

Transvaal Tsonga - head - rest

1987.3-17



object type: head-rest	acc no: 1987.3.17
vernacular:	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> <p>contact prints</p> </div>
sub-type:	
community: Transvaal Tsonga	
sub-group:	location: [REDACTED]
geographical location:	shelf: [REDACTED]
	b/w: c/t: c/s:
	dimensions:
date and place collected: Elim, Transvaal, c. 1930	h: 15 cm diam:
date executed:	w: 24,5 cm mounted:
artist name, sex: male	d: 8 cm
use: for resting the head while sleeping	medium: wood

Trust donation: Anglo American Johannesburg Centenary

price paid: - (R168 000 incl. GST
paid by Trust for the Collection)

insurance value: R346 291 (114
objects in Jaques Collection)
(1990)

authority: AGC 1987-03-26
MC 1987-03-30

original collection no: Jaques Coll./
Africana Mus. 50/910

object type translation:

catalogues: Wanless, AN&N 26(7):297

physical description:

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 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



1987

Rankin, E. A question of restitution De Arte 38,
Sept 88 (Bull article in Jaques coll. general
archives)

REVIEW ARTICLE

is only possible because the San people represent no threat to any other group. In contrast, the admiration for Cape Dutch architecture may be linked to Afrikaner nationalism, just as Buthelezi's encouragement of the revival of Zulu customs and traditional dress relates to Inkatha's political aspirations. The knowledge that many examples of Cape Dutch architecture are protected by legislation and that excellent restoration programmes are underway, whilst the value of Zulu artefacts is scarcely acknowledged outside the context of curio shops and colourful tourist attractions, may demonstrate the current position of power of the groups with which these art forms are identified. On the other hand, the relative neglect of English artefacts, represented by early Cape crafts and furniture,³³ and of city culture, as in the failure to preserve many interesting urban buildings, may illustrate the lack of a sense of group identity and of corporate interest in political power amongst urban English speakers, who by and large seem to focus their aspirations on commercial or professional success.

It is not really of importance here to investigate what individual reasons might account for the neglect of different parts of South African material culture — what is significant is that a large proportion is neglected, and that all too little is done to preserve the built environment or art works outside the walls of institutions like museums.³⁴ Working on the unsuccessful Save the Colosseum Committee in Johannesburg some years ago brought home to me the level of public indifference to such issues: the campaigner rarely had to deal with anger or abuse but was perpetually frustrated in confronting a blank wall of disinterest. If one seeks an explanation for this general apathy, it probably lies in the general lack of education in the visual arts in South Africa, compounded by the sense of confusion with regard to a clear concept of identity that must be experienced by many South Africans. Through education, an awareness of the rich multiplicity of South African art and architecture could be developed, which would promote understanding and respect for the different facets of culture that are all a part of South Africa's heritage. But until that comes about it is incumbent on those in authority to accept responsibility on behalf of the country as a whole to institute and enforce means for protecting the visual arts. It would not of course be desirable for all art works produced in South Africa to remain there, for it is also important that local achievements be recognised and studied in a

wider context. It is essential, however, that significant works and representative collections be retained to avert cultural impoverishment in the future.

A National Monuments Act was promulgated in 1969, with amendments in 1970, 1971, 1979, 1981 and as recently as 1986. The clauses that apply directly to the visual arts read as follows:

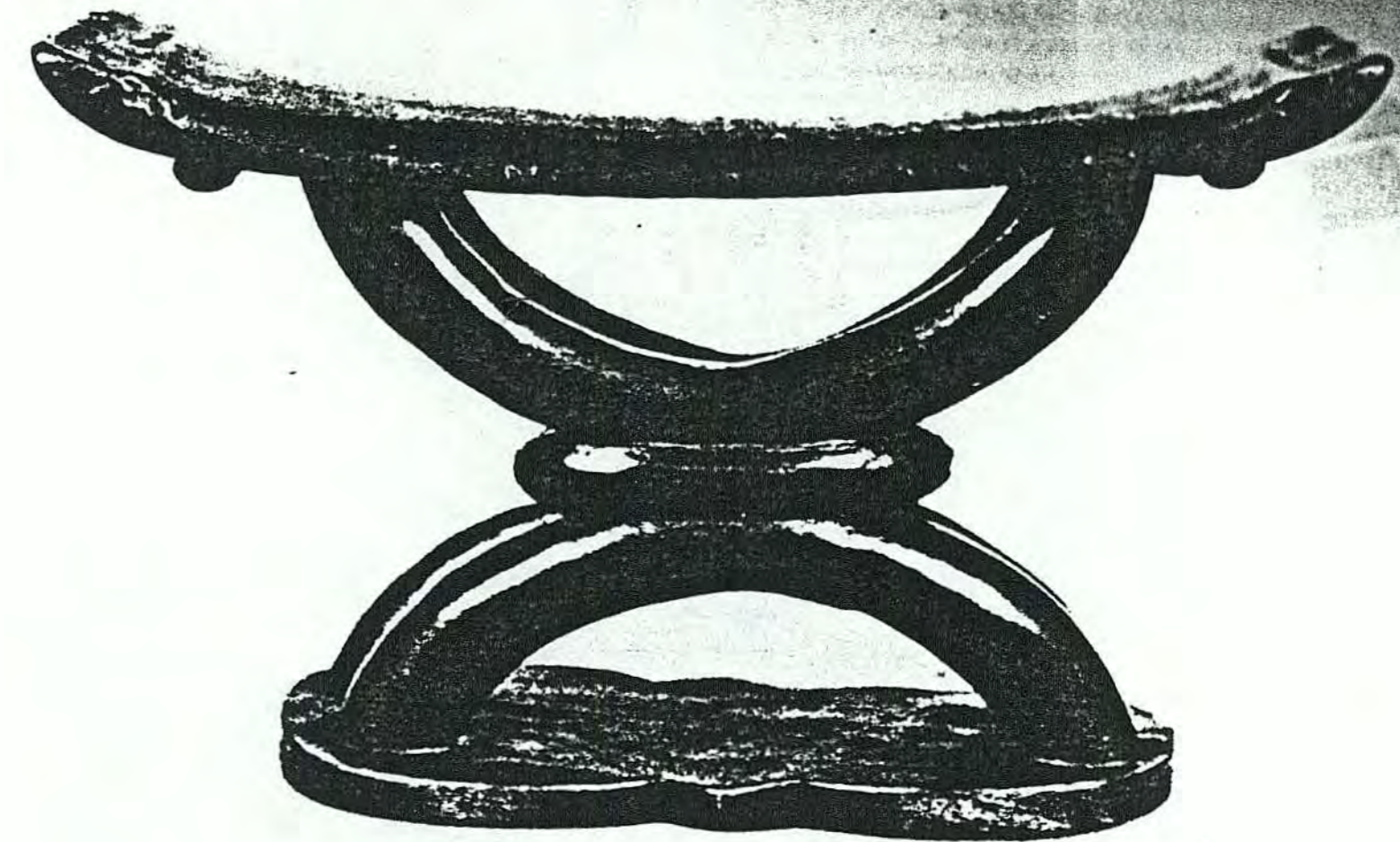
(2B) No person shall destroy, damage, alter or export from the Republic —

- (a) any painting, print, document, deed, seal, stamp or manuscript or collection or group thereof or an object made of paper in respect of which it is known or generally accepted that it has been in the Republic for longer than 50 years;
- (b) any object or collection or group of objects of any substance except paper, in respect of which it is known or generally accepted that it has been in the Republic for longer than 100 years;
- (c) any movable object or collection of objects of any substance, including manuscripts, declared by the council to be a cultural treasure.

.....
except under the authority of and in accordance with a permit issued under this section.³⁵

Permits are issued by the National Monuments Council appointed by the Minister of National Education.³⁶ An examination of the document readily shows problems in two main areas — in the definition of what is to be protected and in the implementation of the act.

In terms of the definition of objects that are protected, the period delimiting paintings and works on paper was reduced from 80 to 50 years in the 1986 amendment, but all other objects remain under a 100 year clause, as in the original act. In the context of urban culture in South Africa, one is already puzzled as to why such an age differentiation is applied, and why a painting that is 50 years old should be protected, when a sculpture is not eligible until it is 100 years old. But in the context of traditional black art, the application is even more problematic. Because of the vulnerability of materials employed by the blacks in the making of artefacts, notably wood, which has a limited life in the African environment, very few surviving artefacts in that category would exceed the stipulated age



5. Tsonga Headrest from the Jaques collection, c. 1930 (50/190). Reproduced with the permission of the Johannesburg Art Gallery.

limit: hence almost the entire material culture of rural blacks in South Africa is unprotected. Clause (c) does offer a further possible category which might be invoked with regard to such objects, but why exactly a 'movable object or collection of objects of any substance' would be declared a 'cultural treasure' is not clear. Moreover, an earlier clause establishes that the declaration of a cultural treasure in the Gazette may take place only 'after consultation with the owner',³⁷ and that such a declaration may be withdrawn at the request of the owner.³⁸

An interesting recent case which illustrates the limitations of the National Monuments Act concerns a collection of Tsonga headrests assembled

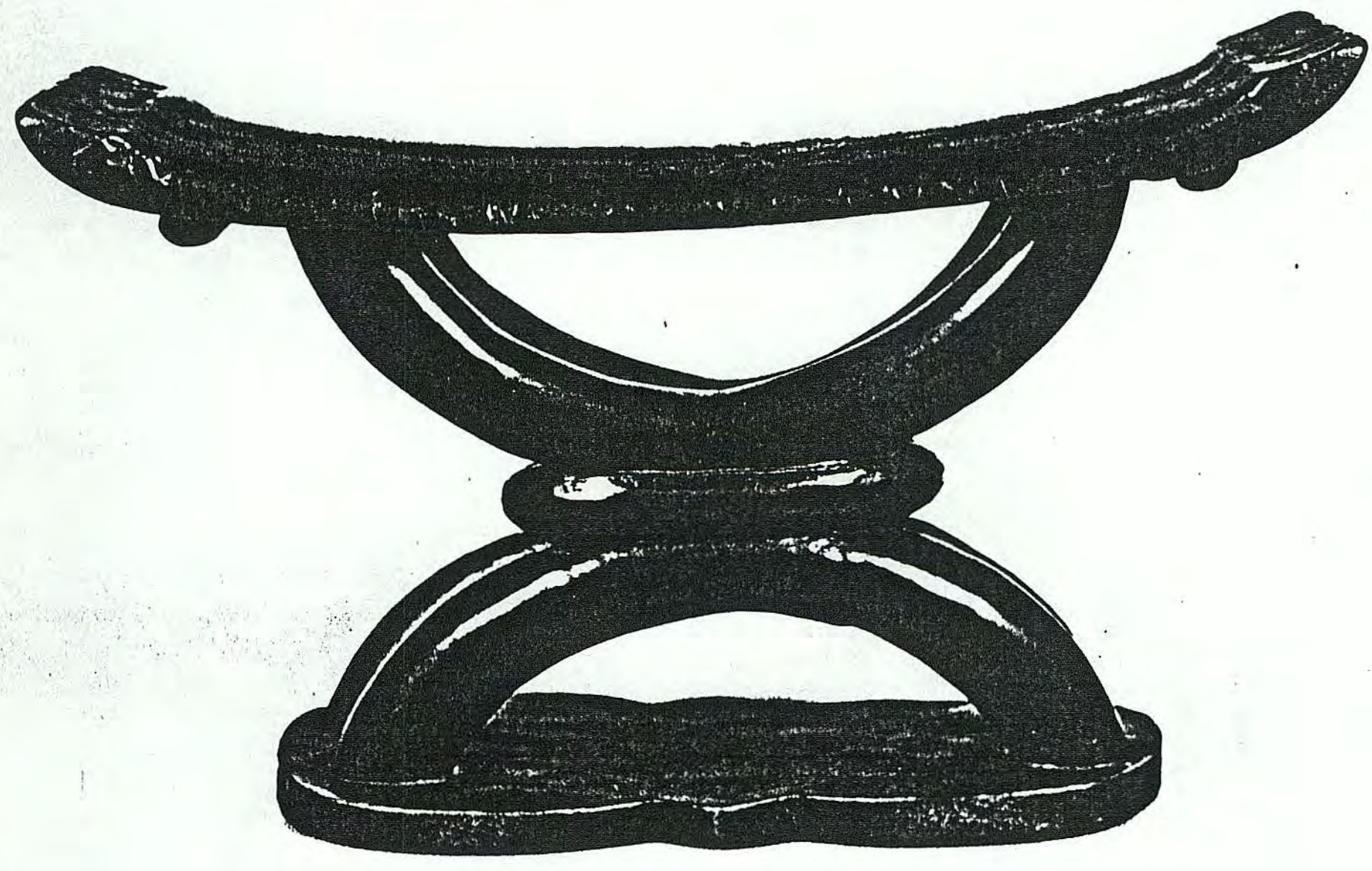
by Alexander Jaques (1895–1949).³⁹ Jaques was a Suisse Romand missionary in Southern Africa from the mid 1920s, when he began collecting headrests in the North-Eastern Transvaal/Mozambique area. It would seem that the collection was completed in about 1940; during the 1940s a temporary exhibition was mounted at the Africana Museum in Johannesburg. In 1959 a loan arrangement was made with the Museum by Jaques' heirs. The collection remained there and gradually became known as an important part of the ethnographic holdings. It no doubt came as something of a shock when the Jaques family recently declared their intention to sell the collection. The Africana Museum had expended a great deal of time and money as care-

J. Williams art.
Headed from
Chin, Tve.
Transmit Borge
C. 1980



50/905

taken for archive by J.R.
Jan 90



50/910

taken for archive in
Ippogri fo
(Italian public
for)
J.R. 27 July 1990



These photos lent to Prof E. Rouxin for reproduction
in archive 9.2.88 J.R. 9.3.89

Column: Two pillars sloping inward from crossbar toward a horizontal disc in centre from which two pillars curve outward toward base.

Base: Three, flat, linked circles.

✓ 46 50/908

Place: Elim, Transvaal.

Tribe: Shangaan.

Date: c.1930.

Source: Jaques Collection.

Size: Height 130 mm

Length 230 mm

Width 65 mm

Length of base 170 mm

Description: *Crossbar:* Rectangular, slightly curved, and decorated near the narrow ends with a row of zig-zags in relief. There is a hole near one end.

Lugs: Half cylinders running from front to back, with small raised ridge in centre.

Column: Two arches meeting at centre on a horizontal rectangular slab.

Base: A long piece is missing from the back now, but probably was roughly ovoid, with two small triangular pieces cut from centre front and back.

✓ 47 50/909

Place: Elim, Transvaal.

Tribe: Shangaan.

Date: c.1930.

Source: Jaques Collection.

Size: Height 125 mm

Length 220 mm

Width 80 mm

Length of base 165 mm

Description: *Crossbar:* Rectangular, curved, and decorated on the flattened, narrow ends with a row of diamonds carved in relief.

Lugs: Side facing, flared, and decorated with incised rectangles.

Column: 'X' shaped, with curved pieces at sides across centre point, and with incised lines across the centre front and back.

Base: Two flat circles joined by two small semi-circles at centre front and back.

✓ 48 50/910

Place: Elim, Transvaal.

Tribe: Shangaan.

Date: c.1930.

Source: Jaques Collection.

Size: Height 150 mm
Length 245 mm
Width 80 mm
Length of base 180 mm

Description: *Crossbar*: Rectangular, curved, and decorated on flattened narrow ends with a row of very small incised triangles.

Lugs: Half cylinders running from back to front.

Column: Two, parallel, curved 'X' shapes joined at centre by a horizontal disc.

Base: Roughly ovoid with two small triangular pieces cut into centre front and back.

Comments: The wood is dark and highly polished, and the whole piece has been carved and finished with care.

✓ 49 50/911

Place: Elim, Transvaal.
Tribe: Shangaan.
Date: c.1930.
Source: Jaques Collection.
Size: Height 125 mm
Length 215 mm
Width 65 mm
Length of base 125 mm

Description: *Crossbar*: Rectangular, curved, and decorated near narrow ends with a row of three large, incised rectangles filled with incised parallel lines.

Lugs: None. Part of the column would appear to be an extension of the lugs.

Column: Four short rectangular posts rest on a horizontal rectangular bar which, in turn, rests on a rectangular block decorated at front and back with the same pattern that appears on the crossbar.

Base: Flat and oval.

Comments: The whole piece is covered with black patches.

✓ 50 50/912

Place: Elim, Transvaal.
Tribe: Shangaan.
Date: c.1930.
Source: Jaques Collection.
Size: Height 150 mm
Length 220 mm
Width 70 mm
Length of base 165 mm

Description: *Crossbar*: Rectangular, curved and decorated near narrow ends with a row of zig-zags carved in relief. There is a small chip out of one corner, but the scar is worn and patinated.

Lugs: None.
Column: Two rectangular
row of zig-zags carved
to form four pillars
the ends of the cross
'V' shaped gap.
Base: Two flat circles

51 50/913

Place: Elim, Tr
Tribe: Shangaan
Date: c.1930.
Source: Jaques C
Size: Height
Length
Width
Length of

Description: *Crossbar*
pronounced slope fr
Lugs: One is broken
Column: Two rough
are decorated by rot
tions at front and b
there is a small pend
Base: Ovoid with tw
Slightly convex.

52 50/914

Place: Elim, Tr
Tribe: Shangaan
Date: c.1930.
Source: Jaques C
Size: Height
Length
Width
Length of

Description: *Crossbar*
ends with two rows of
Lugs: Formed by an
angular, facing sides
incised triangles.
Column: Two rough
joined top and bott
with two rows of in
the 'circle'.
Base: A flat rectang