

Nom : Tsonga male figure

Description : Male figure, Tsonga peoples, South Africa, Late 19th century, Wood

This standing male figure was once part of a male and female pair that may have been used in male initiation ceremonies or as emblems of rank set up in or near the houses of chiefs. It has traditional markers of gender and status-a carved penis sheath and a headring. The headring was worn by several groups in the region to signal age, status and one's readiness for marriage. The change in surface color on the thighs and hips suggests that for a long time this figure was clothed.

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Source : Musée national d'art africain