

Nom : Female figure with child

Description : This type of large, relatively naturalistic female figure with child was not well known outside its region in Mali until the late 1950s. Fieldwork determined that groupings of iconic statues were displayed in Gwan ceremonies, a division within the Jo initiation society open to both men and women. Gwan addresses problems associated with fertility and childbirth. Through frequent washing and application of oil, the surface has darkened and weathered, obscuring the fine linear scarification patterns incised on the face, arms and back.

The dots of red, white and black pigment on the backs of the figures and on the center post are unusual. While Dogon masks have painted designs, figures and stools generally have encrusted or eroded surfaces indicative of ritual use.

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Source : Musée national d'art africain