

1992.11.54

figure

Tsonga



location: [redacted]

object type: figure

acc no: 1992.11.54

vernacular:

sub type:

contact
prints

community: Tsonga

sub-group:

location: [redacted]

shelf: [redacted]

geographical location:

b/w: c/t: c/s:

date and place collected:

dimensions:

h: 85

diam:

w: 8

mounted:

d: 9.5

date executed:

artist name, sex:

medium: woody Polder work

use:

purchase / donation / bequest:

udo Harstmann

price paid:

physical description:

insurance value:

authority: AGC 1992.11.10
CR 1992.11.04
MC 1992.08.07

original collection no:

object type translation:

catalogues:

JOHANNESBURG ART GALLERY

EXHIBITIONS
REGISTER

ARTIST: Tsonger

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1992.11.54

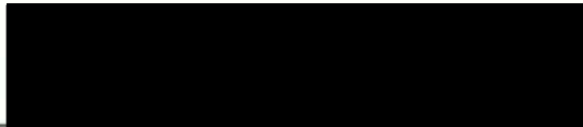
NAME OF GALLERY	ADDRESS	DATES
1 SHB Gallery The Hertzmann Collection of Southern African Art		3 Dec 1992
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J OHANNESBURG ART GALLERY

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JOHANNESBURG ART GALLERY

PROVENANCE

ARTIST:

ACCESSION NUMBER:

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Juergen Witt

15.10.92

TSONGA GUARD FIGURES
NORTH EASTERN TRANSVAAL.

CATS 90,91

The guard figures were used to protect the property of its owner. They need not be in the shape of a person. As a rule two kinds of guard figures have been found amongst the Tsonga. Firstly those that protect the property and everything inside the yard and secondly those that protect the inside of a hut.

A property usually consists of a few huts and a kitchen, storing bins, a chicken hut as well as a kraal for animals. In former times the whole was encircled by a stockage about 3 metres high, or hundreds of branches of thorn trees, to keep wild animals out. The stockages usually had two entrances a main entrance and one leading to the gardens. They were closed at night. These entrances were always "doctored" to keep evil spirits away. The protective medicines were administered by a medicine-man/woman. This person will also decide where the medicine is to be placed. Sometimes it would be placed in the earth underneath the entrance and would therefore be invisible. At times however, a simple stick or pole which was treated would serve the same purpose. The two carvings shown here were also treated, at the same time they appear to have had some decorative significance.

The two large carvings were collected in the early 1970s, close to an area occupied by Low-Country-Sothos. It appears that both were made by the same person, who properly carved them to order by a medicine man, who in turn planted them at the entrance of his customer. It should be added that a fragment of such a figure was found with a hole made at the lower neck which could have served as a receptacle for the protective medicine.

Figures smaller than the two referred to above, were made for the same purpose but were kept close to the door of the sleeping hut. Carving No. is one like that. This unusual piece was found near present day Giyani in Gazankulu. It appears to be in the shape of a stylized human head with the described medicine still in place. The latter is, as a rule, always removed as it can be used to bewitch its original owner.

The original owner of this guard figure was just converted to Christianity and all his "Heathen" Possessions had been burned. This is usually demanded by the church. By burning all these objects the "evil spirit" of the past is also destroyed. This item was, however, overlooked and could be obtained without difficulty.

It is impossible to give a date as to when these figures were carved or put to use. A date of between 1940 and 1950 appears to be acceptable.

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.

All coll early 1960s

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1959/60

± 6 yrs later

1959 ± 6 yrs later

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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.

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

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Spoon

Chief ^{belonged to} Ngobe - ~~near~~ near Giyani Tsonga chief. Coll at his head kraal

110 age 14 died c 1965

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(Put thanks to Witt)

Put Tsonga in cat.

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Tsonga.

Lovedu.
TVI low level Sotho

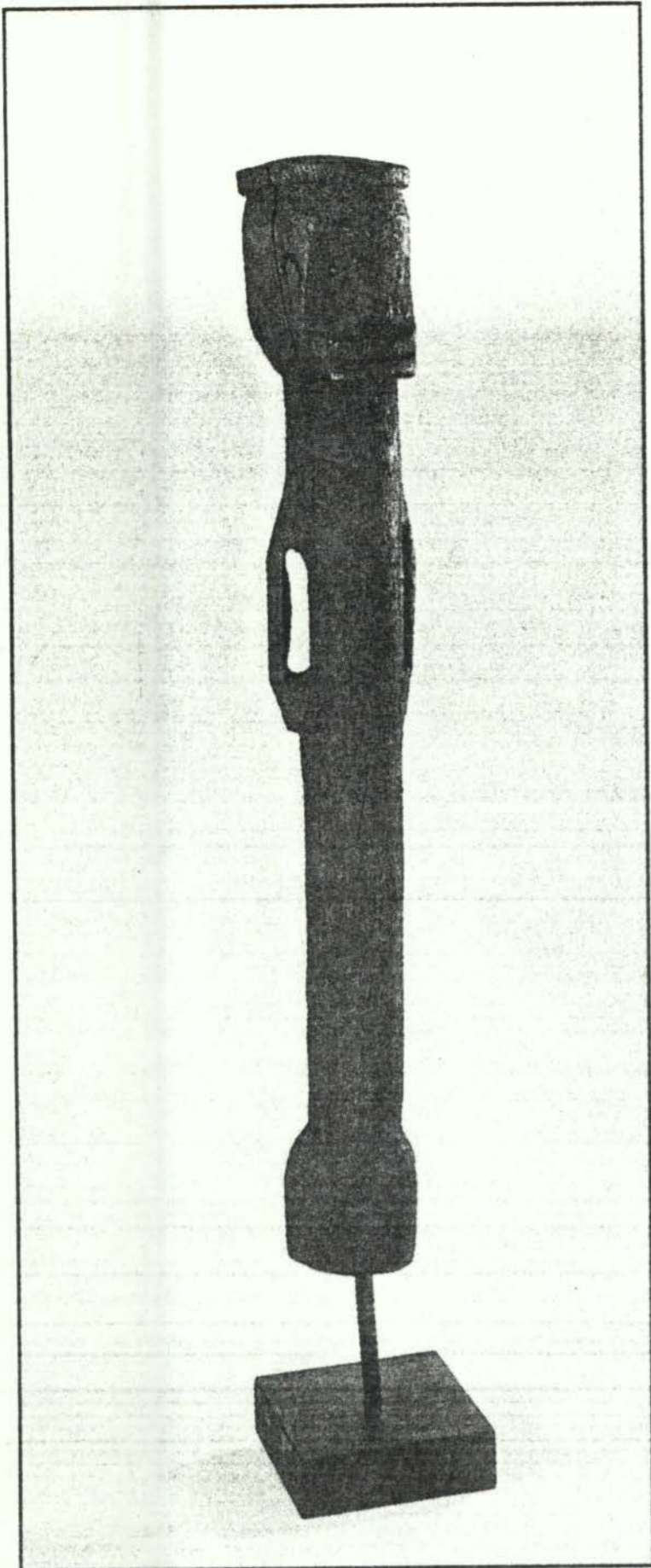
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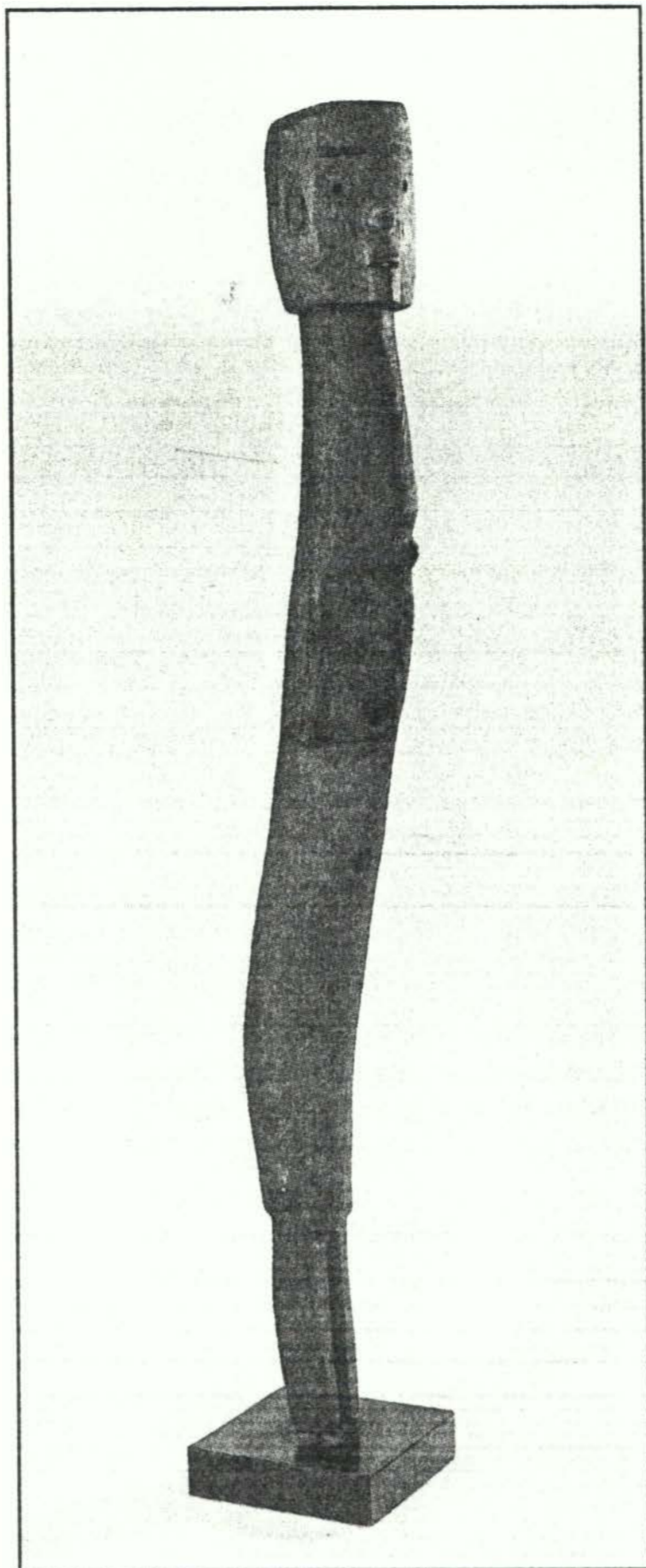
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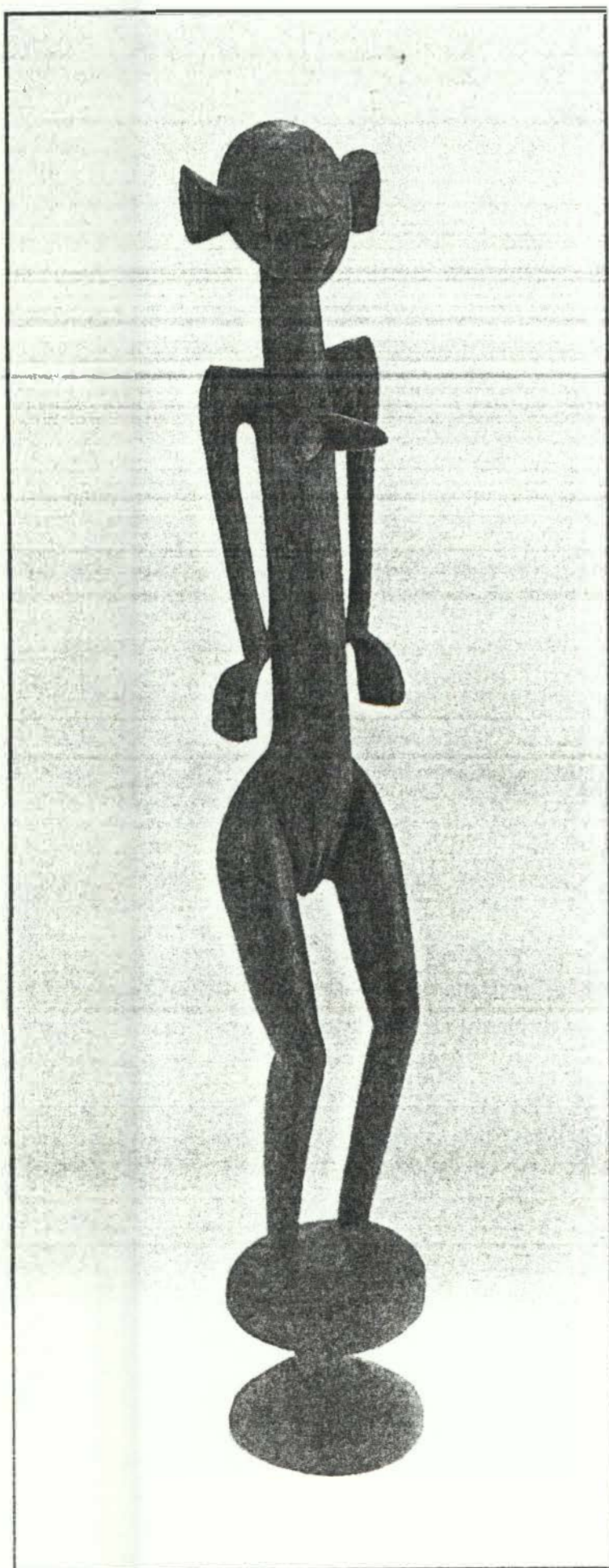
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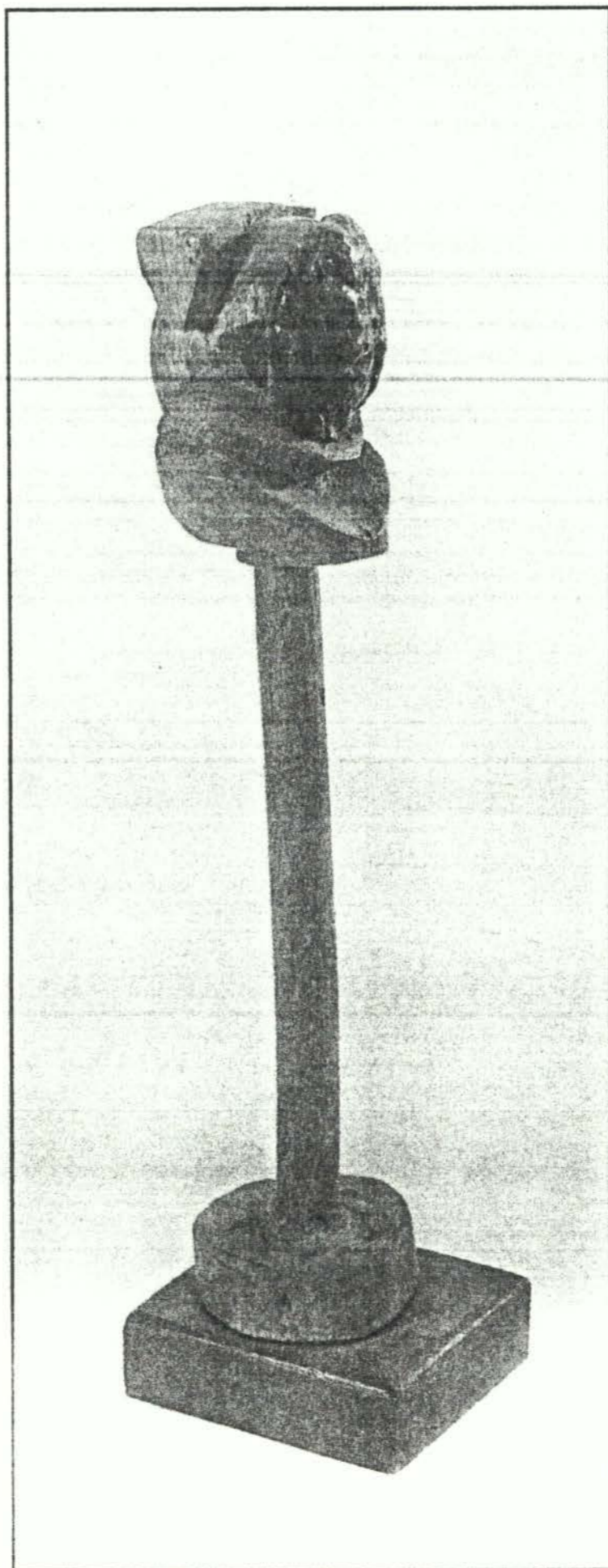
91

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

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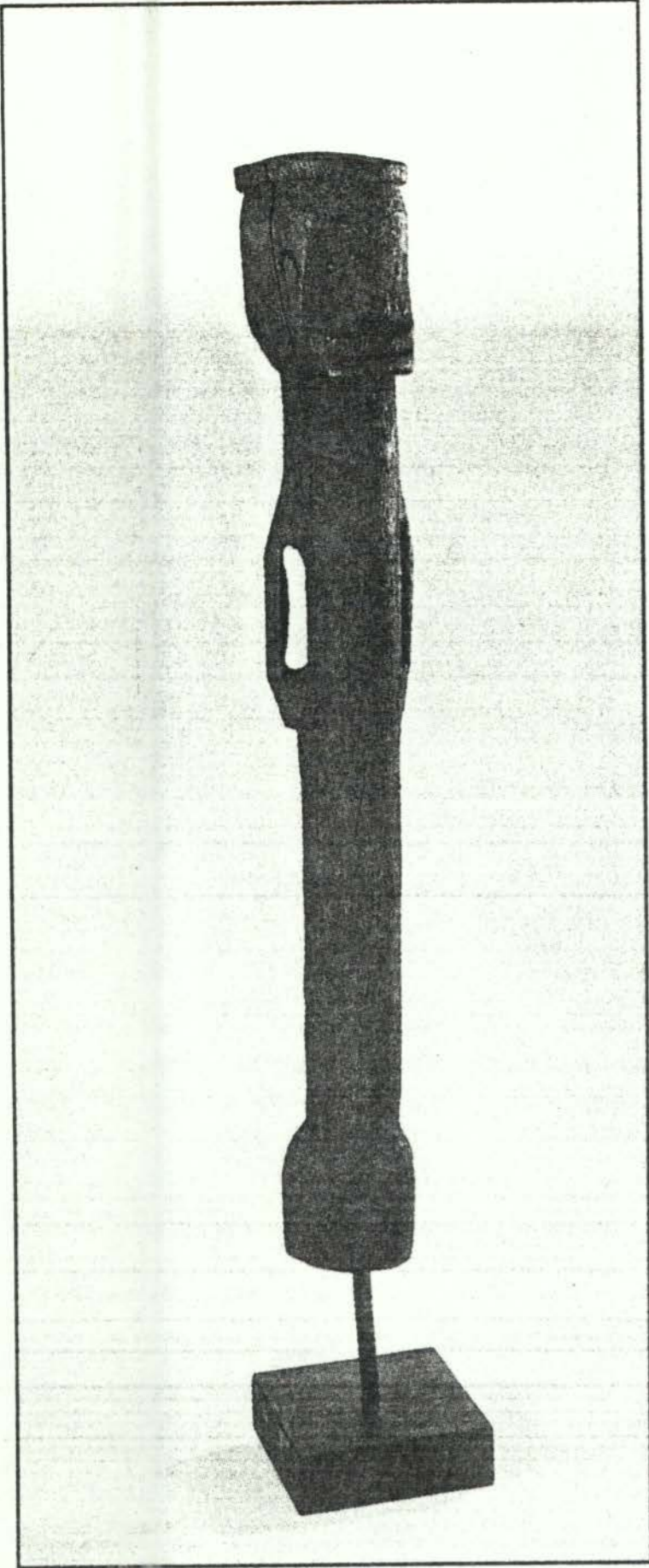
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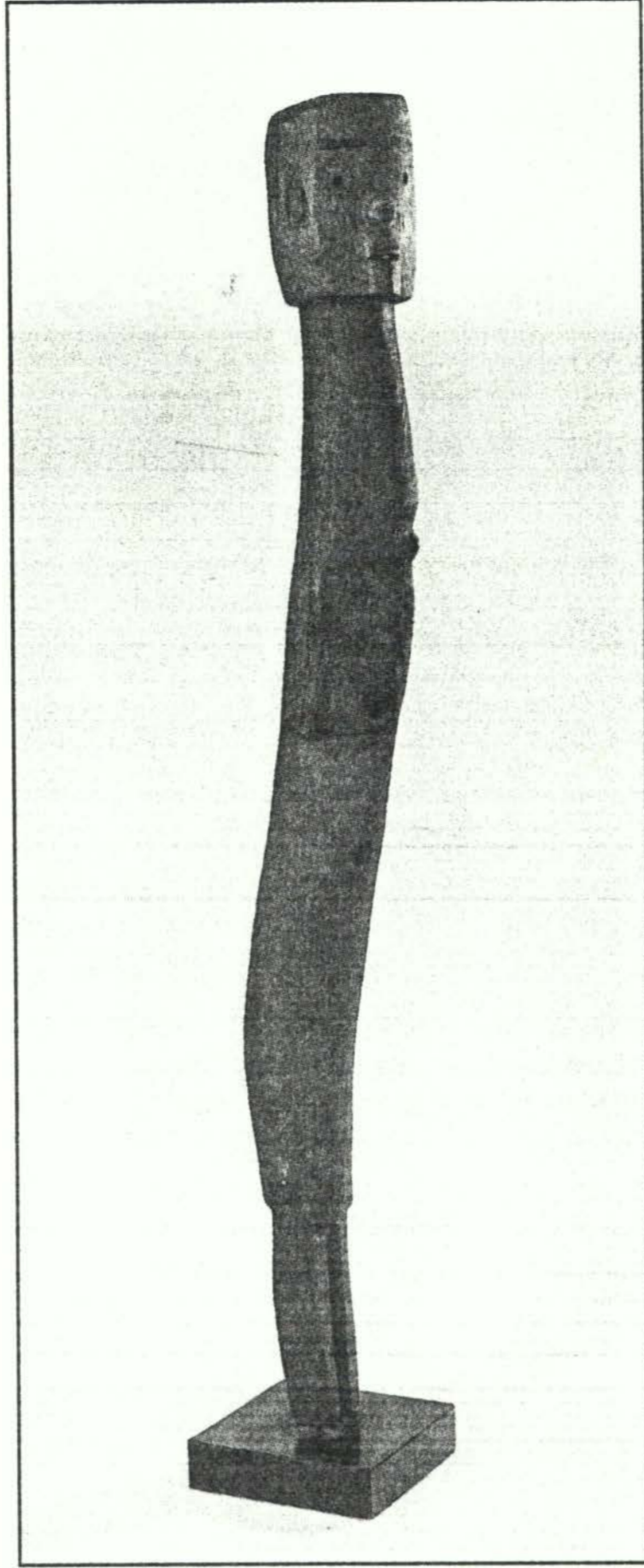
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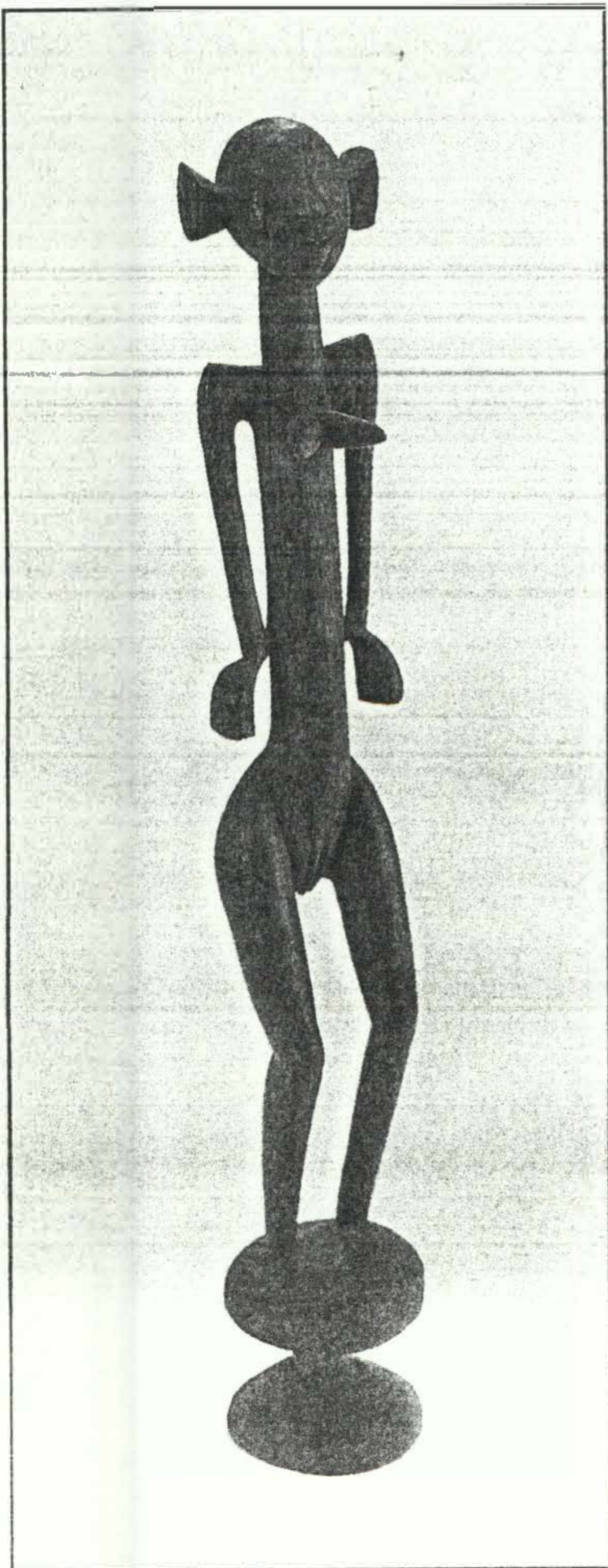
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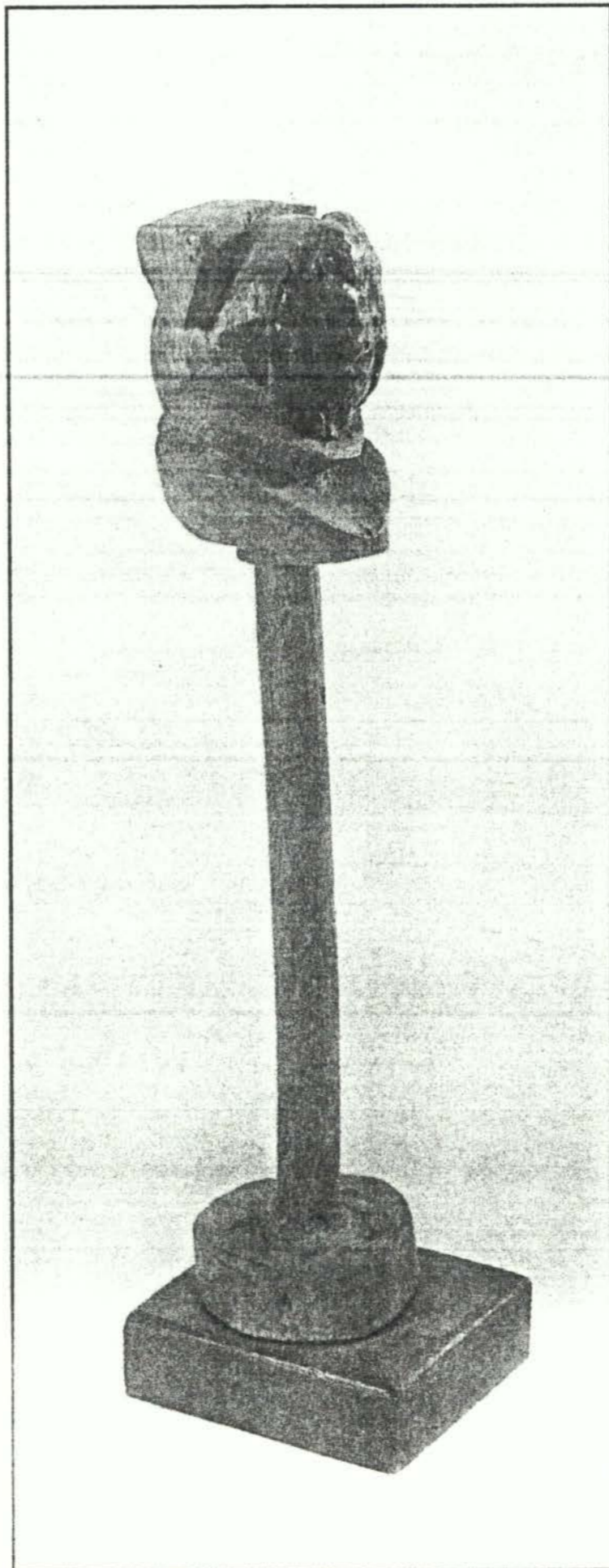
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