



## Letter

**In terms of Section 32(19) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)**

**Attention: Mr Tony Le Roy**

P.O Box 702  
Parlands  
Johannesburg  
2121

**Four different wooden carved headrests all approx 15cm tall and 20cm wide. One with three supporting posts, one with two posts on top of a semicircular supporting post, one on two patterned supporting posts and one on two vertically aligned opposing grooved semicircular posts.**

### **OUTCOME OF PERMIT APPLICATION TO EXPORT "FOUR TSONGA HEADRESTS"**

The South African Heritage Resources Agency's Permit Committee regrets to inform you that after careful deliberation it has decided not to approve your application for a permit to export "Four different wooden carved Tsonga Headrest" which are all approximately 15cm tall and 20cm wide. One with three supporting posts, one with two posts on top of a semicircular supporting post, one on two patterned supporting posts and one on two vertically aligned opposing grooved semicircular posts.

The reasons for declining the permit are as follows:

(a) The four headrests are of outstanding significance by reason of:

Rev Jacques is well known and highly regarded for his pioneering collection and documentation of Tsonga history, art and culture. He made a huge contribution by recording and illustrating and preserving the headrest styles and varieties used by the Tsonga people who lived in the northern part of South Africa in the 1920's. He added to and researched for a Swiss university collection in Basle where there is another Jacques collection and his research is deposited. It is largely his pioneering work that has contributed to the appreciation and value placed on headrests as works of art and desirable collectors' pieces today.

In view of the fact that this is a small early collection of headrests reflecting a certain antiquity and the existing styles and conventions of almost a century ago. Each example is carved in a unique style with beautiful execution, no two are the same. These four headrests are extremely rare, no longer made, and very difficult to locate today.





They have a symbolic and sacred religious aspect integrated into their design and manufacture. Formerly such objects may have been buried with their owners, explaining their rarity. These works of art have an extremely important provenance coming from an important collection formed by Rev Jacques of the Swiss Presbyterian Mission in the early part of the 20th century. The Johannesburg Art Gallery repatriated a Jacques collection of headrests at great expense purchased from a dealer in London in circa 1992.

(b) Its export would therefore be a loss to the national estate.

This is acclaimed as an important acquisition of heritage art in the Johannesburg Art Gallery collection. It is similar material to this with provenance and of unique heritage significance and aesthetic merit that a national collection Iziko South African National Art Gallery has sought to repatriate to South Africa since 1994.

In circa 1995 Iziko South African National Art Gallery managed to repatriate one headrest with financial assistance obtained from the Department of Arts and Culture and the German Government as part of the African Art Heritage Collection that forms a frequently exhibited and documented part of the Permanent Collection.

There is no doubt that they are of national significance and the works are also of great local significance, particularly to the Northern communities of Limpopo and Mpumalanga. The headrests are of exceptionally rare and unique manufacture each being different. They show skill and imaginative interpretation of materials. In addition they have a sacred and religious dimension to their design and manufacture and formerly such headrests may have been buried with their owners explaining their rarity.

Within the genre of headrests, those of Tsonga manufacture of this early period are considered by some specialists (eg Dr Antira Nettelton at Wits, Karel Nels etc) to be at the pinnacle of artistic achievement. Because this entire collection is so rare and does not often appear for sale, losing it would diminish the national estate.

You are now at liberty to exercise any right available to you in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act, No 25 of 1999, including the right to appeal against this decision should you choose to do so.

Please see appeal procedures attached.



The South African Heritage Resources Agency

Street Address: 111 Harrington Street, Cape Town 8000 | Postal Address: PO Box 4637, Cape Town 8000  
Tel: +27 21 462 4502 | Fax: +27 21 462 4509 | Web: <http://www.sahra.org.za>

**tsonga headrests**

**Our Ref:**

Enquiries: Azola Mkosana  
Tel: 021 462 4502  
Email: amkosana@sahra.org.za  
CaseID: 1840

Date: Friday April 26, 2013

Page No: 3



Should you have any further queries, please contact the designated official using the case number quoted above in the case header.

Yours faithfully

---

Azola Mkosana  
Heritage Officer: Heritage Objects Unit  
South African Heritage Resources Agency

---

Regina Isaacs  
Manager: Heritage Objects Unit  
South African Heritage Resources Agency

---

**ADMIN:**

Direct URL to case: <http://www.sahra.org.za/node/114957>



The South African Heritage Resources Agency

Street Address: 111 Harrington Street, Cape Town 8000 \* Postal Address: PO Box 4657, Cape Town 8000  
\* Tel: +27 21 462 4502 \* Fax: +27 21 462 4509 \* Web: <http://www.sahra.org.za>