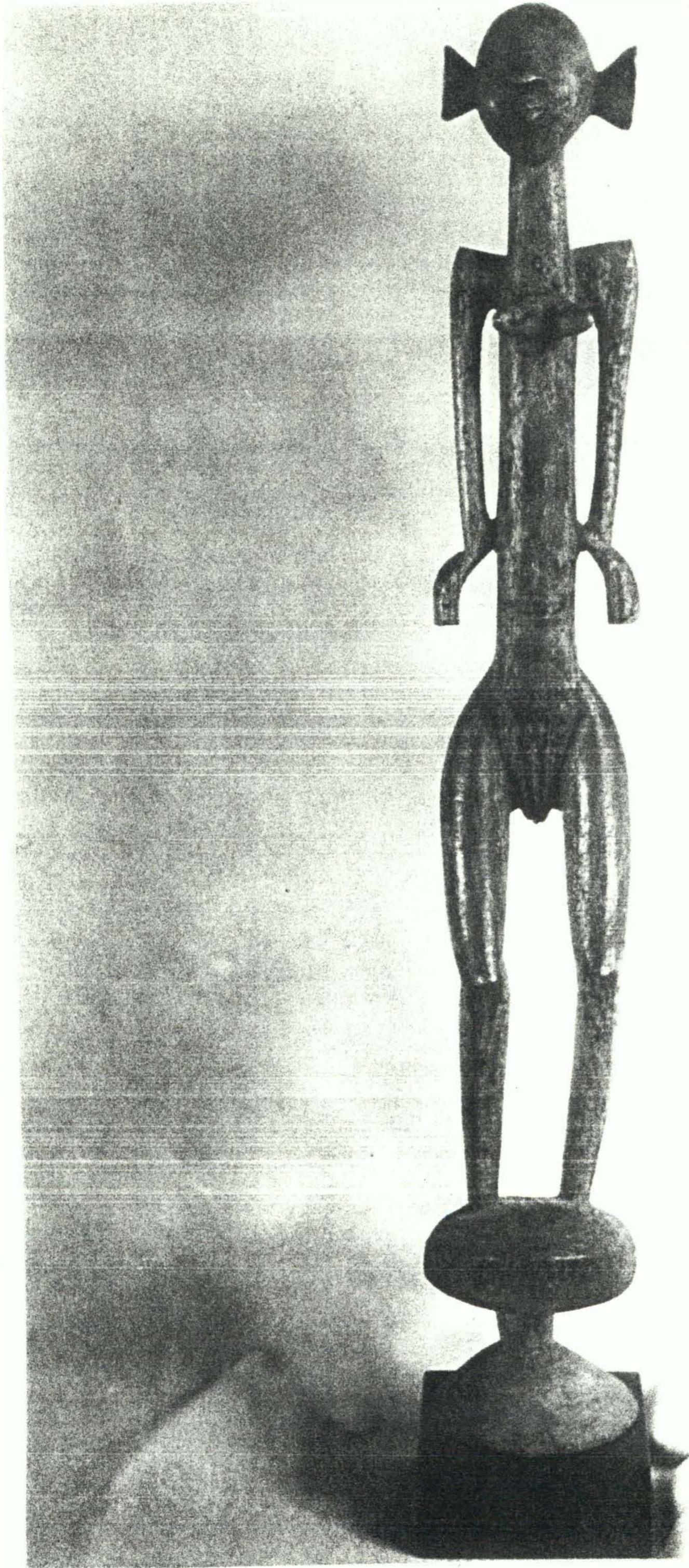
Put Tsonga in cat.

Witt has coll sim eg ± 6/7 yrs ago in differ. area.

Tsonga.

Lovedu.
TVI lowveld Sotho

1992-11-52
Tsonga



1992-11-52
Tsonga

JUERGEN WITT

11.11.92

Note on Tsonga figure CAT 92

"The similarity of execution suggests that they were products of the same hand."

I do not agree that the similarity of execution is proof enough to state that they were made by the same hand.

Having done some research with regards to woodcarvings especially with the view of distinguishing between traditional and non traditional work, I have made some interesting discoveries. For example I have met an old Tsonga man in about 1965 who was carving female figures about 30-35 cm high. The Tsonga Nguvu being part of the carving. When I asked the man where he had learned the art, he said that a Venda, living a few villages to the north, had taught him. I went to see this old Muvenda and found figures there which had not only the same ornaments carved on them but also the facial expressions were almost identical. One of the sons of the Tsonga mentioned continued to carve these female figures and still later one of the grandsons of the old Tsonga man carved in almost identical fashion. Although I had handled a number of these figures, I still found it difficult at times to attribute the work to one particular carver.

To come back to the "Products of the same hand" I would rather think that some time ago (Perhaps generations ago) a certain style developed which was generally accepted for this particular purpose. Perhaps this style could even be identified with a certain people.

The geographical distance between the figures collected would also make this suggestions somewhat unlikely. The hairstyle of the one carving is also unique and has not been seen again.

Extract:

SPOONS IN SOUTHEAST AFRICA
JÜRGEN WITT

IN SPOONS IN AFRICAN ART
MUSEUM RIETBERG: ZÜRICH 1991

No photograph.

PHOTOGRAPH OF THIS SPOON APPEARS
IN AFRIKANISCHE LÖFFEL, AFRICAN
SPOONS. By ERNST WINITZKI

DISTRIBUTION: MUSEUM RIETBERG, ZÜRICH
PRODUCTION: UDO HORSITANN. 1990.

ILLUST. III CAPTION READS:
WERKSTATT DER SCHANGAAN REGION
NATIBIA. HOLZ 58 cm.

Spoon with woman's figure
od, 56,7 cm

known master of the Zulu region
uth Africa

bl. Vogel-N'Diaye 1985: 49 u. 165;

ssani 1988: 16; Bassani-Fagg 1989: 146 u. 274

isée de l'Homme, Paris, Acc. No. 977.52.14

CAPTION SHOULD READ.

TSONGA GABANKULL.
R.S.A.

question is raised as to the origin of the chains. To the indigenous population chains most certainly were unknown, but not to the Arabs, or later the Portuguese. Are they mere copies of chains, or was the entire carving-technique of these items copied? Indeed, these decorations do not fit into the general aspect of the indigenous art of carving. These show-piece spoons were frequently coloured with natural dyes. A spoon without a spiral-shaped handle, but with a chain, was collected around 1890 in Maputo (Lourenço Marques) (Monteiro 1891: 72). Apart from this type of ladles and spoons, other shapes were also carved, as for example the serving spoon (cat. no. 59).

Another serving spoon, presumably Tsonga as well, has the head of a man with a headring at the end of the handle; the head appears to be quite caricaturistic.

CAT 92 ~~CAT 58~~ may be an exception. It is a stylised figure with an egg-shaped head, large protruding ears on a neck carved into a double cone, resting on a ball-shaped shoulder from which the back and the arms are connected to the pelvis. The legs are carved at a slight angle, the knees only indicated by a slight thickening, and the feet lead over to the dish-like bowl of the spoon. This spoon was collected from the North-Western Tsonga, and had been used for mixing the holy seed. At the time of the first rains the chief summons his sub-chiefs. With the assistance of the medicine man and the priest a sacrifice is made to the spirits of the ancestors: for instance a fowl, beer or snuff, while prayers are said to attract the attention of the spirits. The seed of the previous year, of which each sub-chief brings a few handfuls, is mixed with that of the chief. Pumpkin seed, beans, maize or kaffircorn are each placed into a separate pot. Then the priest adds various powders which he pours from calabashes or horns. During the whole procedure the priest speaks to the spirits of the ancestors, only now and again interrupted by the assenting utterings of the participants. The rainwater from the previous season is sprinkled over the seed. Finally the priest distributes the seed with the spoon. For each spoonful which is given to one of his subjects, the chief

receives one. After the ceremony, the seed is sown in the garden, or field, of the chief and his subjects.

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TSONGA FIGURE

Female wood figurine, North Eastern
Transvaal, South Africa
EARLY 1960s Collected ~~prior to 1960~~
35 cm (13 3/4 inches)

Private Collection

J. Witt.

CAT 92

Please Note

This article does not refer
to the one donated by
Udo Horstmann, but
it belongs to the same
group.

This figurine is one of four stylistically similar carvings collected during the 1960s amongst Tsonga-speaking people in the North-Eastern Transvaal. Very little is known about these unusual objects, shrouded as they were in mystery and in white cloth. According to Mr J. Witt, responsible for the collection of the four known figures, they were regarded as sacred objects by their owners, and would have been concealed from general view. All of the images are female, and all were ~~apparently~~ in the possession of women. They share too the features of a straight back and neck, bent knees and a rounding of the volumes. Prominent buttocks and breasts emphasise their sexuality [The similarity of execution suggests that they were the products of the same hand] but the enigmatic conditions surrounding their ownership and display renders impossible any speculation as to whether they reflect a wider tradition.

This figure is unusual in the expression of the eyes drawn with graphite on the surface. Interesting too is the extension of the use of the graphite to colour the carved ~~hair~~, a headpiece which does not relate to local headdress styles. The hands cradle a small face, but again there appears to be no explanation or precedent for this image. A metal anklet has been placed over the shoulders and rests on the hands of the figure. This anklet was possibly part of the regalia of the woman for whom the carving was made.

HAIRSTYLE.

RAINIER A SACRIFICE
NOT BELONGING TO THE
WOMAN FOR WHOM
THE CARVING WAS
MADE.

Although collected in the North Eastern Transvaal, in an area inhabited by Tsonga speakers, the figure is stylistically reminiscent of Makonde or Yawo carving from East Africa, and reflects the problems of attribution according to where a piece is collected. The carving is fine and striking in both its subject matter and its resolution of form, although these same qualities make it somewhat unconventional and enigmatic.

EXTRACT FROM

PASSIONS

TOPIK AND AFRICAN ART,

A COLLECTION.

LESLIE J. SACHS EDITION

JOHANNESBURG 1990(?).

The cavities are sealed off with wild bee's wax. Some informants say that to have a sculpture made means being able to afford such an expensive item. **MANUSCRIPT: CONTRIBUTION TO TRADITIONAL SCULPTURE**

J. With

before the final preparations are made to house the carving, a ceremony sometimes lasting a few days and nights is held. All members of the family (including all females) must be present. An animal is ritually slaughtered and this varies with the status of the family. It can be an ox or a goat, but sheep appear to be excluded. The ceremony is supervised by the medicine man and drumming and singing of praise songs is performed during the period. Each member of the clan tries to communicate with the ancestor represented by the figure, which is provisionally kept in the house occupied by the senior female. This communication is reached by falling into a state of trance, whereby the whole body shakes. Once communication is established, conversation is made in a language which no outsider appears to fully understand. The language is said to be the language of the ancestor. The spirit is asked to live in peace with his living descendants and also asked to accept his new home. If one person fails to communicate then the ritual has to be repeated. After that the medicine man with his novices again consults the divining bones to establish if the ancestor has accepted. Afterwards he indicates the place where the hut is to be built to house the figure. It can never be an existing one. This hut can also serve as the sleeping hut of the female head of the clan who is acting as a 'caretaker'.

After completion of the new dwelling a small platform is erected against the inner wall diagonally to the right when seen from the entrance (with the door usually hinged on the right ^{side} ~~side~~). The figure is placed on this platform and is covered with a spotless white cloth which must always be kept clean. This is done because

the ancestor's spirit appears to be white, like the water and the sky. One informant said 'at the sea the water and the sky unite, all men come from the water, the supreme god Tilo^① resides in all that is white, and she knows that her clan came from the water of the sea where the sun rises'. The platform is also used as a shrine, often with an ancestral tree planted in it and surrounded by calabashes containing medicines. Entrance to the hut is limited to the senior female who appears also to have a status similar to that of a priest. Small children are also allowed to enter, providing that they have not yet reached the age of puberty. Only when certain rituals are performed is the white cloth removed, but the figure will not be shown to anybody. The statue is only attended to and consulted by this one person.

① Tilo. Hat fully unadorned, Tilo iteans suy

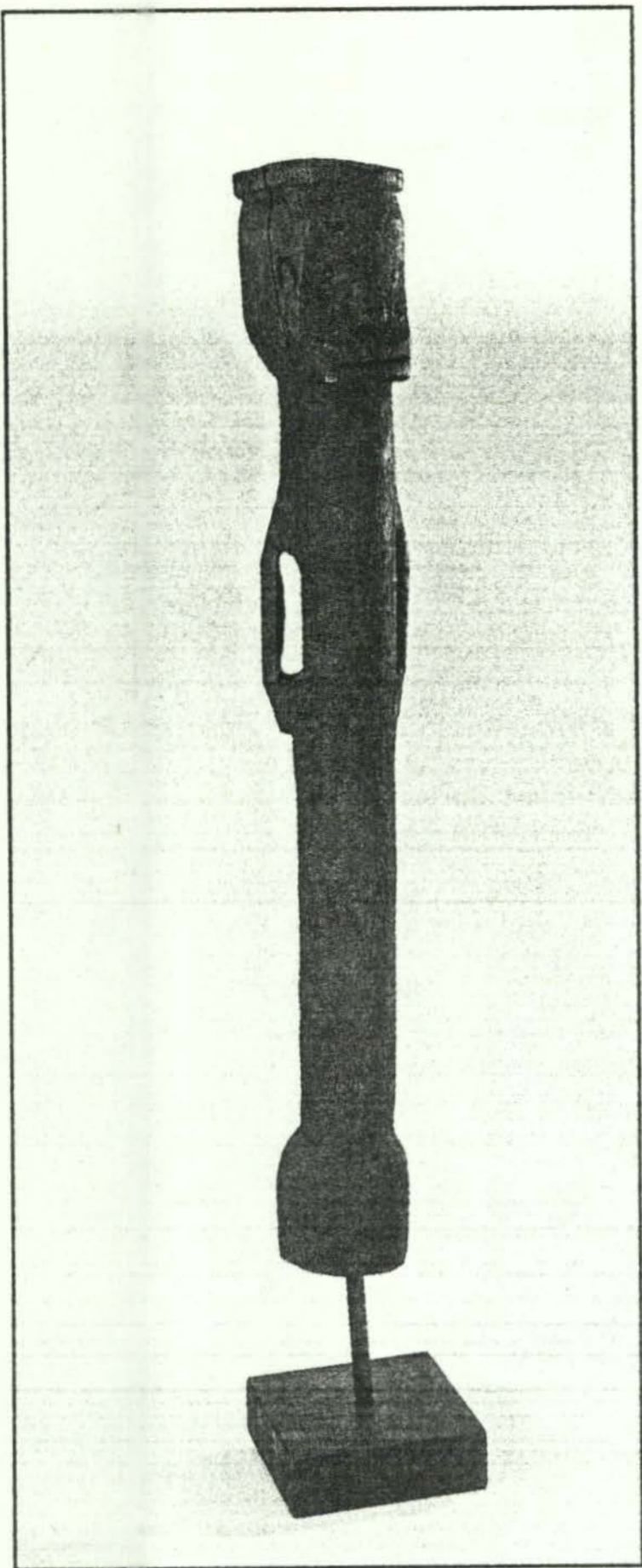
1993.08.10

HORSTMANN GENERAL FILE

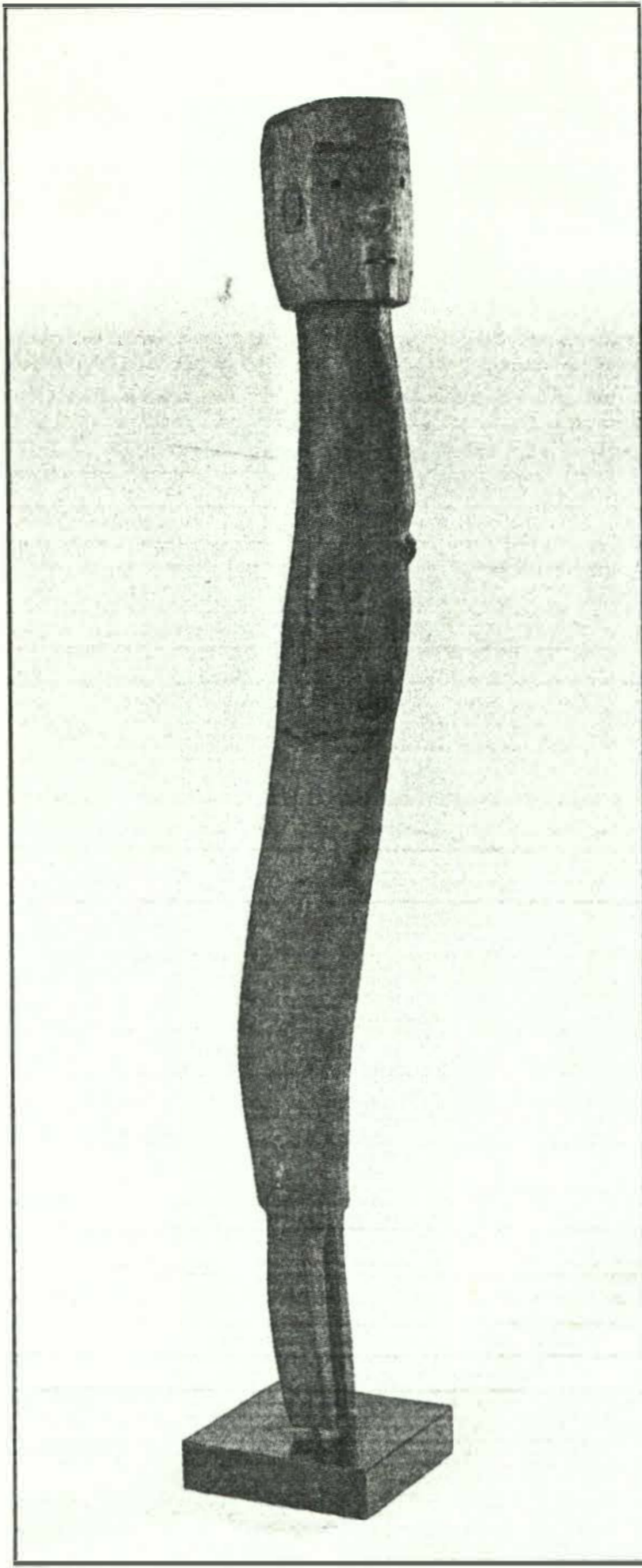
A GENERAL FILE CONTAINING NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINE
ARTICLES ON "HORSTMANN COLLECTION" IS KEPT IN THE FILE:

1992.11.01 Northern Nguni stool, wood

Articles referring to specific works in the collection
are filed in the relevant file, not general file.



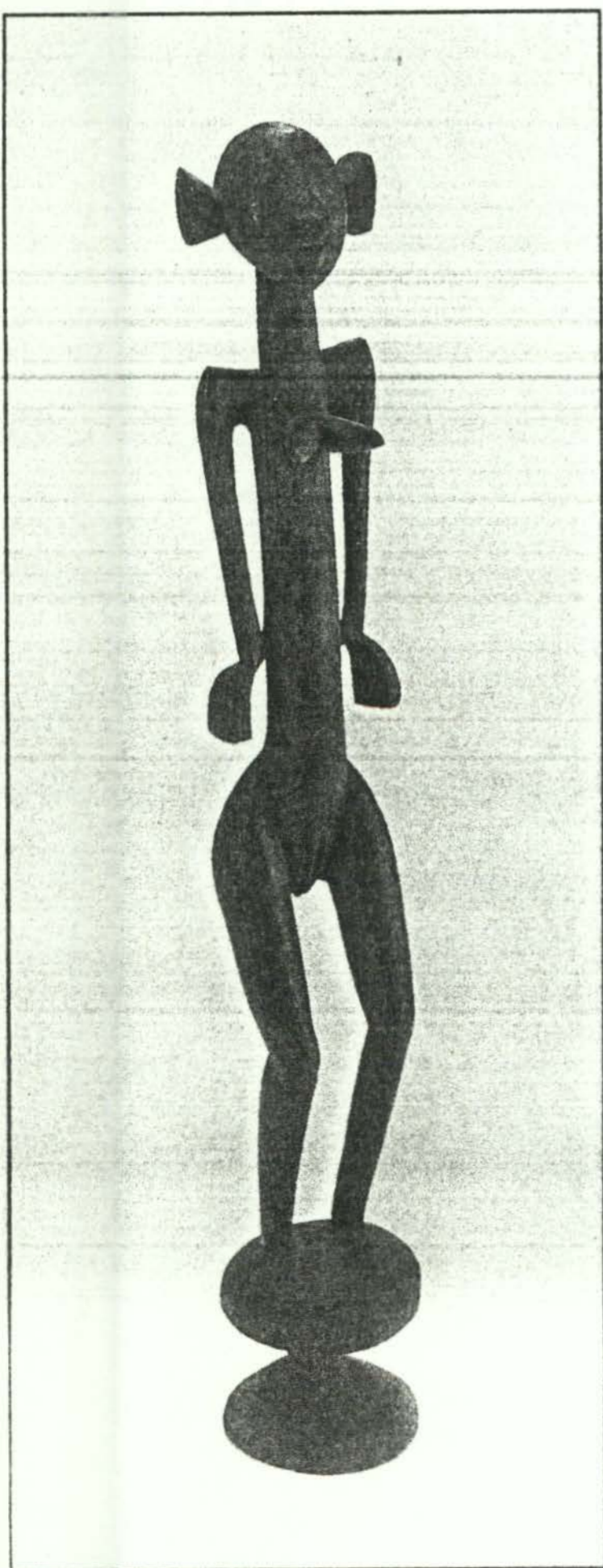
90



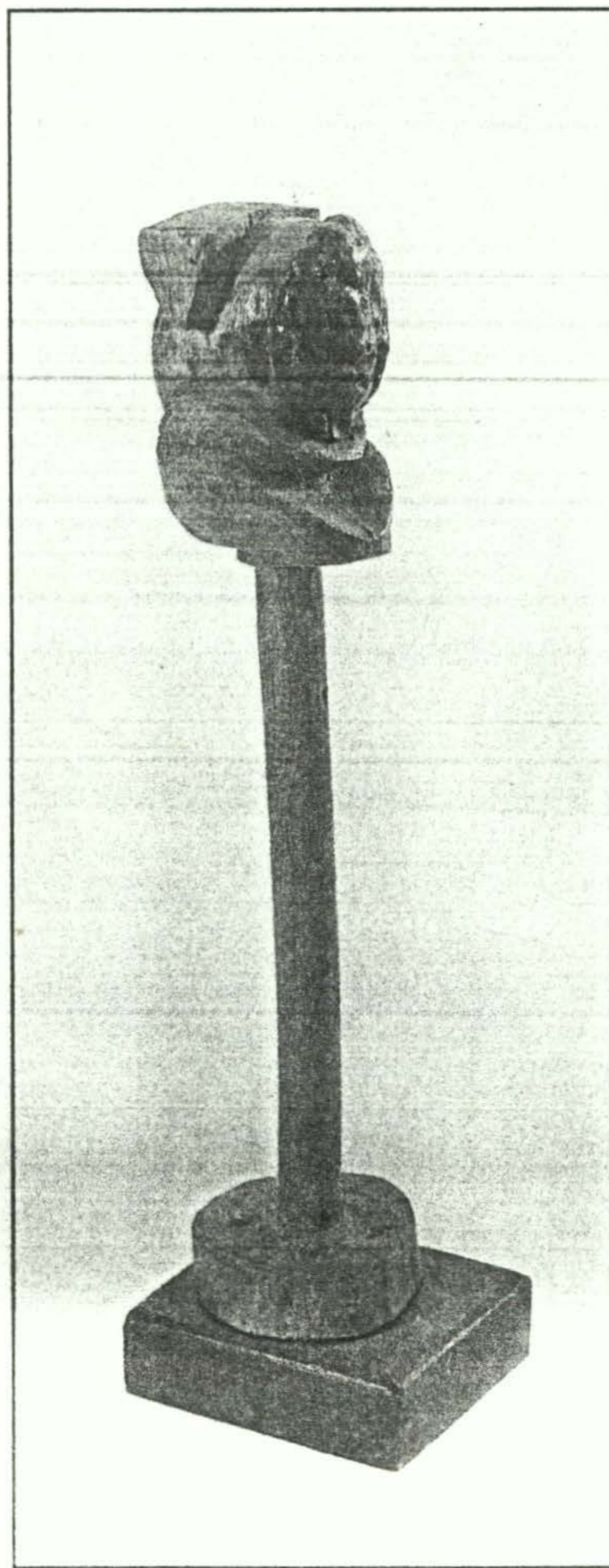
91

90 **Figure**
wood, pokerwork, seed
75,4 x 10 x 13
Tsonga
acc no: 1992.11.53

91 **Figure**
wood, pokerwork
85 x 8 x 9,5
Tsonga
acc no: 1992.11.54



92



93

92 **Figure**
wood, pokerwork
43 x 11 x 11
Tsonga
acc no: 1992.11.52

93 **House guard**
wood
25,5 x 6 x 6
Lovedu
acc no: 1992.11.55