

# La région lagunaire

ADRIAN SCHLAG  
TRIBAL ART CLASSICS



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TRIBAL ART CLASSICS

Membre de la Chambre Royale  
des Antiquaires de Belgique

Membre de la Chambre Belge  
des Experts en Œuvres d'Art

31 Rue des Minimes  
B 1000 Bruxelles  
Belgium  
Tel. 0032 25 12 93 08  
Mobile 0034 617 66 60 98  
adrian@schlag.net  
www.tribalartclassics.com



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The Lagoon Region between Ivory Coast and Ghana is a center for some of the most exceptional art styles of West Africa.

Influenced by its neighboring tribes, the Senufo, the Lobi, the Baule and the Akan, this ancient cultural melting pot was the birthplace for unique sculptural inventions.

The dynamism of the Mande communities, which resulted from migrations of the Ligbi tribes from the west and the northwest, and of the Dioula from the north, would make Begho the most important Southern Mande city from the 15th through the 18th centuries, and the most distant place from Djenne that maintained commercial relations with it.

The plastic conceptions, and the quality of the often highly sophisticated execution that certain masks and figures from this region display, are testimonies to the richness of these societies and to their level of accomplishment. This is all the more astonishing as these now Islamicized societies continue to excel in an art one thought to be dogmatically proscribed.

The exhibition presents examples of each of this area's major art styles, as well as some very rare examples of Do society masks.



# Lagoon Peoples

## La région lagunaire

The eastern coast of the Ivory Coast comprises an area of lagoons, where the population is divided into twelve different language groups. The cultural and stylistic unity of these people justifies grouping them together for the purposes of this chapter. Before colonization, each village was autonomous and, when threatened, they united to form a 'confederation'. Unusually, these people are not governed by chiefs, although a man's social position is determined by his age.

The sculptural art of this area can be identified by common characteristics. Carvings feature an elaborate coiffure divided into raised masses and sometimes small button-like scarifications on the face, while the influence of their neighbours, the Akan to the east and the Baule to the north, is also apparent.



## History

R. A. Freeman has acquired in Duadaaso (Ghana) , amongst the Nafana or Ligbi , a face mask. He attributes its origin to the Jimini ( the area of Dabakala). This remarkable piece seems to belong to the initiation society Do, typical of Mande minorities of the northeastern Ivory Coast . It was listed in the Armitage collection but has in fact been kept in the family of the explorer. His widow later the donated it ( 1948) to the British Museum .This is probably the first artifact that has been collected in Senufo country. R. A. Freeman publishes a photo in the book that reports of the expedition (Fig 3 ). (Freeman 1898 : fig. 34).

Figure 3 - " Sakrobundi Mask , polished black wood "

Mask probably Jimini origin ( Ivory Coast) but collected in Duadaso ( now Ghana) in 1888 (Freeman 1898 : 152, fig . 34 ) . It is in the British Museum since 1948

## Ligbi/Djimin

Related to the Senufo, the Ligbi people, living close to the Senufo have moved from west Ghana to the Côte d'Ivoire. The Islamized communities who live as traders and artisans among non-Moslem groups in extensive areas of northern Côte d'Ivoire are known for an institution called do or lo, one of whose most striking public manifestations is colorful masquerade dancing. Though in decline, the custom is still practiced on important Islamic holidays, especially at the end of Ramadan, the month of fasting. The feast goes on for several days. The performance of the maskers is accompanied by drums, singing and dancing, it expresses the joy of the faithful that the period of fasting is over. Prayers and sacrifices alternate for a full week before the assembled village.

With its lateral wings, Ligbi masks show the influence of Senufo kpelie mask. Nevertheless, the downcast curved eyes and the use of pigments are typical for Ligbi masks. To complete these masks, oil and make-up are applied and during the performance they are adorned with gold and silver jewelry. In the other type of mask (Yangaleye), human features are combined with the powerful bill of the hornbill bird. The Ligbi attach great importance to this bird, considering it one of mythical primeval animals, an attendant on the souls of the dead and a symbol of fertility. These masks are also popular among the do society. They are danced during the funerals of distinguished Moslem holy men, and their performances also mark the end of Ramadan. The masqueraders are greatly admired for the grace of their dance movements, which they perform in pairs and in perfect unison. They are also valued for the positive qualities ascribed to the hornbill, whose behavior and family life are considered exemplary by the Ligbi.



Sakrobundi Mask, polished black wood

Mask probably Jimini origin (Ivory Coast) but collected in Duadaso (now Ghana) in 1888 (Freeman 1898 : 152, fig . 34). It is in the British Museum since 1948.

## Attie / Ebrie

The two principal groups of the Lagoon area are the Ebrie and the Attie (also called Akye). The Anyi people, also called Angi, live to the north-east of this area and evolved an artistic tradition reflecting the influence of both the Lagoon and the Baule people.

The standing or seated statues of the Attie are some of the most beautiful of all African statuary, combining the best features of Baule artistry with a uniquely "lagoon" appearance.

The bulbous arms and legs, serene face and stunning body proportions common to the Attie show definite Baule influence, but they are more daring in their execution, with exaggerated volumes, and the resulting effect is unusual and very striking in my opinion. These magnificent seated female and male figures are excellent works, with a dynamic blend of detail and expressiveness, and the carving when viewed from the side reveals an extraordinary profile.

Unique to the Attie, the prominent, elevated scarification marks are often achieved by the insertion of small wooden plugs. Representing the forces of female fecundity, these statues are used in rituals to make these forces work. They are also employed by healers to cure sickness and to convey messages to the spirit world.

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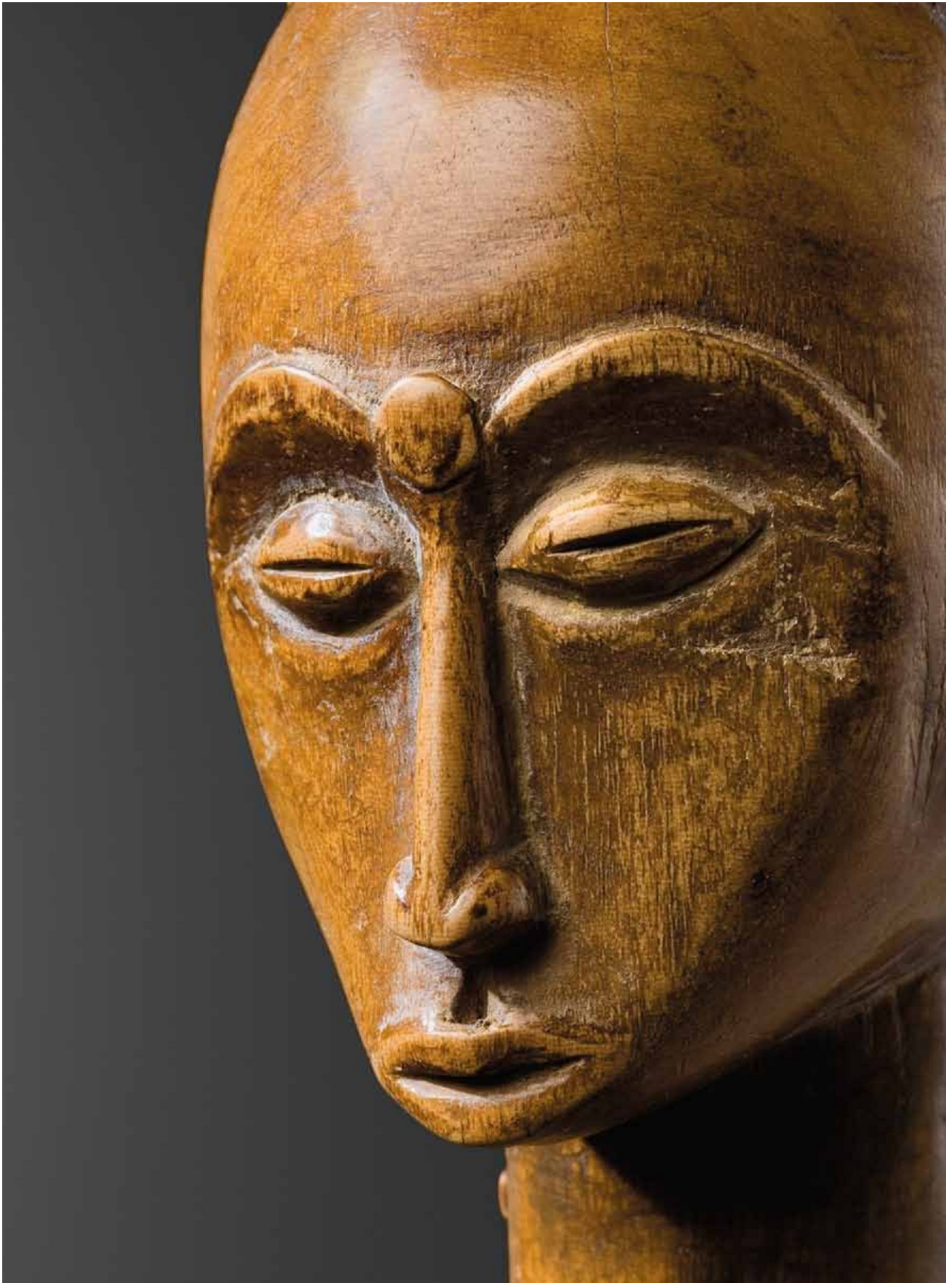
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**Abron / Attie**



## Standing male figure

Civilization Attie

Ivory Coast

Wood,

grey patina

Height 54 cm

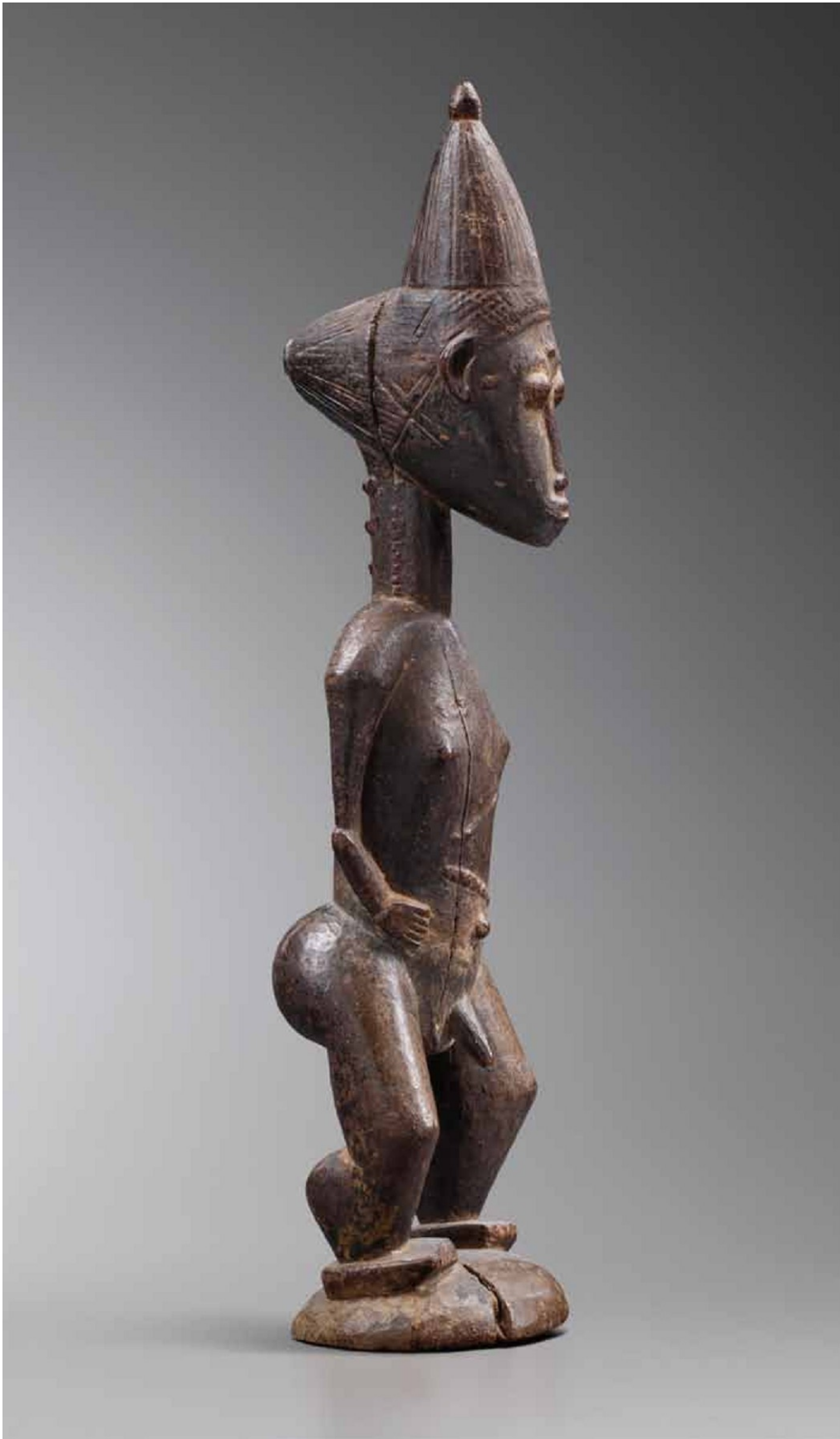
End of 19<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance:

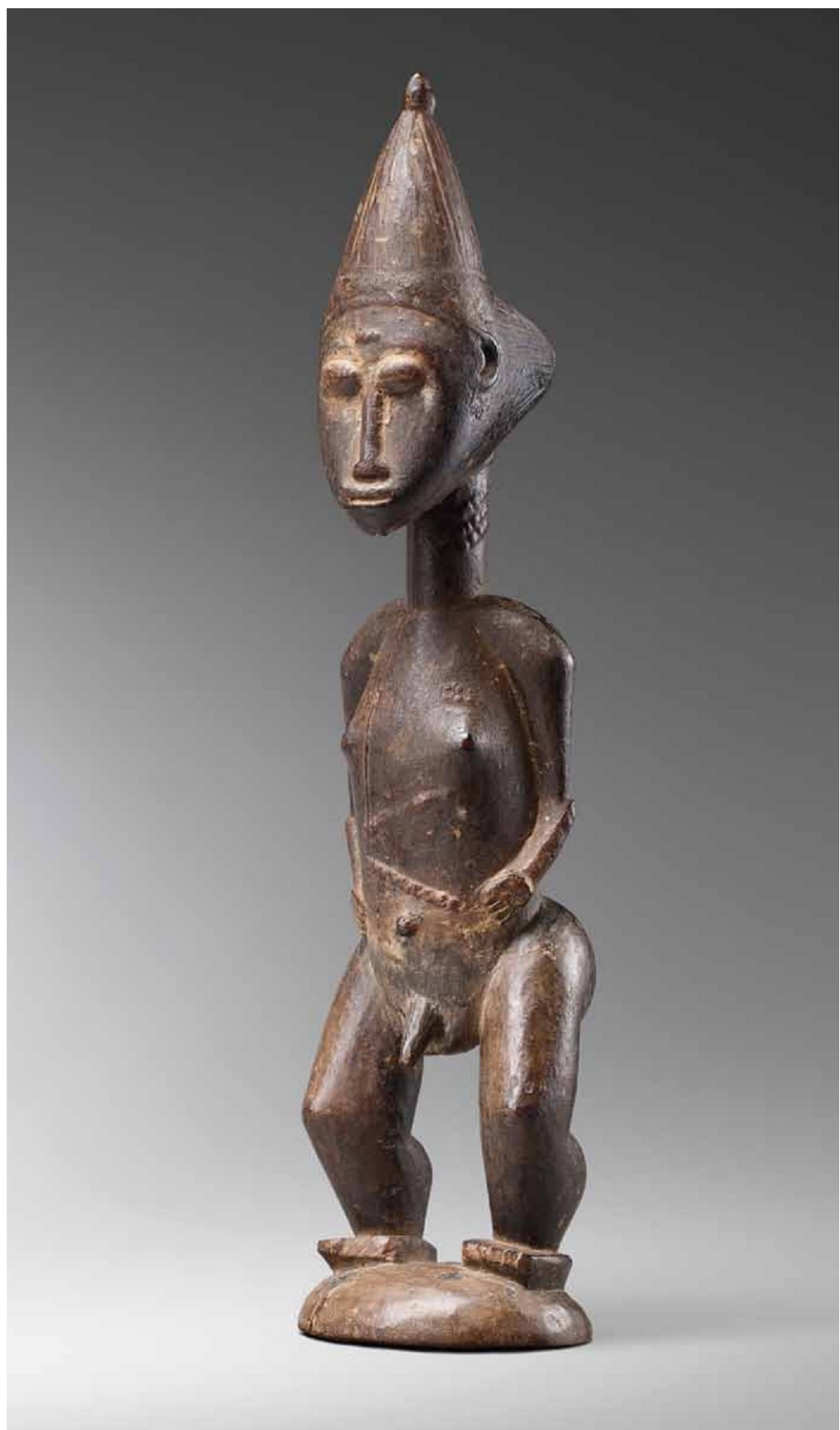
› Javier Lentini, Barcelona

› Dr. Adelheid Wurzer, Muenchen









## Standing female figure

Civilization Attie

### Ivory Coast

Hard wood,  
honey coloured patina

Height 43 cm

End of 19<sup>th</sup> century, beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance:

› Alain Lecomte, Paris

› Private French collection









## Male figure

Civilization Abon

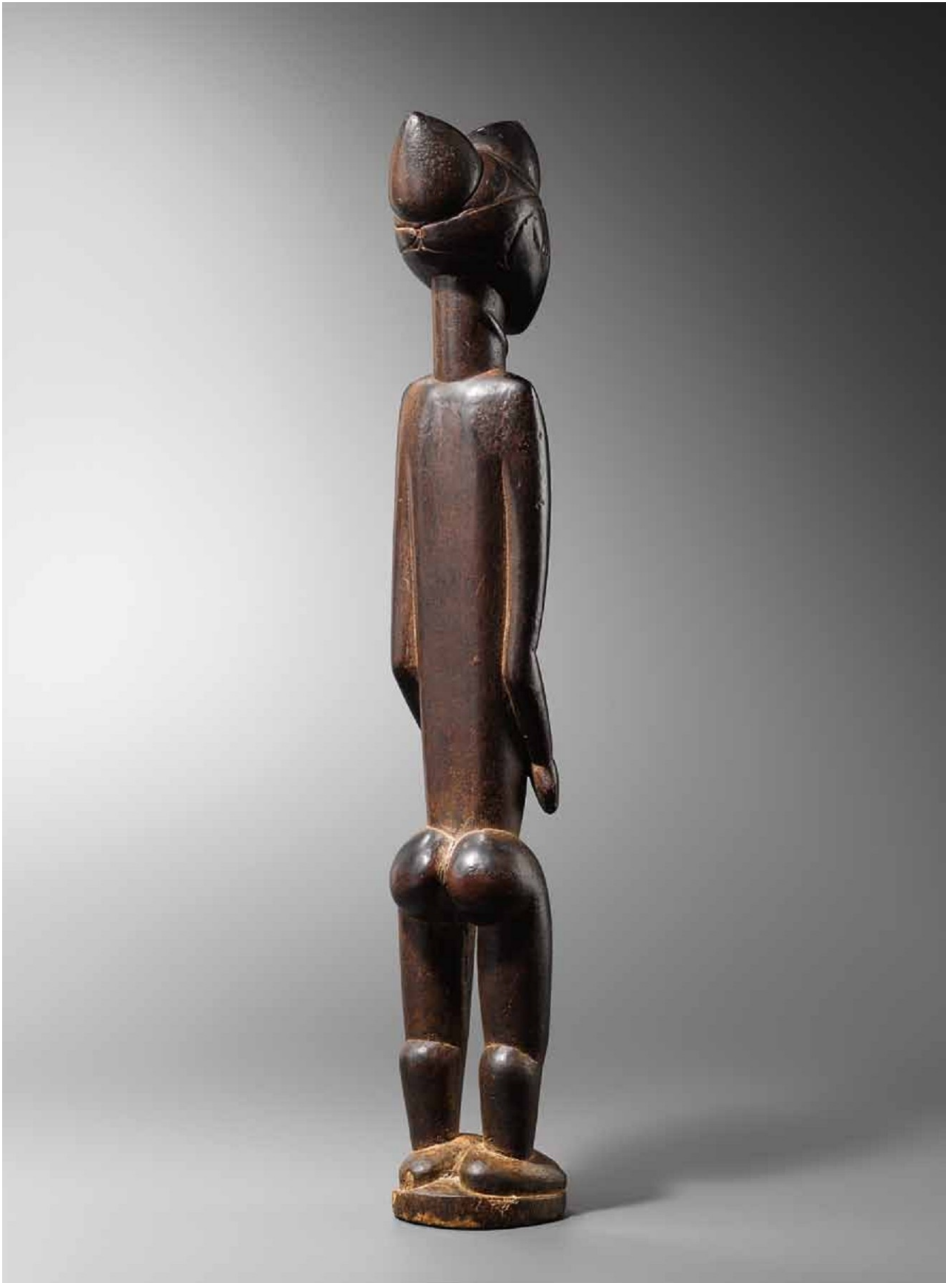
Ivory Coast

Wood,  
brilliant, silky patina  
Height 47 cm  
End of 19<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance:

- › Reginald Groux, Paris (avant 1989)
- › Ancienne collection Henri Bigorne









## Standing male figure

Civilization Attie

Ivory Coast

Wood,  
brilliant, silky patina  
Height 37,5 cm  
End of 19<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance:

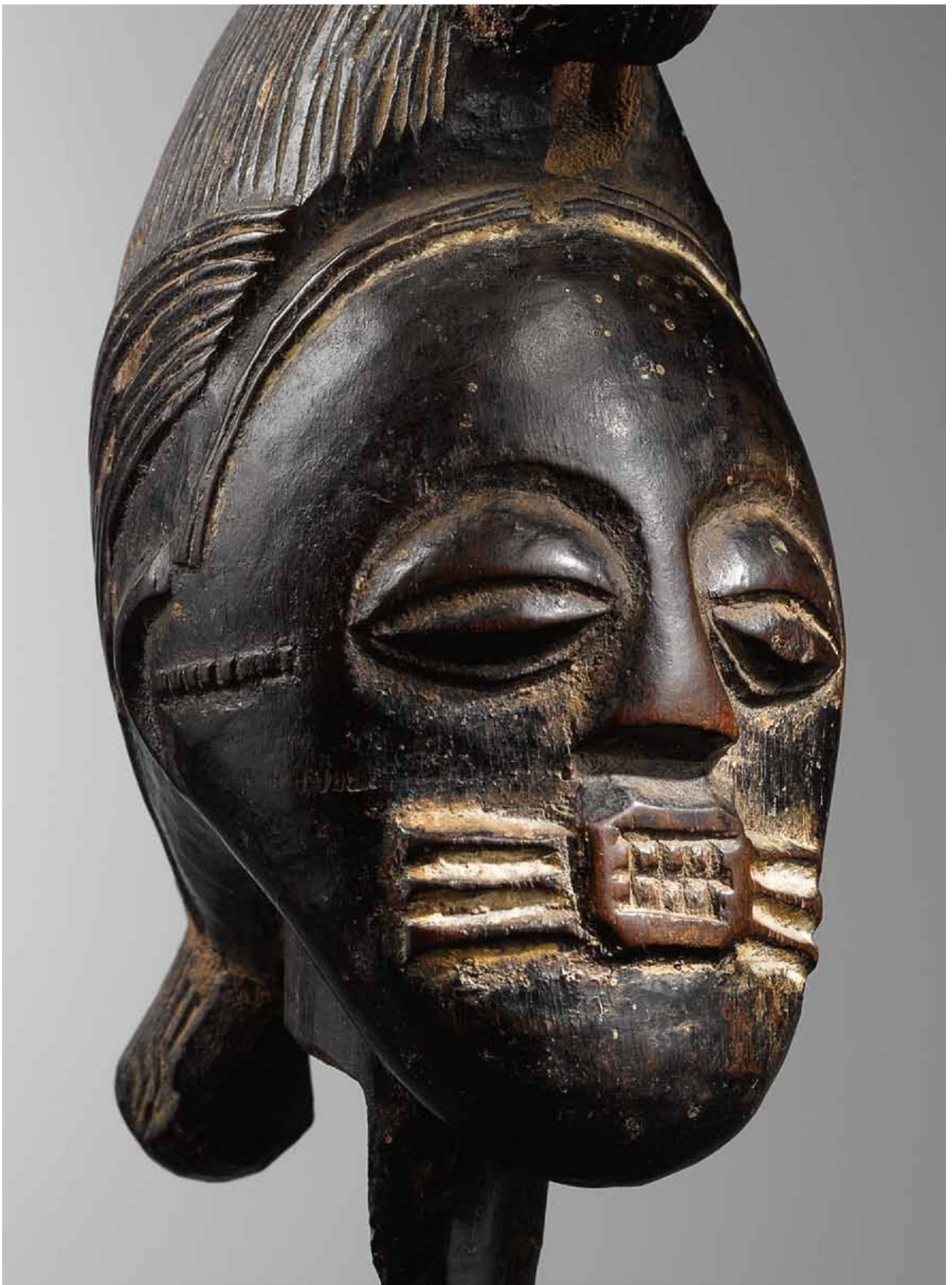
› German private collection







## Kulango



## Standing female figure

Civilization Kulango

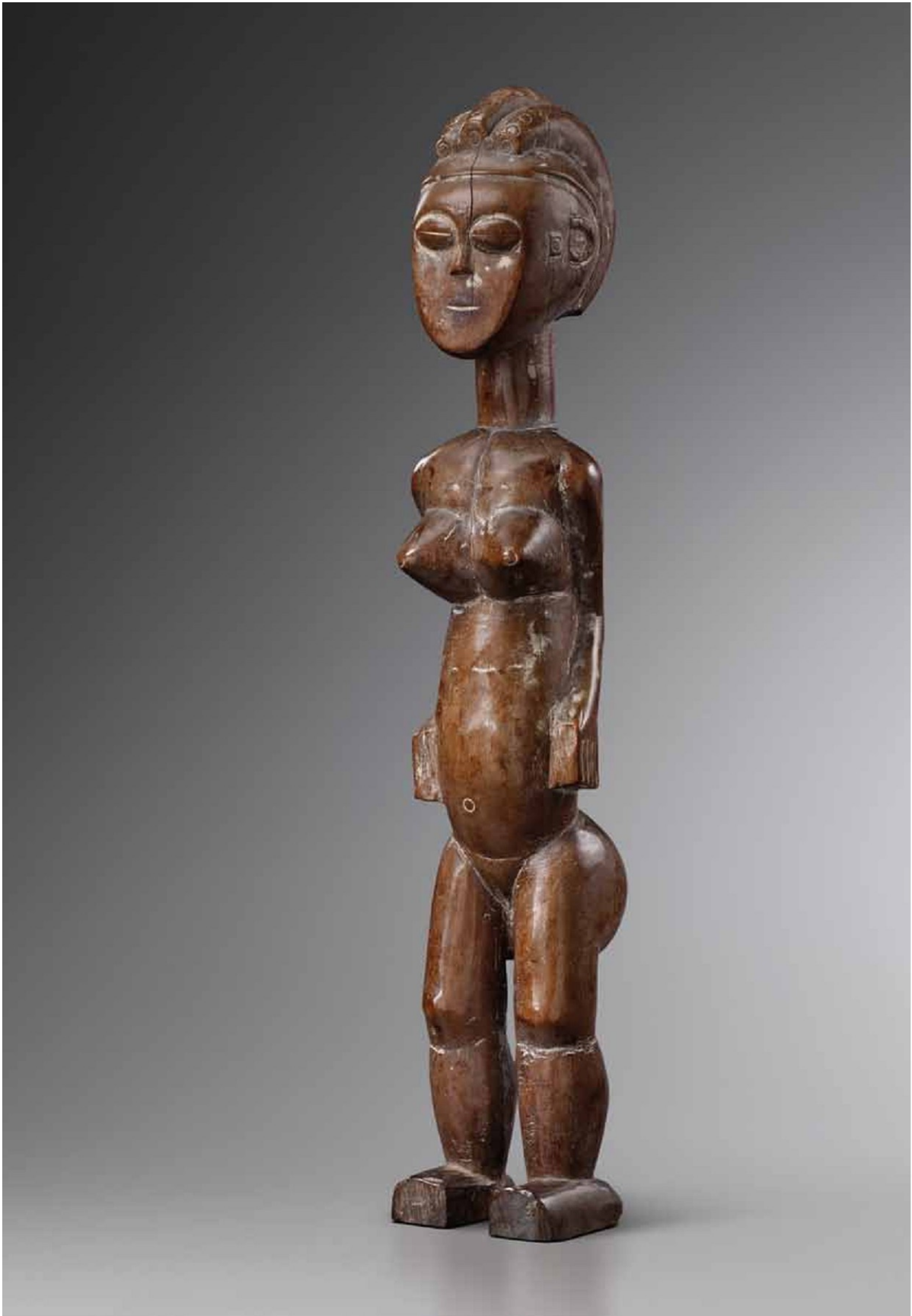
### Ivory Coast

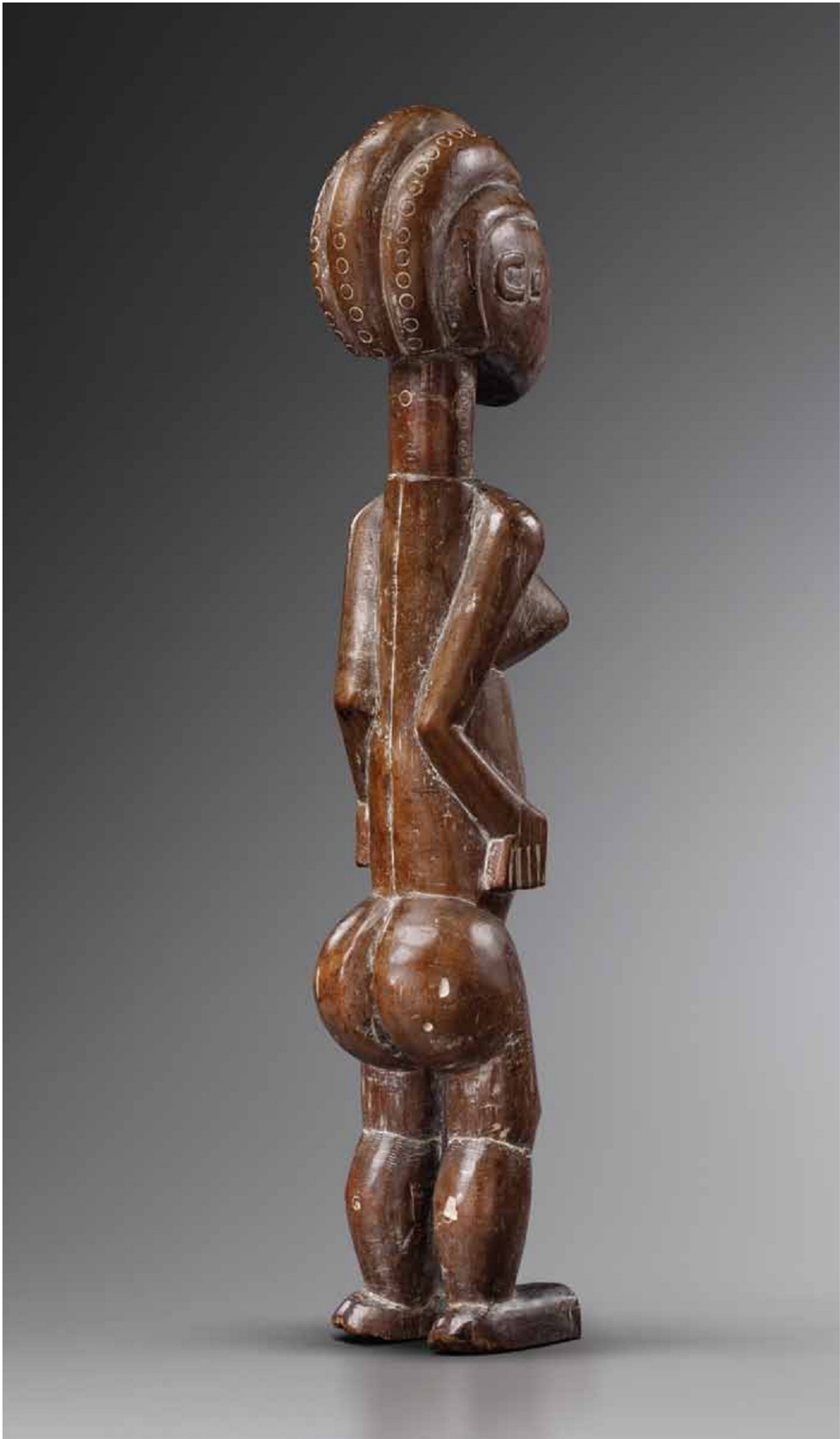
Wood,  
brilliant, honeycoloured patina.  
Height 47 cm  
End of 19<sup>th</sup> century

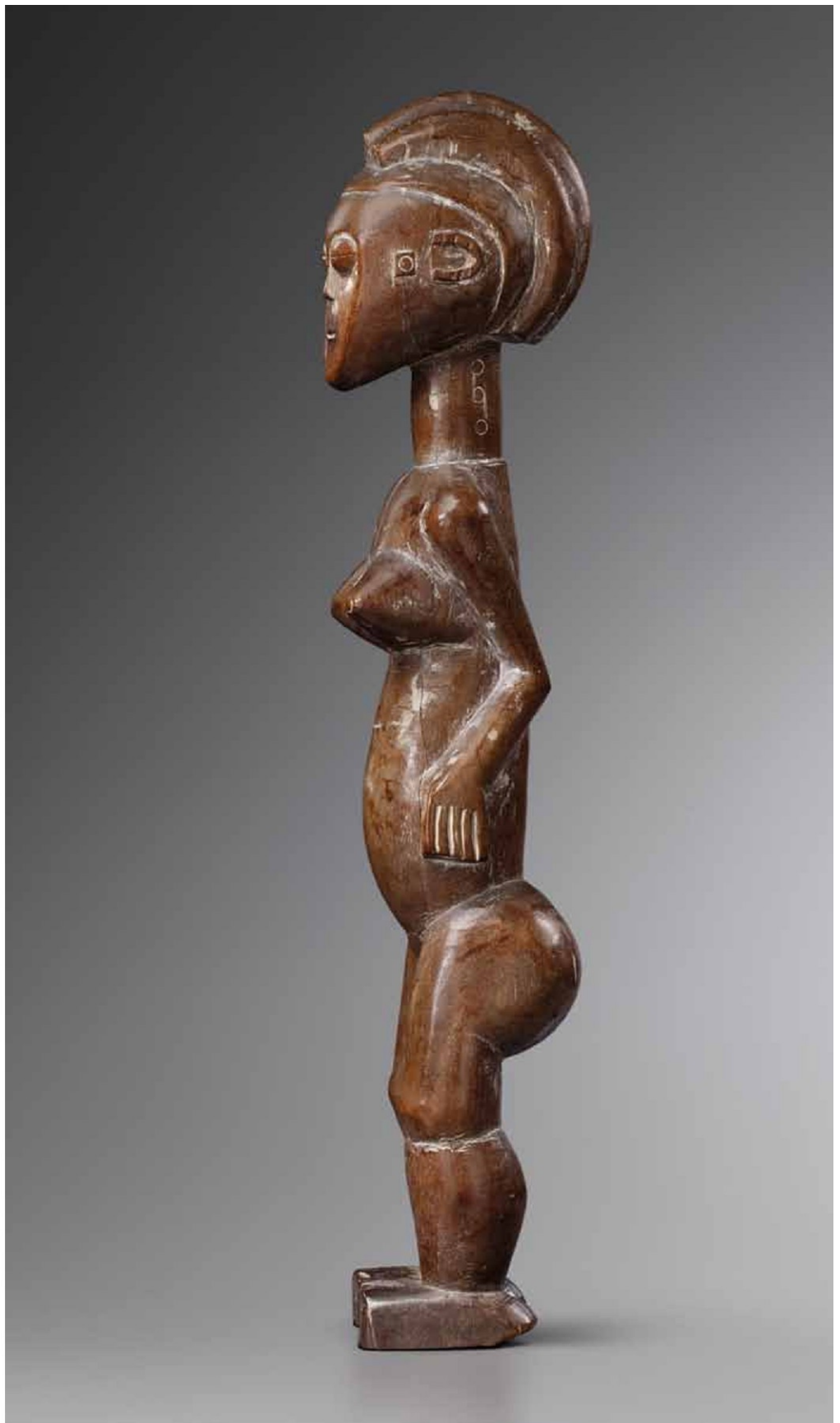
Provenance:

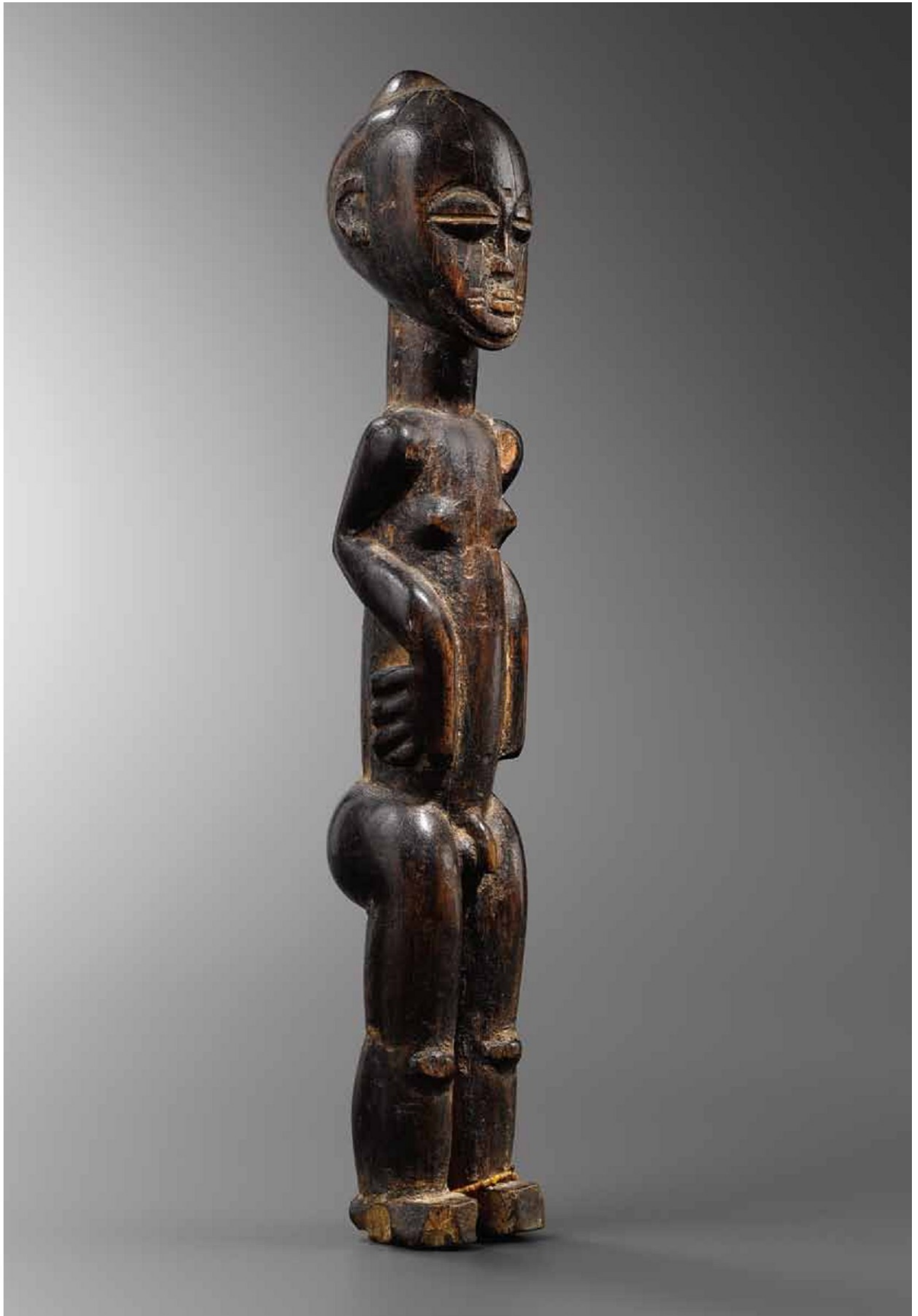
- › Franco Monti, Milan
- › Sanne Nies, Amsterdam







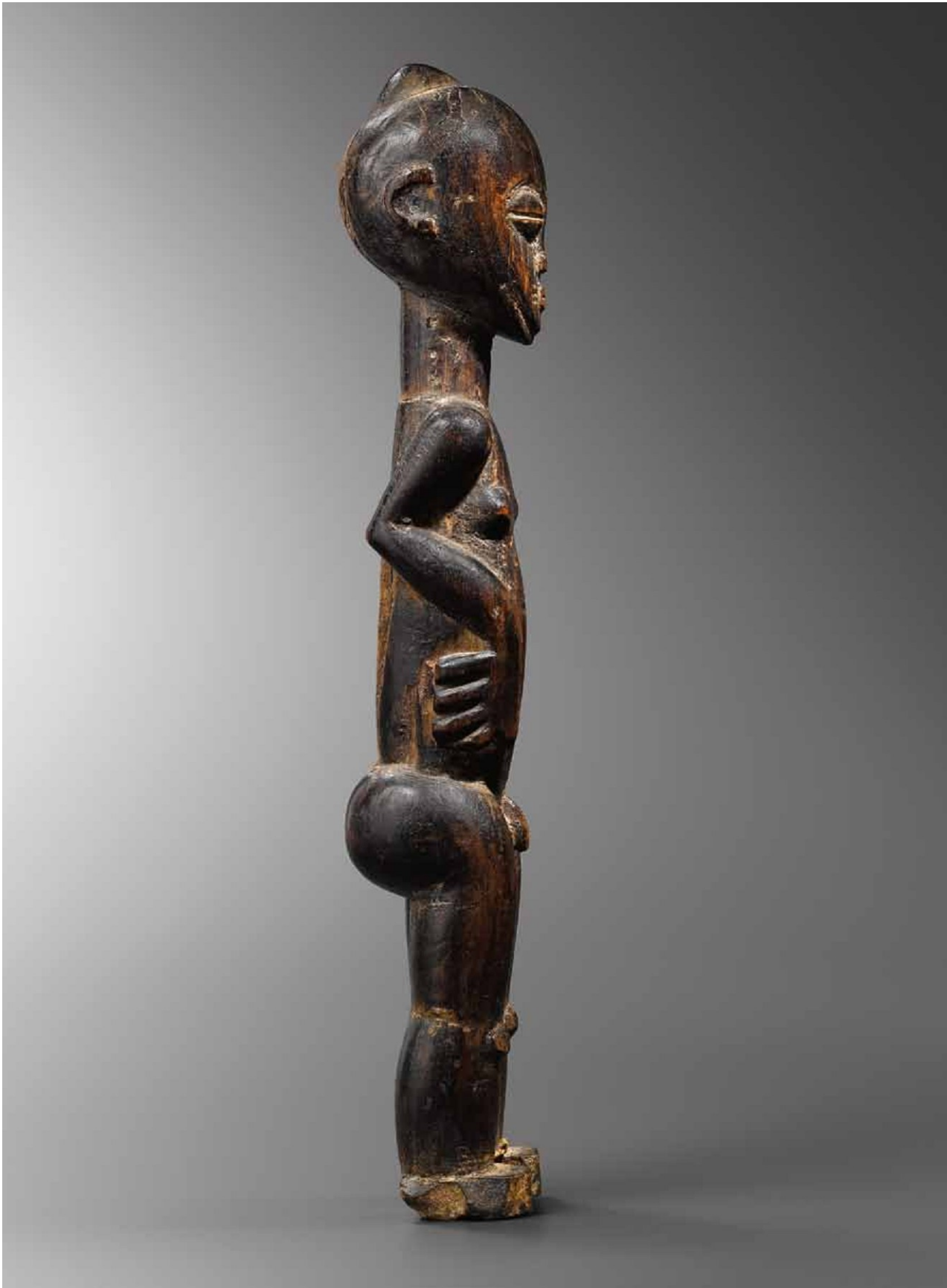




## Standing male figure

Civilization Kulango  
Ivory Coast  
Wood,  
brilliant, brown patina.  
Height 30,5 cm  
End of 19<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance:  
› Leonardo Vigorelli, Milan





## Standing female figure

Civilization Kulango

Ivory Coast

Wood,  
brilliant, brown patina  
Height 21 cm  
End of 19<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance:

- › Josef Hermann, Suffolk
- › Yann Ferrandin, Paris







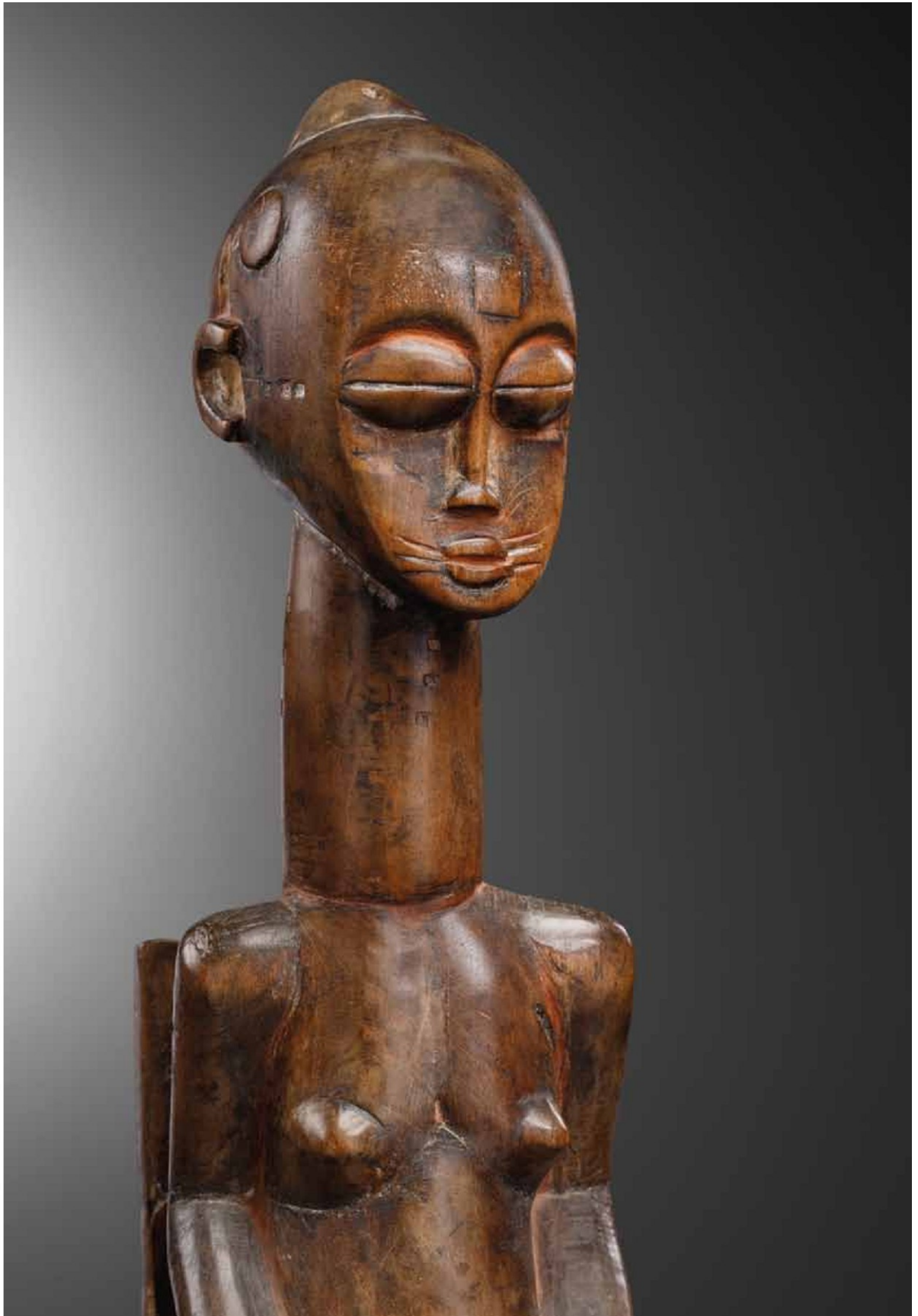


## Standing female figure

Civilization Kulango  
**Ivory Coast**  
Wood,  
brilliant, silky patina.  
Height 29 cm  
End of 19<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance:  
» Johann Levy, Paris





## Seated female figure

Civilization Kulango  
Ivory Coast

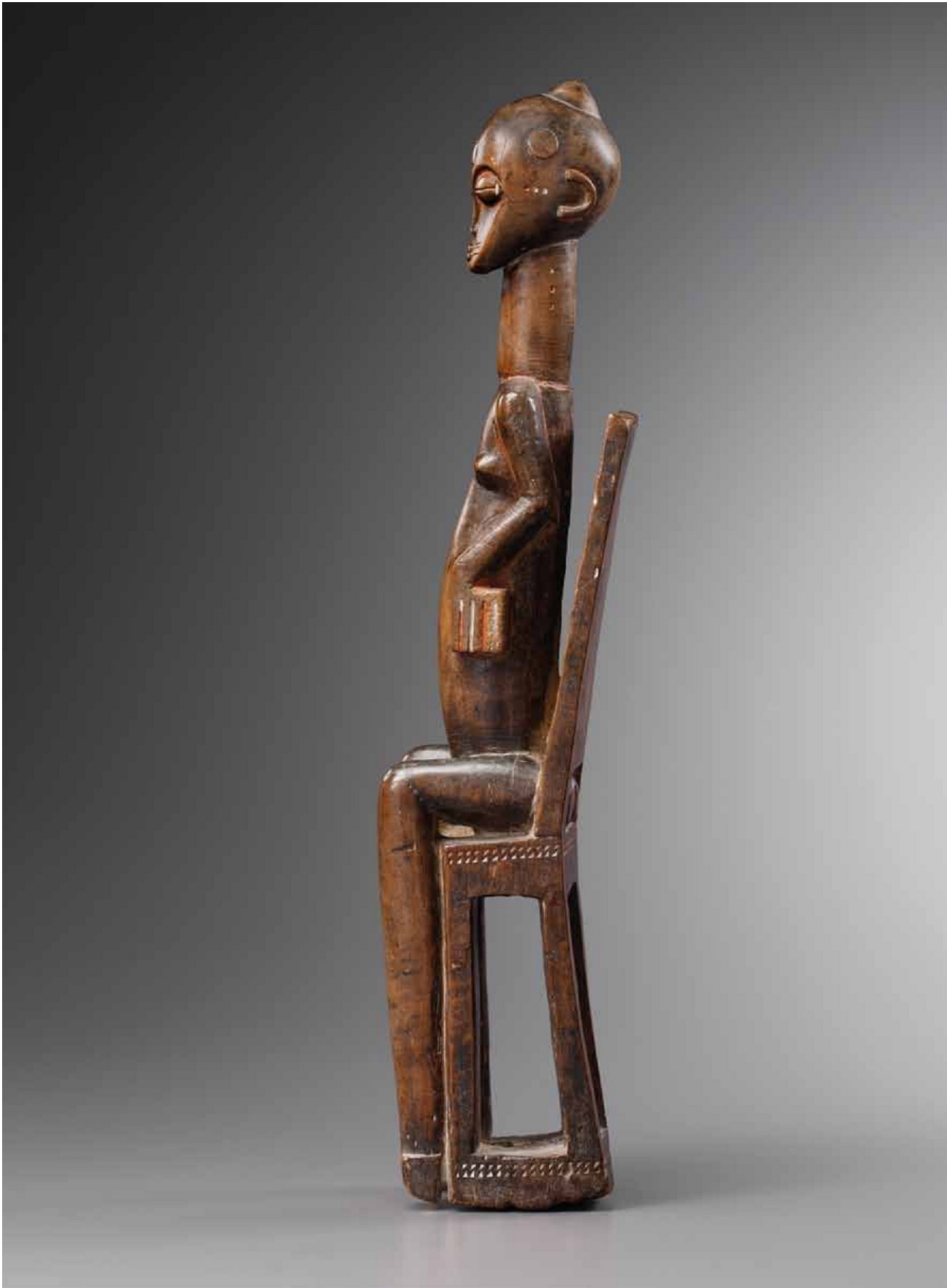
Wood,  
brilliant, silky patina  
Height 62 cm  
End of 19<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance:

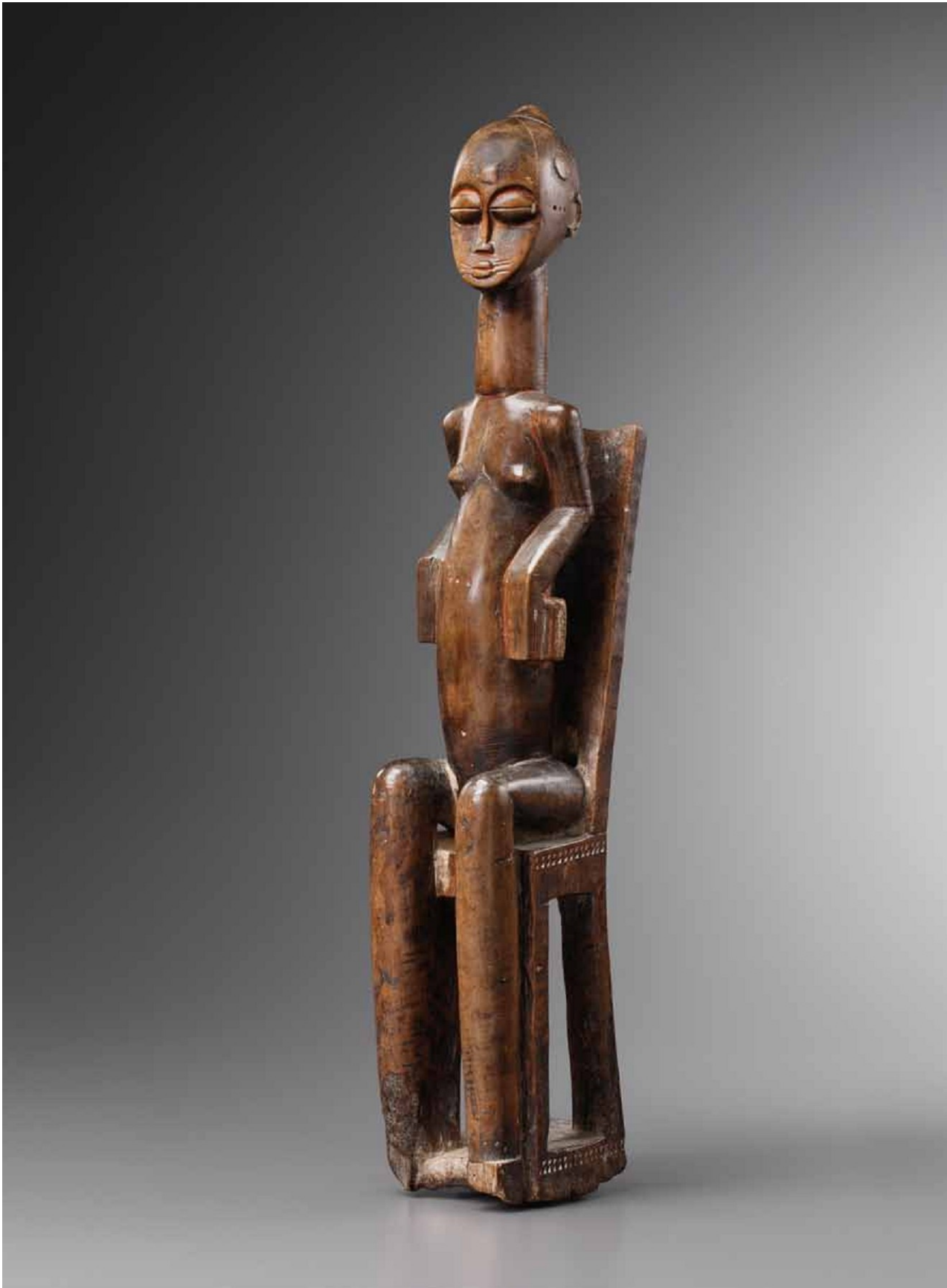
› Retired Southern Californian Art Professor,  
Collected in the 1950s













## Mask of the Do society

Civilization Kulango  
Ivory Coast, area of Bondoukou  
Wood, old patina  
Height : 38 cm  
End of 19<sup>th</sup>, beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance :  
› Collection Robert & Zulma Durand-Barrère (France)

Published :  
› GERMAIN, Jacques. Art ancien de l'Afrique noire.  
Volume VII, Montréal, Canada, 2015, pp. 50 - 51





## Fragment of a standing figure

Civilization Kulango

Ivory Coast

Hard wood,

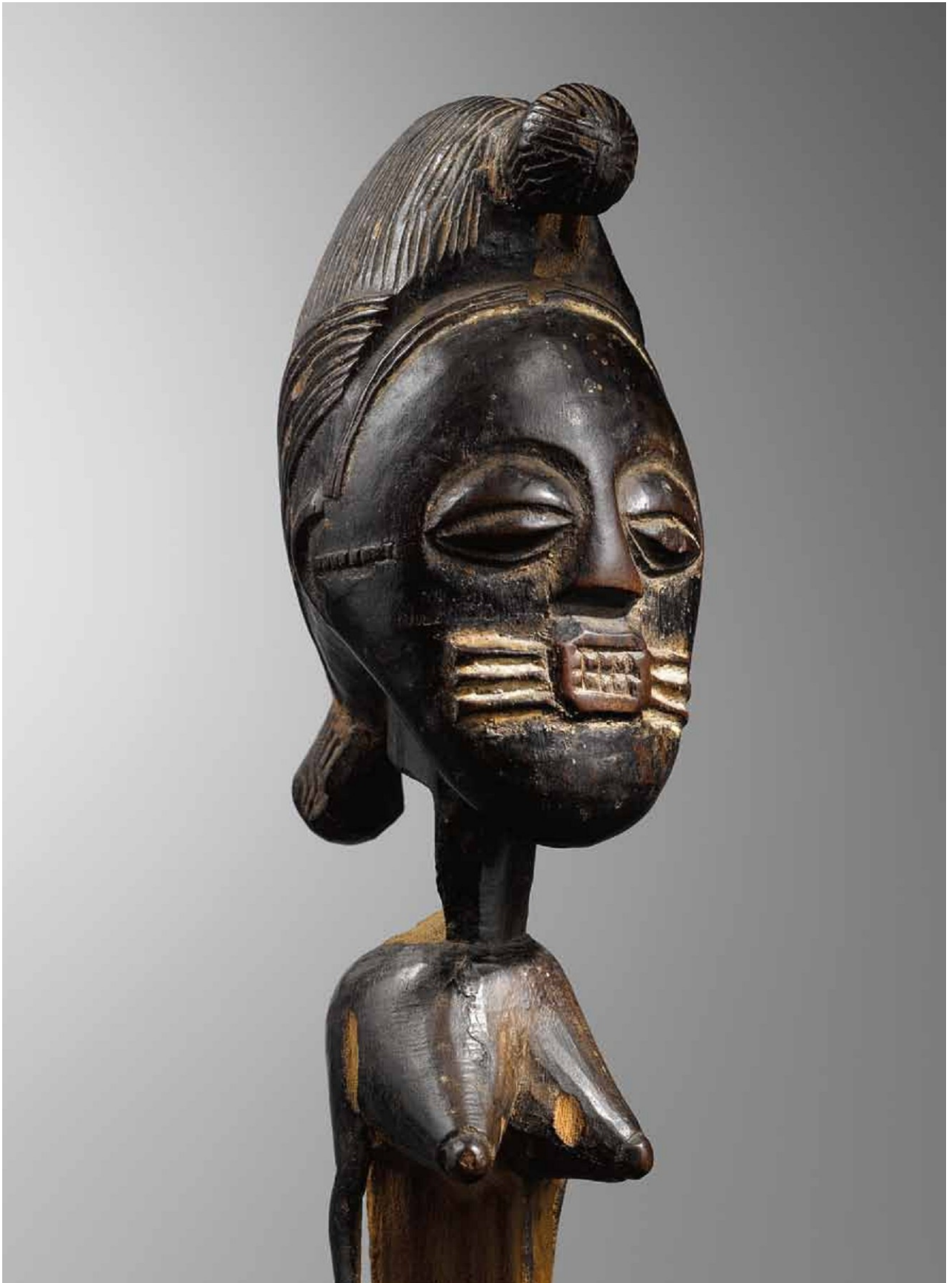
Black patina, with red and white pigments

Height 30,5 cm

End of 19<sup>th</sup>, beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance:

› Mon Steyaert, Bruxelles





## Male and female standing couple

Civilization Kulango

### Ivory Coast

Hard wood,

Black patina, with red and white pigments

Height 34, 36 cm

End of 19<sup>th</sup>, beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance:

› Franco Monti, Milan

Published:

› L' uomo e l' arte

Giugno luglio 1971

Numero 3-4

Page 13

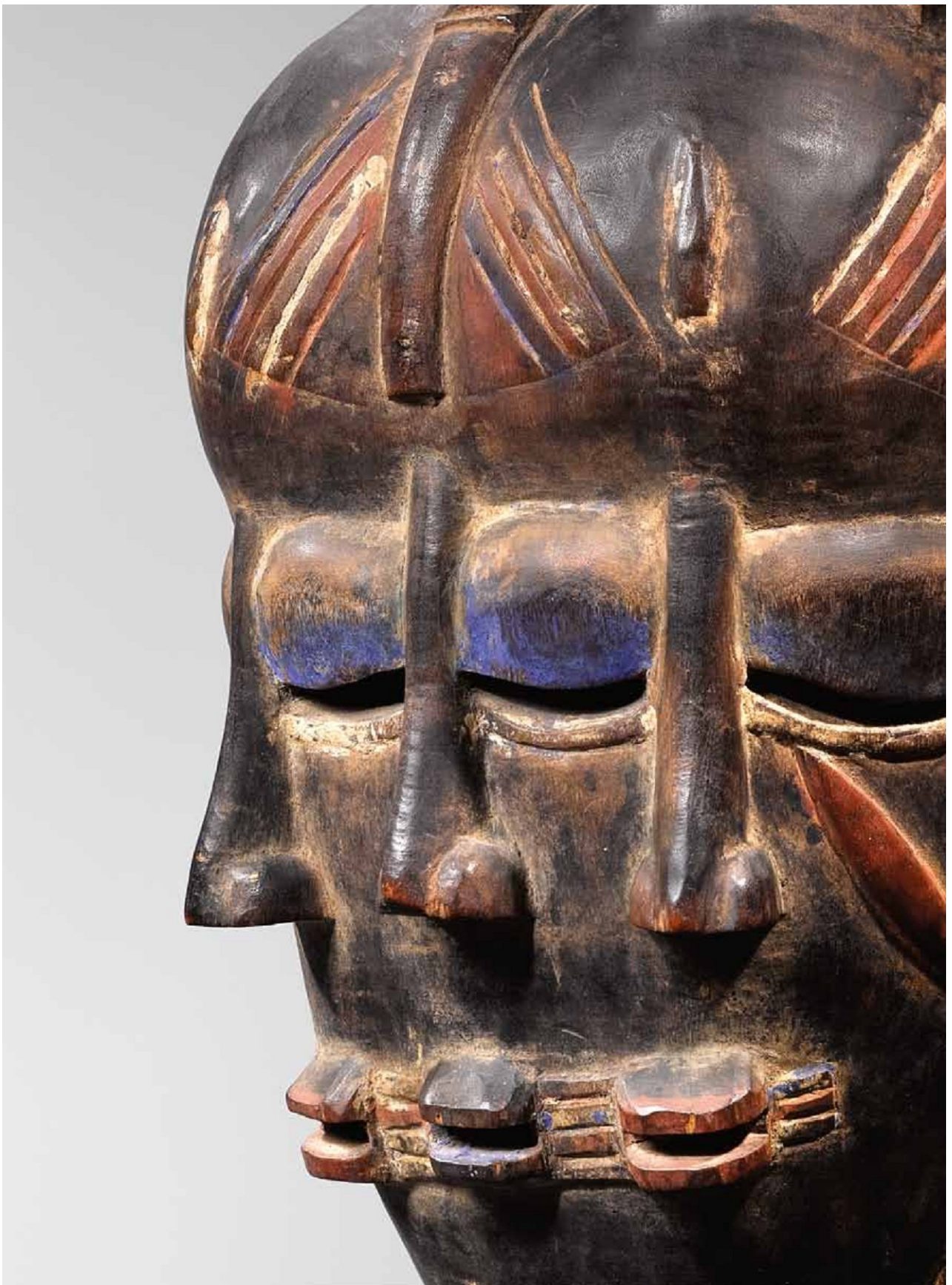








## Jimini/Ligbi



## Horse and rider figure

Civilization Ligbi

### Ivory Coast

Hard wood, oily, black patina

Height 36,5 cm

End 19<sup>th</sup> century, beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance/Publication:

› Senufo, Galerie Olivier Castellano, Paris, Septembre 2014, pp. 88-89

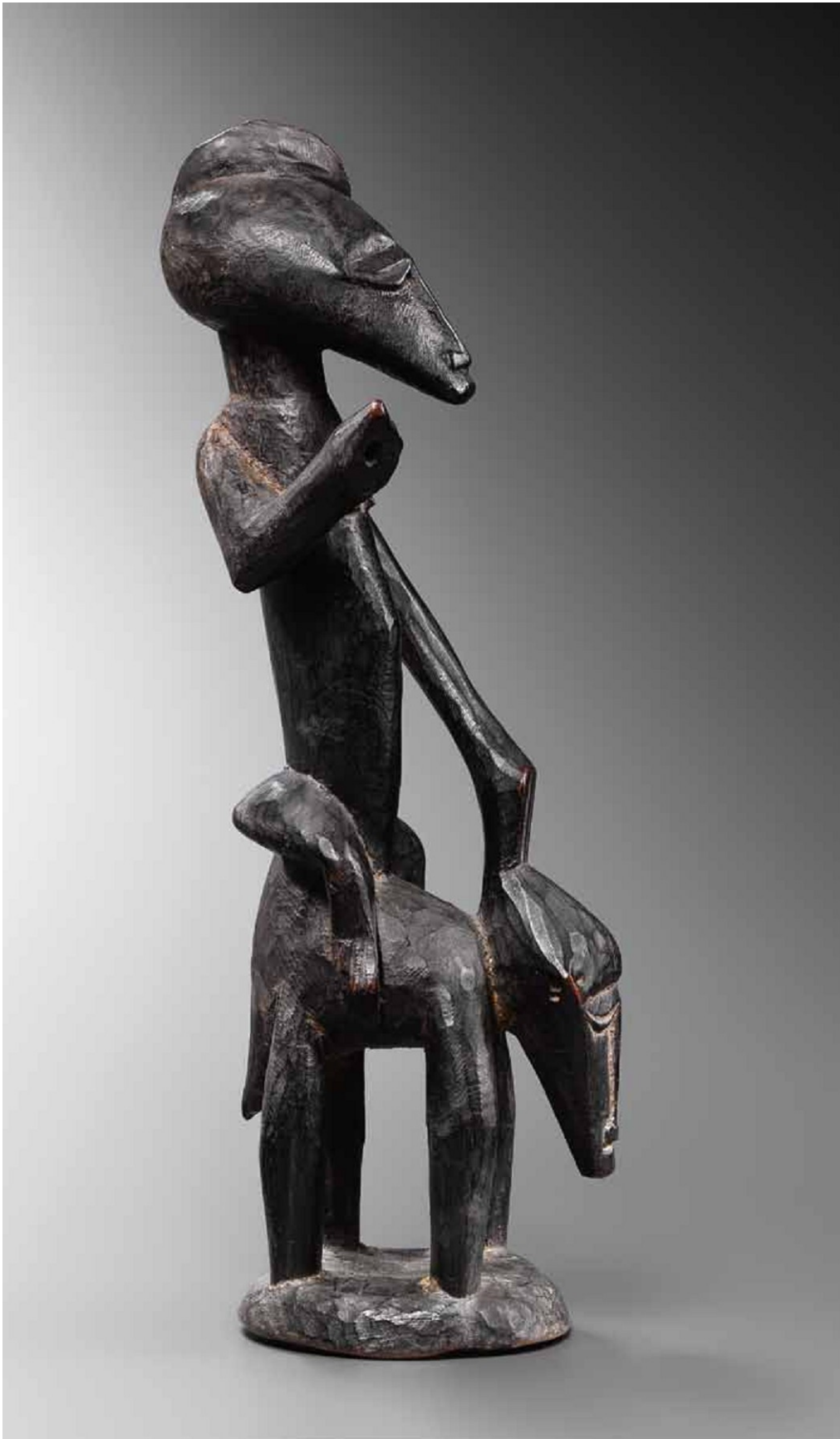
› Galerie Philippe Ratton

› Galerie Olivier Castellano, Paris

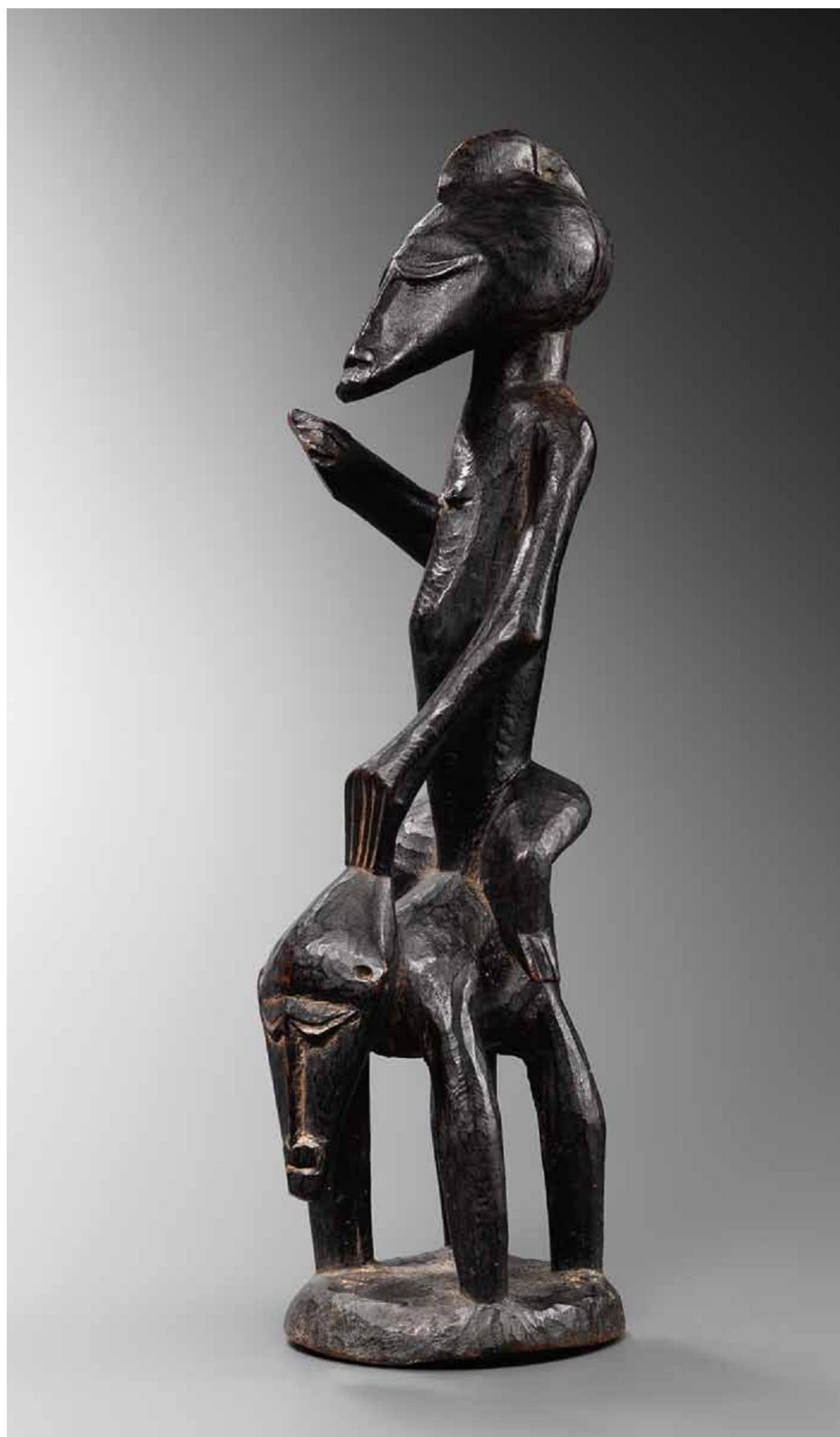
Published:

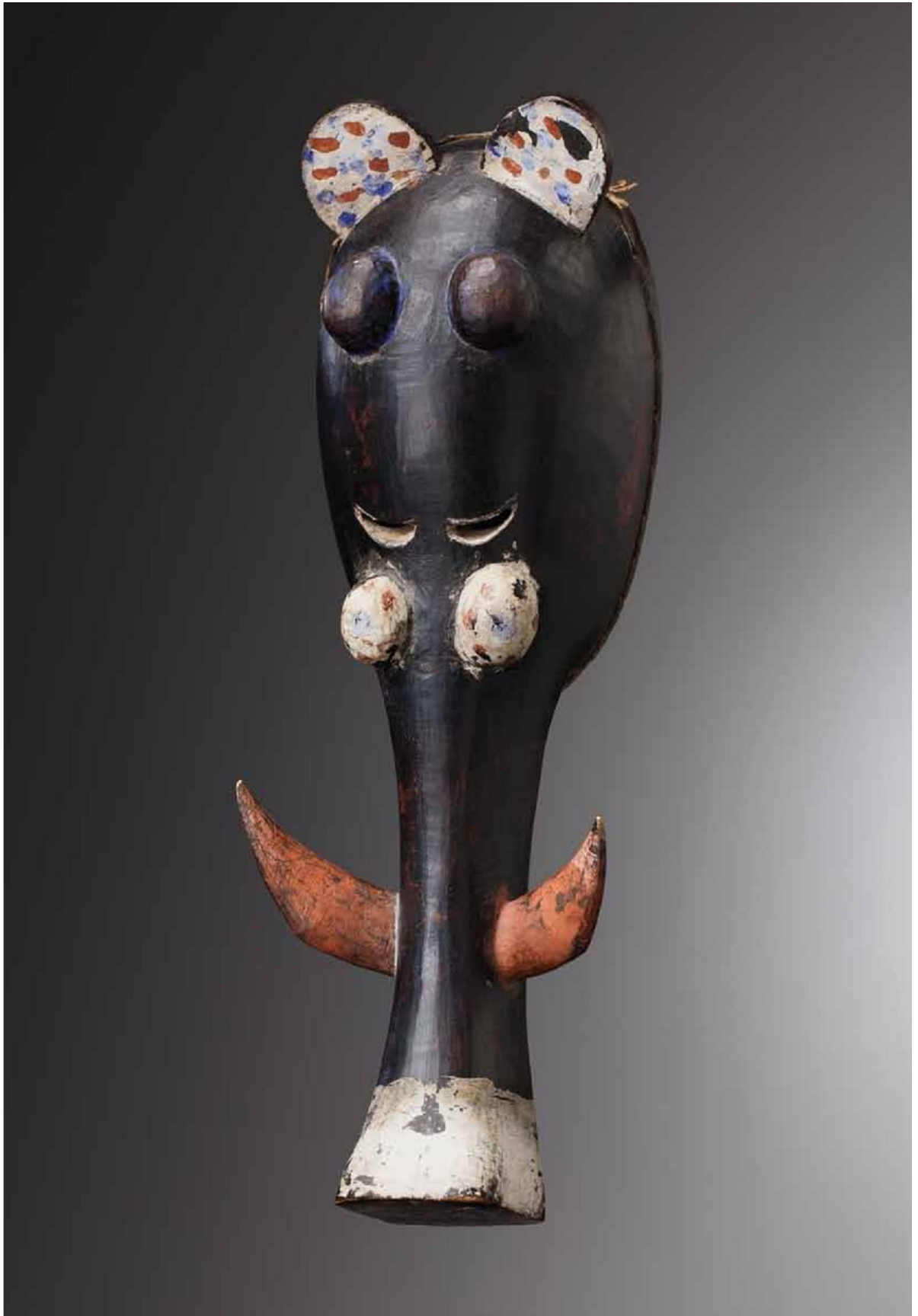
› Senufo, Galerie Olivier Castellano, Paris, Septembre 2014, pp. 88-89











## Mask of a wildboar, Do society

Civilization Ligbi  
Ivory Coast  
Hard wood,  
Black patina, with red and white pigments  
Height 38 cm  
End of 19<sup>th</sup> century, beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance:  
› Rene David, Zuerich  
› Heinz Ryser, Zuerich





## Mask of the Do society

Civilization Ligbi

Ivory Coast

Hard wood,

Black patina, with red and white pigments

Height 35 cm

End of 19<sup>th</sup> century, beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance:

› H.Brettschneider, Muenchen

› Private collection, Germany

## Mask of the Do society

Civilization Djimini

Ivory Coast

Hard wood,

Black patina.

Height 44cm.

Beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance:

› Lore Kegel & Boris Kegel-Konietzko, Hamburg, Germany (1958)

› Sammlung Dr. Wolfgang von Westernhagen.(1921-2004);



## Mask of the Do society

Civilization Igbi

### Ivory Coast

Hard wood,

Black patina, with red and white pigments

Height 45 cm

End of 19<sup>th</sup>, beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance:

› French private collection

› Galerie Guilhem Montaut



## Mask of the Do society

Civilization Igbi

### Ivory Coast

Hard wood,

Black patina, with white, blue and red pigments

Height 33 cm

End 19<sup>th</sup> century, beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century

#### Provenance:

- › Robert Stolper et Morton Lipkin, Stolper Galleries, Amsterdam
- › Acquis le 12 avril 1967 des précédents par William W. Brill, New York
- › Sotheby's, New York, «The William W. Brill Collection of African Art»,  
17 Novembre 2006, Lot 23
- › Collection privée, France

#### Expositions:

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- › Milwaukee Public Museum, 5 Mai - 31 Août 1969, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- › St. Paul Art Center, 23 Octobre - 21 Décembre 1969, St. Paul, Minnesota
- › Tweed Art Gallery, University of Minnesota, 14 Janvier - 22 Février 1970,  
Duluth, Minnesota



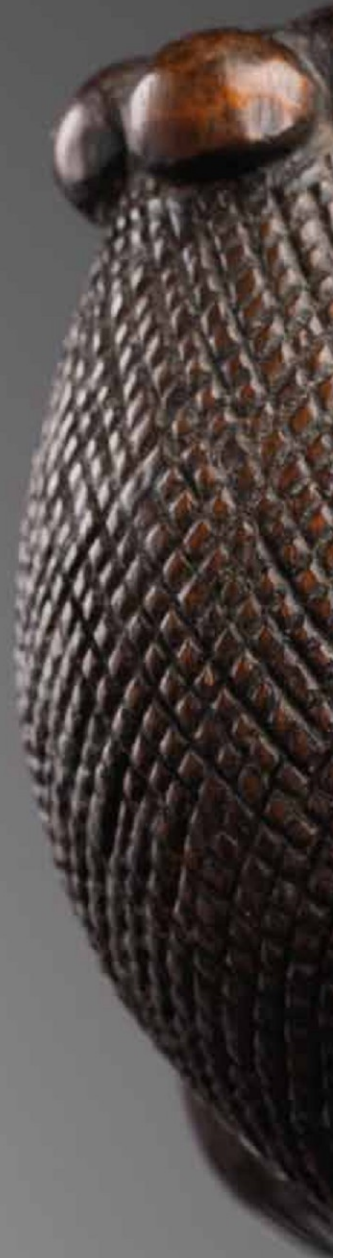




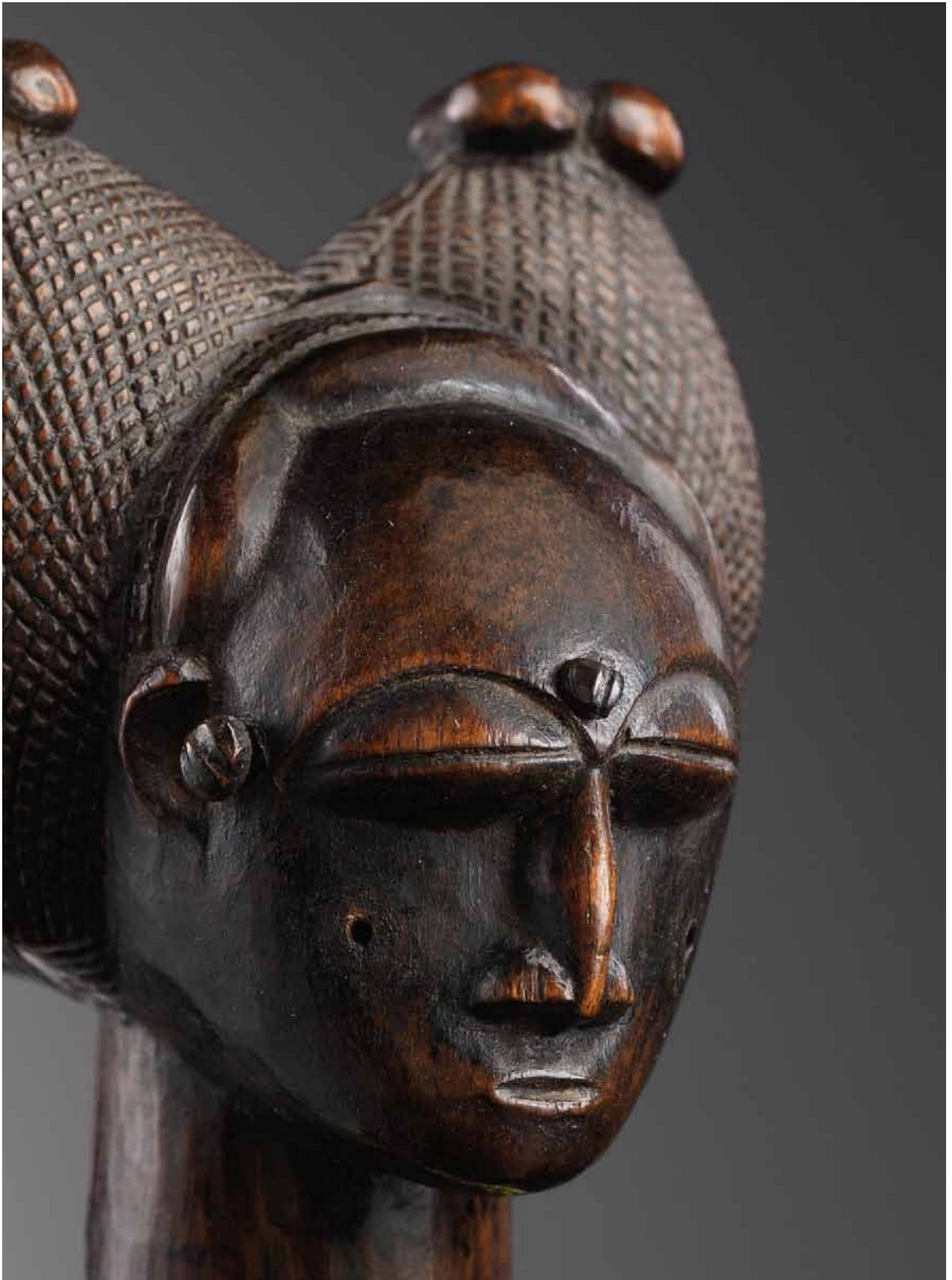




**Attie/Ebrie**







## Wardrum

Civilization Attie

### Ivory Coast

Hard wood,, pigments

Black patina, with red and white pigments

Height 175m

End of 19<sup>th</sup>, beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance:

› Franco Monti, Milan

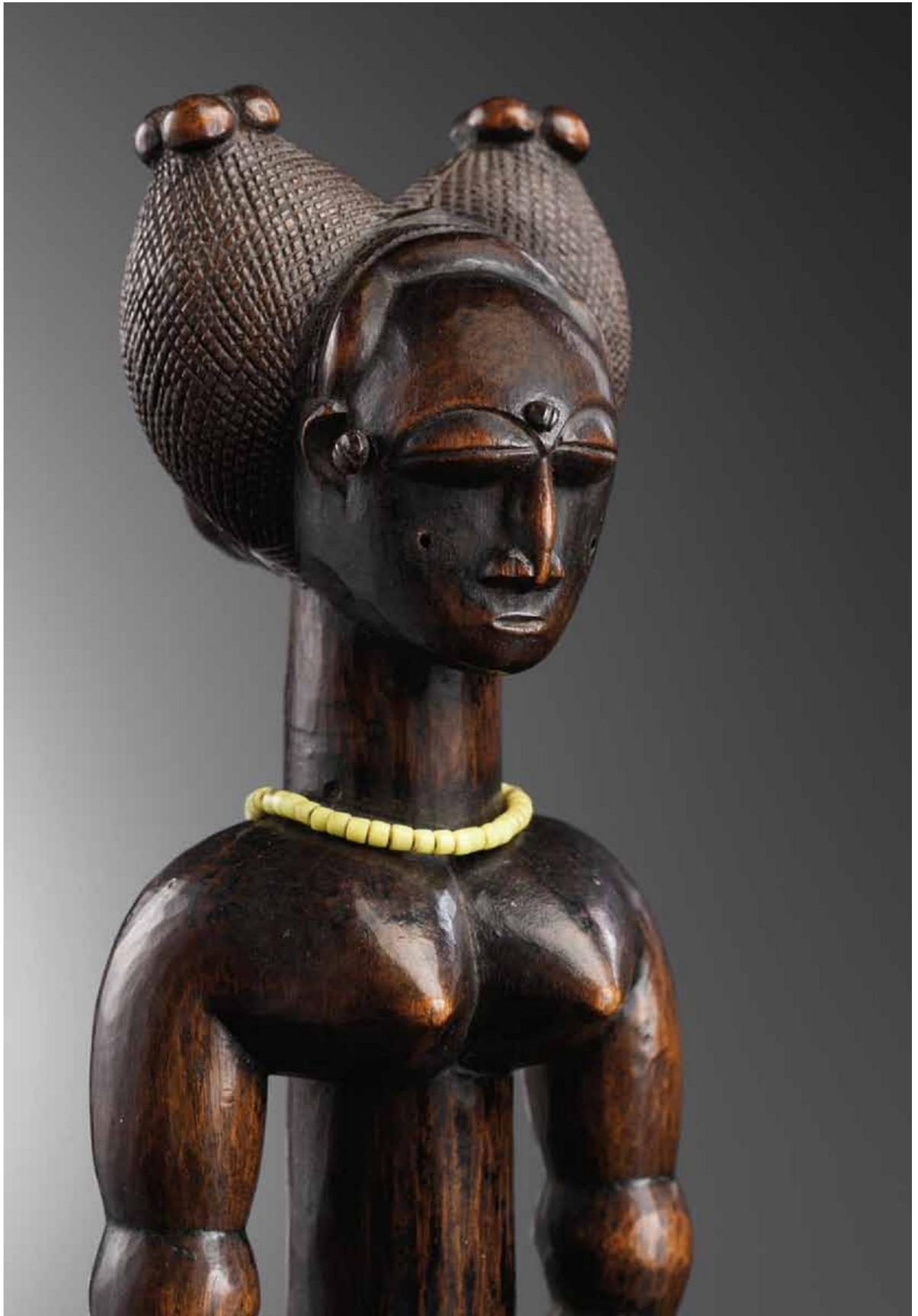












## Standing female figure

Attributed to the master of the rounded volumes

Civilization Attie

### Ivory Coast

Hard wood,

Black patina

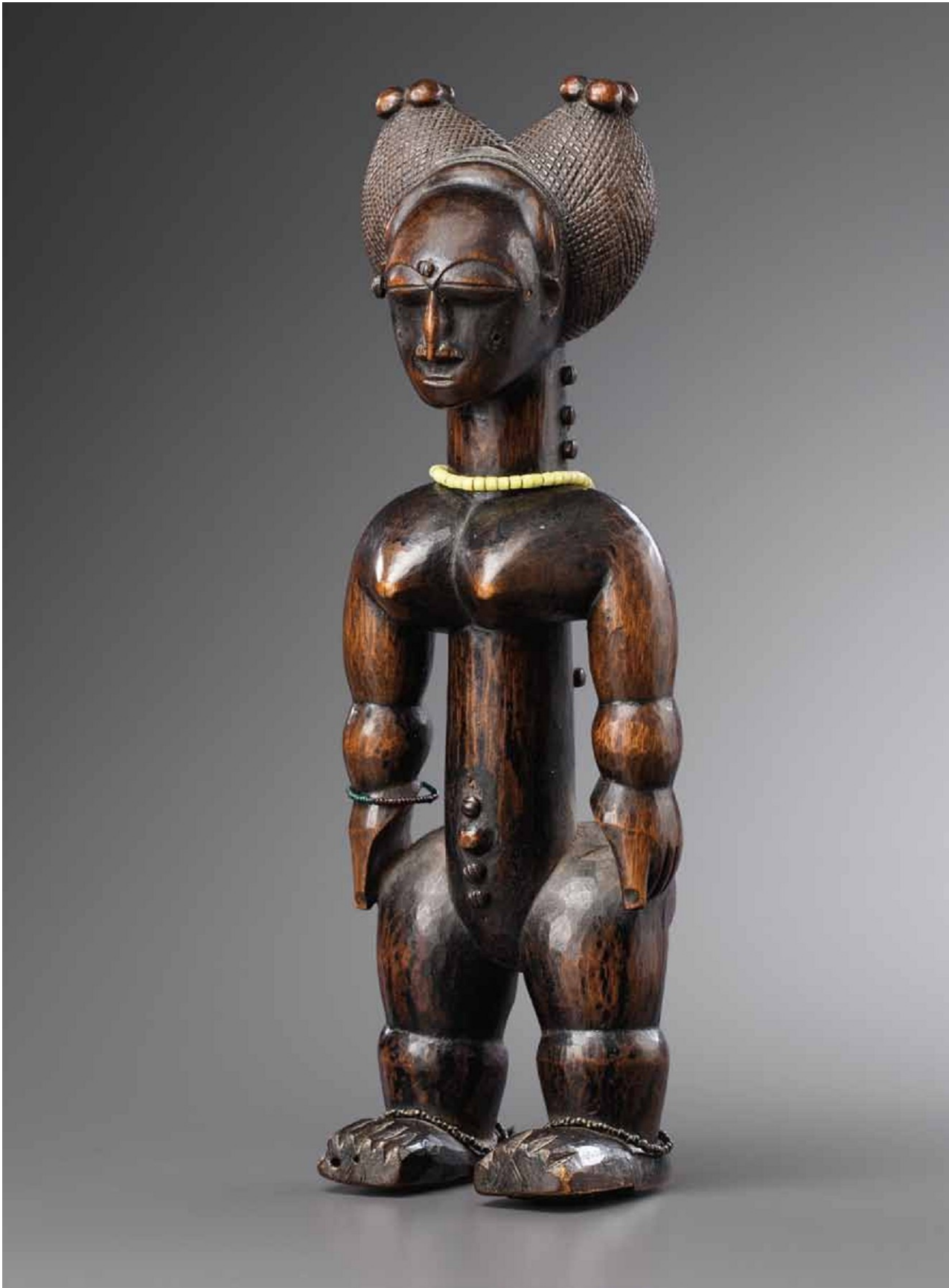
Height 24 cm

End 19<sup>th</sup> century, beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance:

- › ex collection of the doctor in charge  
in the Belgian colonies before 1915
- › Francois Sorel, Brussels







## Standing female figure

Attributed to the "maître des jolis seins"

Civilization Attie

### Ivory Coast

Wood,

Black, shiny patina

Height: 40 cm

End of 19<sup>th</sup> century, beginning 20 century

### Provenance:

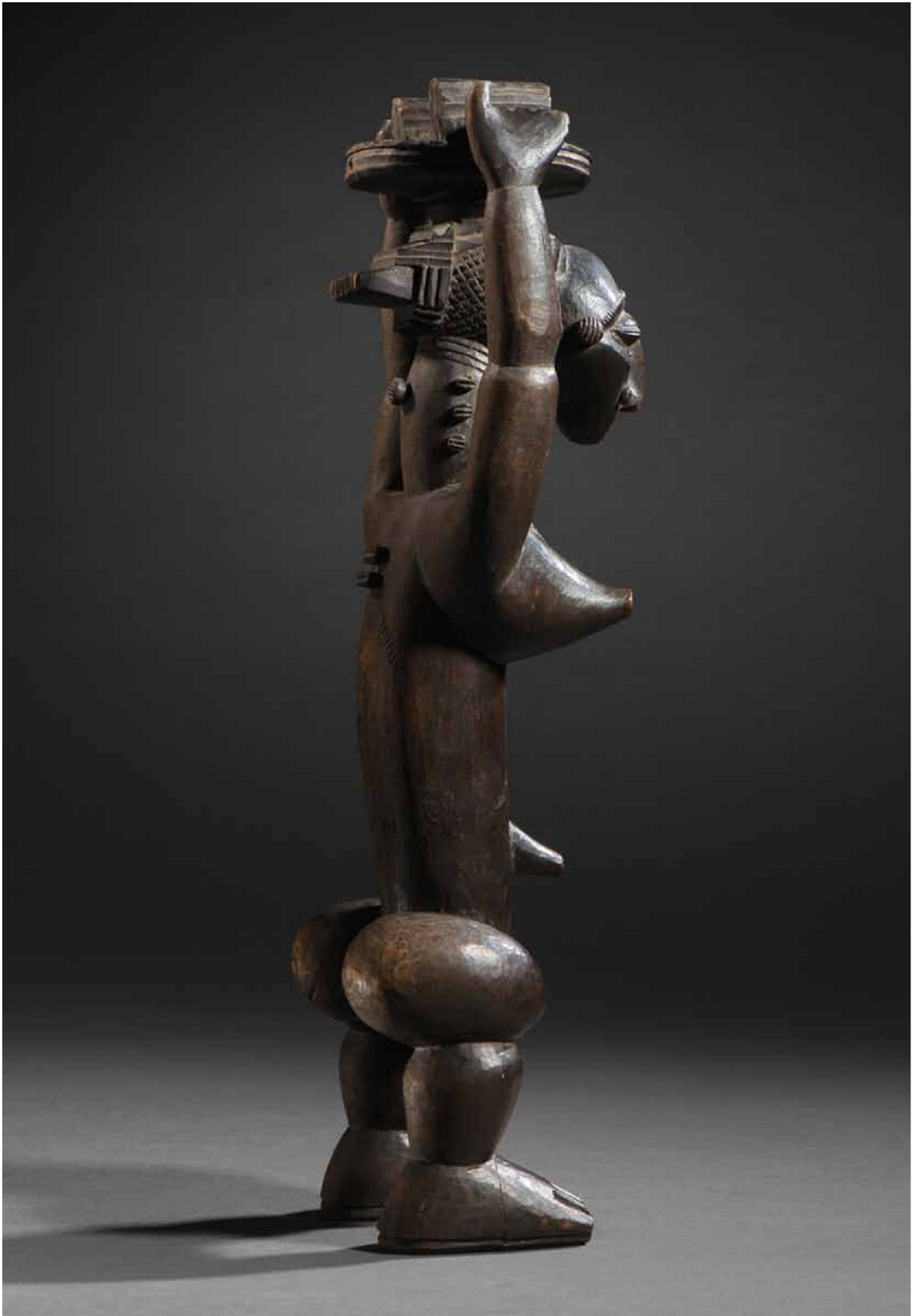
- › Probably William O. Oldman (1879-1949), Londres
- › Armand Trampitsch, Paris Ader-Picard-Tajan, *Collection Armand Trampitsch*, 25 et 26 octobre 1978, lot 93 (ill.)
- › Georges F. Keller (1899-1981), Paris Paolo Morigi, Lugano
- › Collection Rudolf et Leonore Blum, acquired the 24 october 1989 from the above mentioned
- › Daniel Hourde, Paris

### Literature:

- › Jacob, A., «Statuaire de l'Afrique Noire», in magazine ABC décor, Hors-Série, January 1976, p.75 Morigi, P., *Raccolta di un amatore d'arte primitiva*, Bern, 1980, p.165-167









## Standing male figure

Attributed to the master of the triangular nose

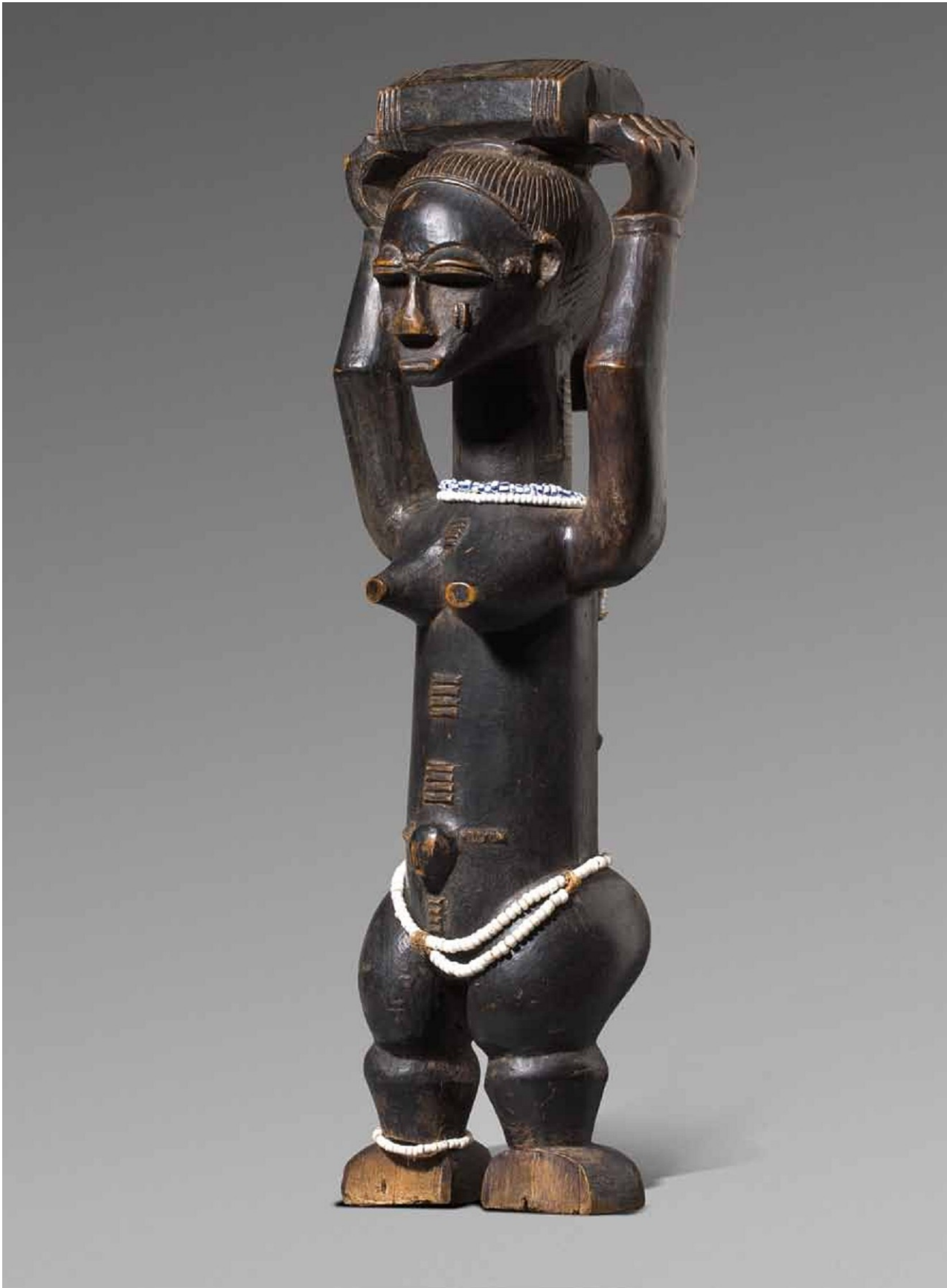
Civilization Attie

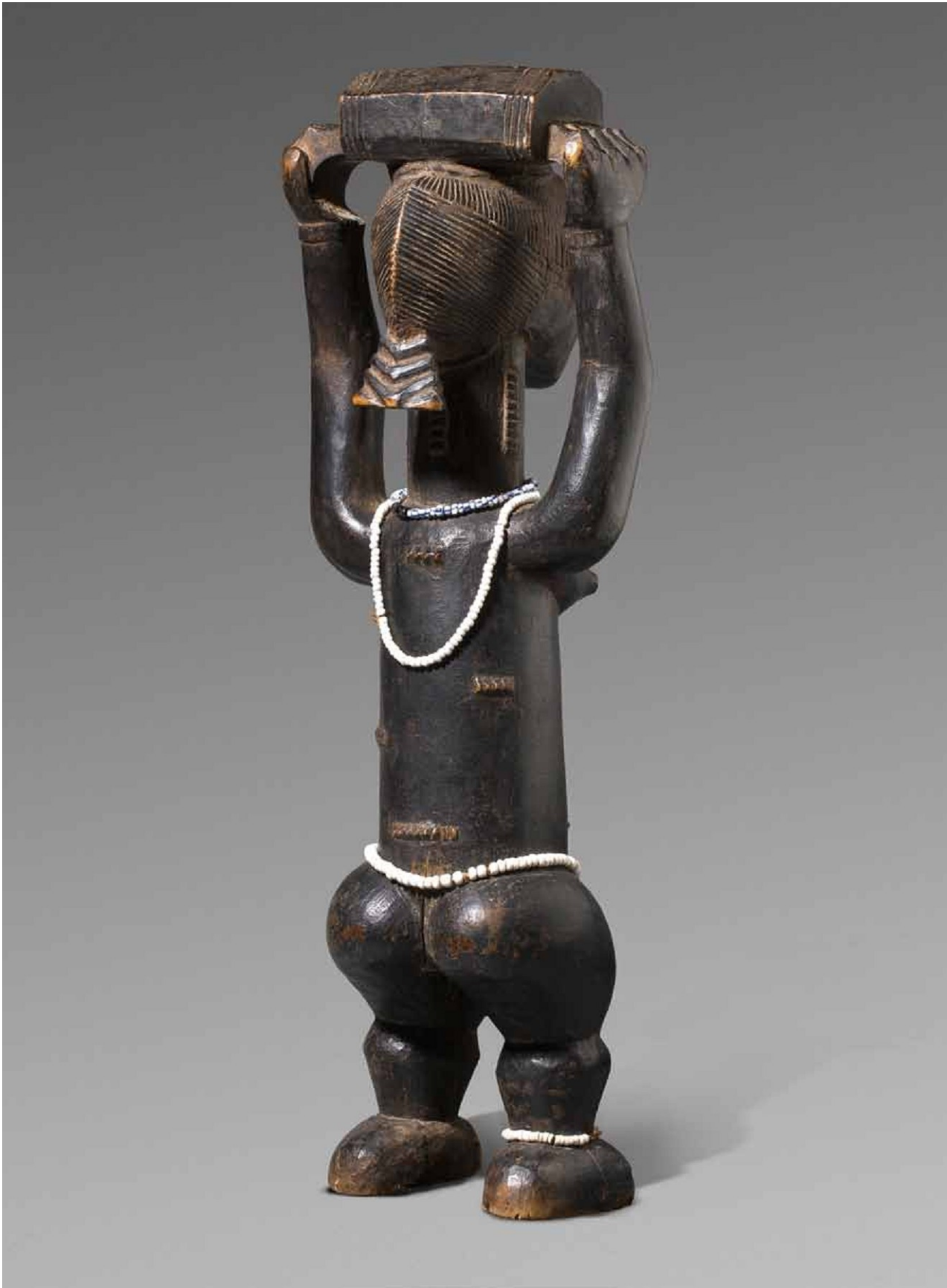
### Ivory Coast

Wood,  
grey patina, pearls  
Height 39 cm  
End of 19<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance:

- › Alain de Monbrison, Paris
- › David and Mercedes Serra, Barcelona







## Seated female couple

Civilization Attie

### Ivory Coast

Hard wood,

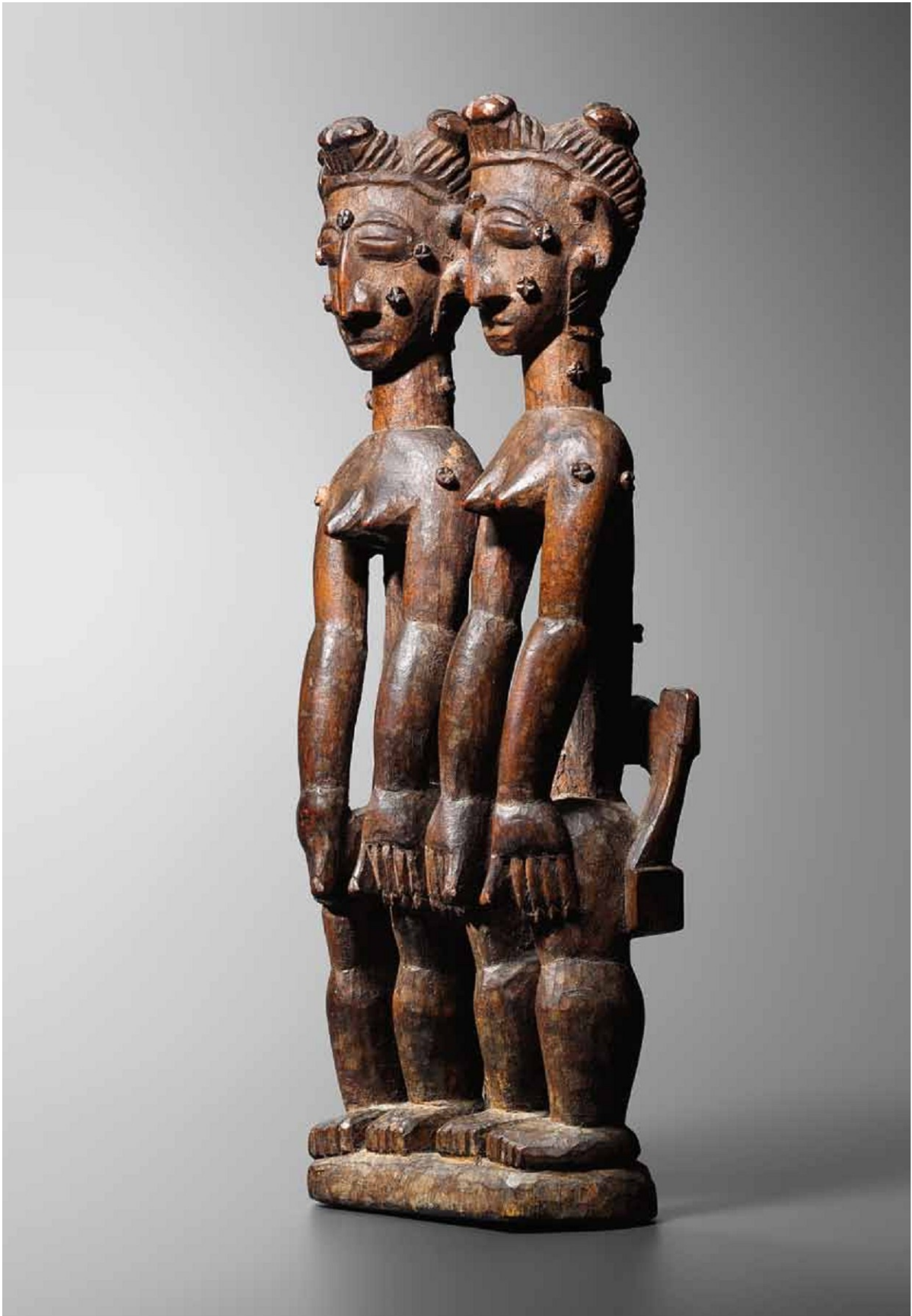
Honey coloured patina

Height 28 cm

End of 19<sup>th</sup> century, beginning 20 century

Provenance:

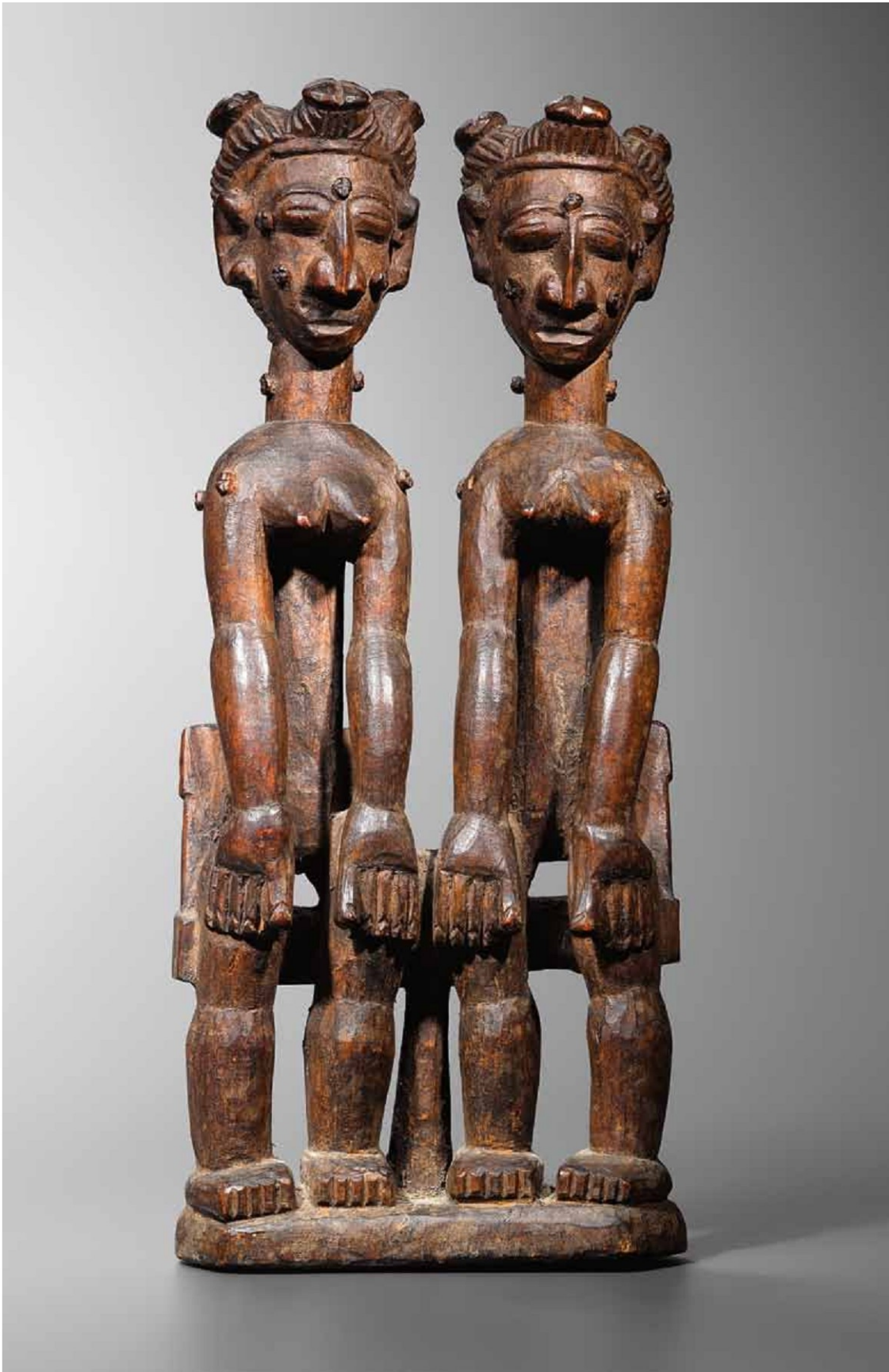
› French private collection











## Female standing figure

Civilization Attie

Ivory Coast

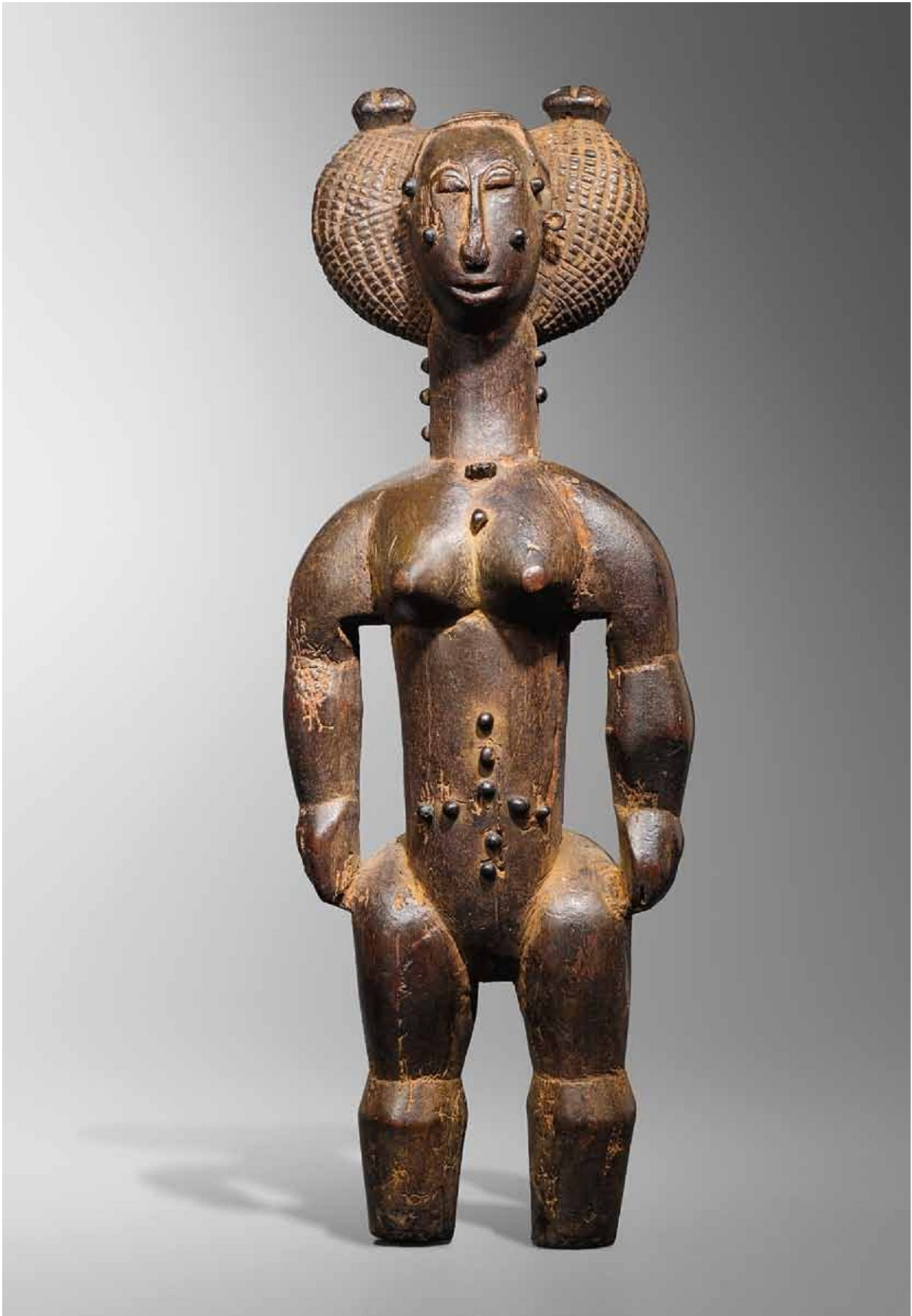
grey patina, wooden plugs

Height 29 cm

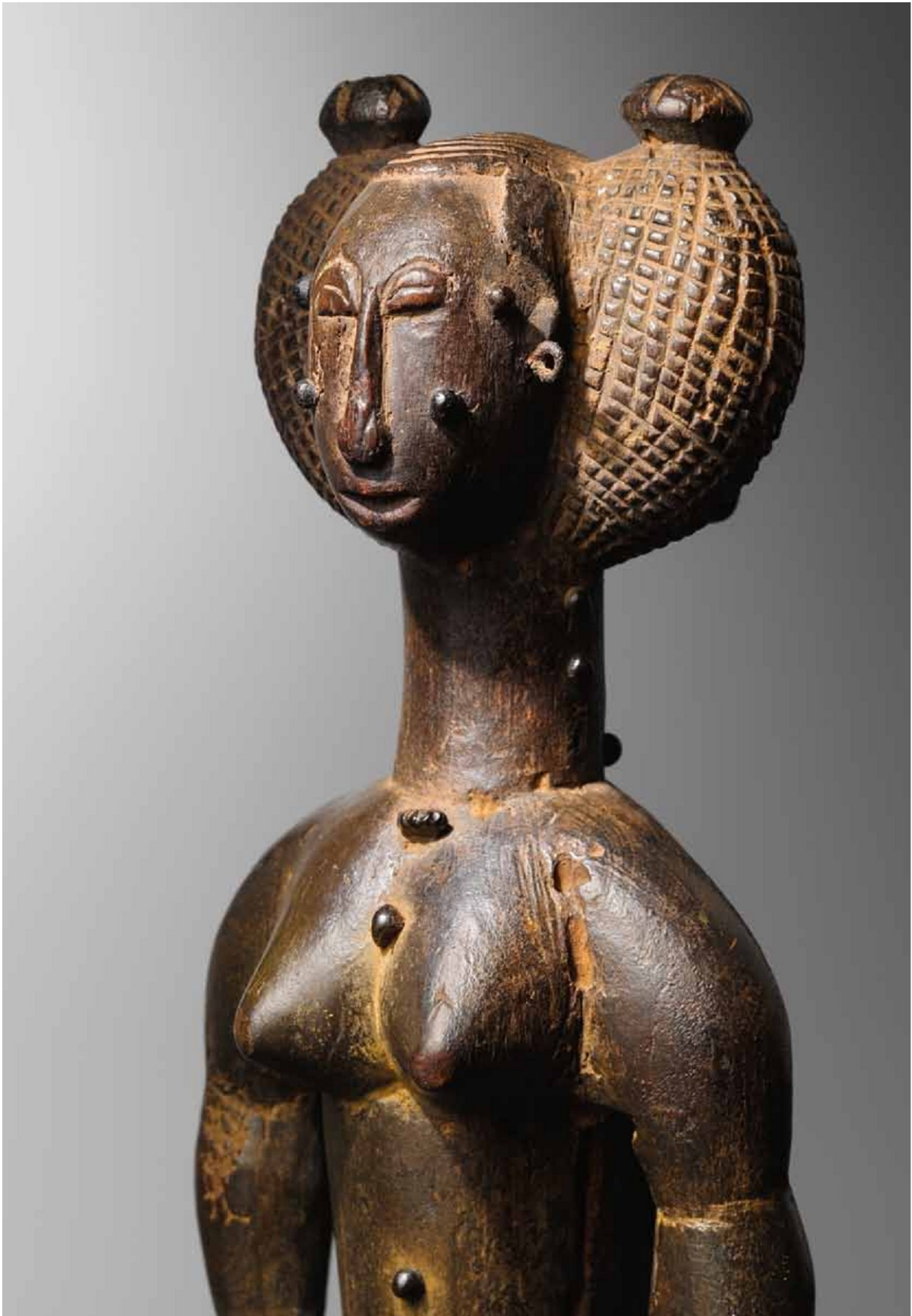
End of 19<sup>th</sup>, beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance:

› French private collection

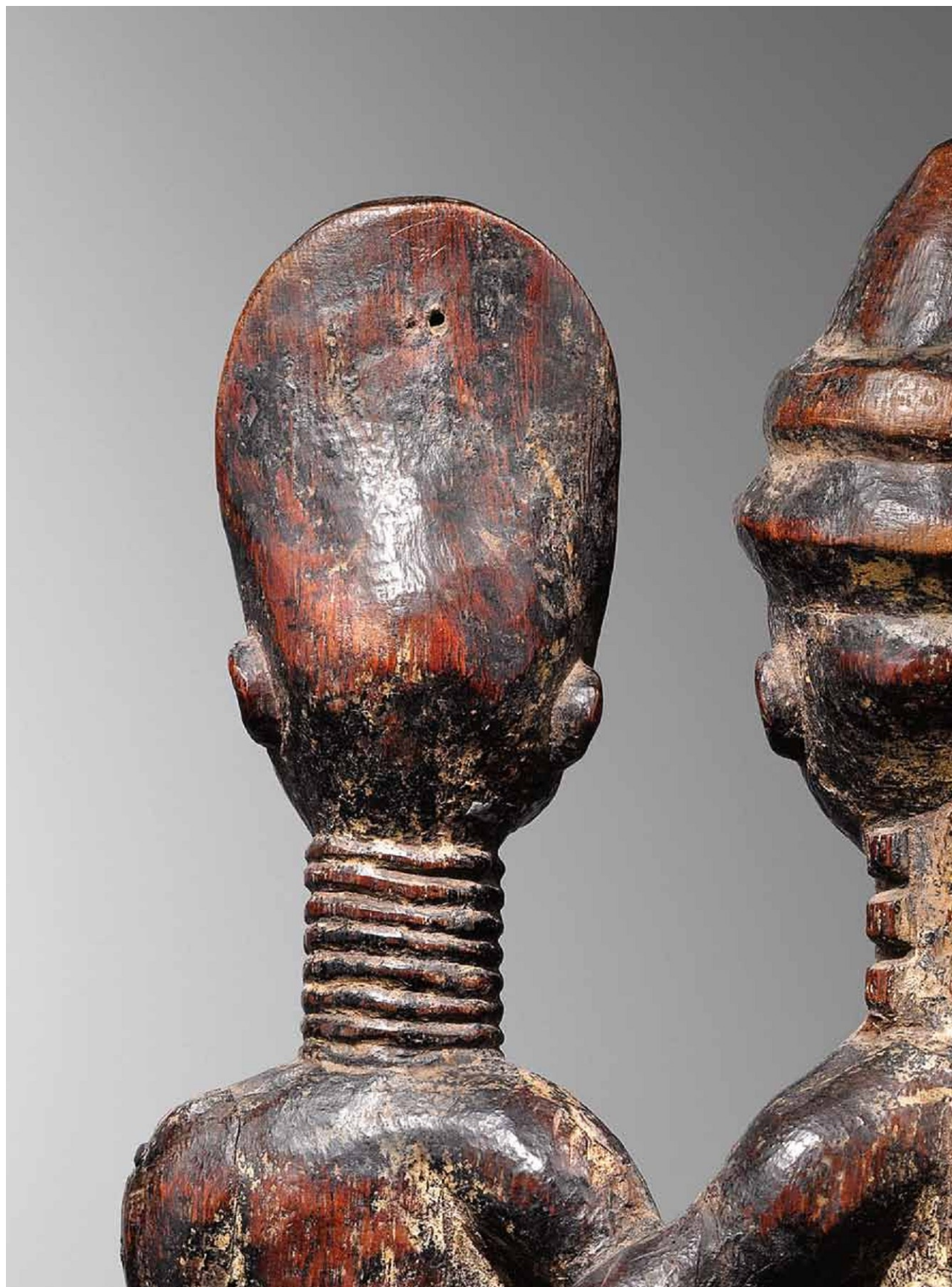








## Agni/Ghana





## Male and female sitting couple

Civilization Agni

Ivory Coast

Wood,

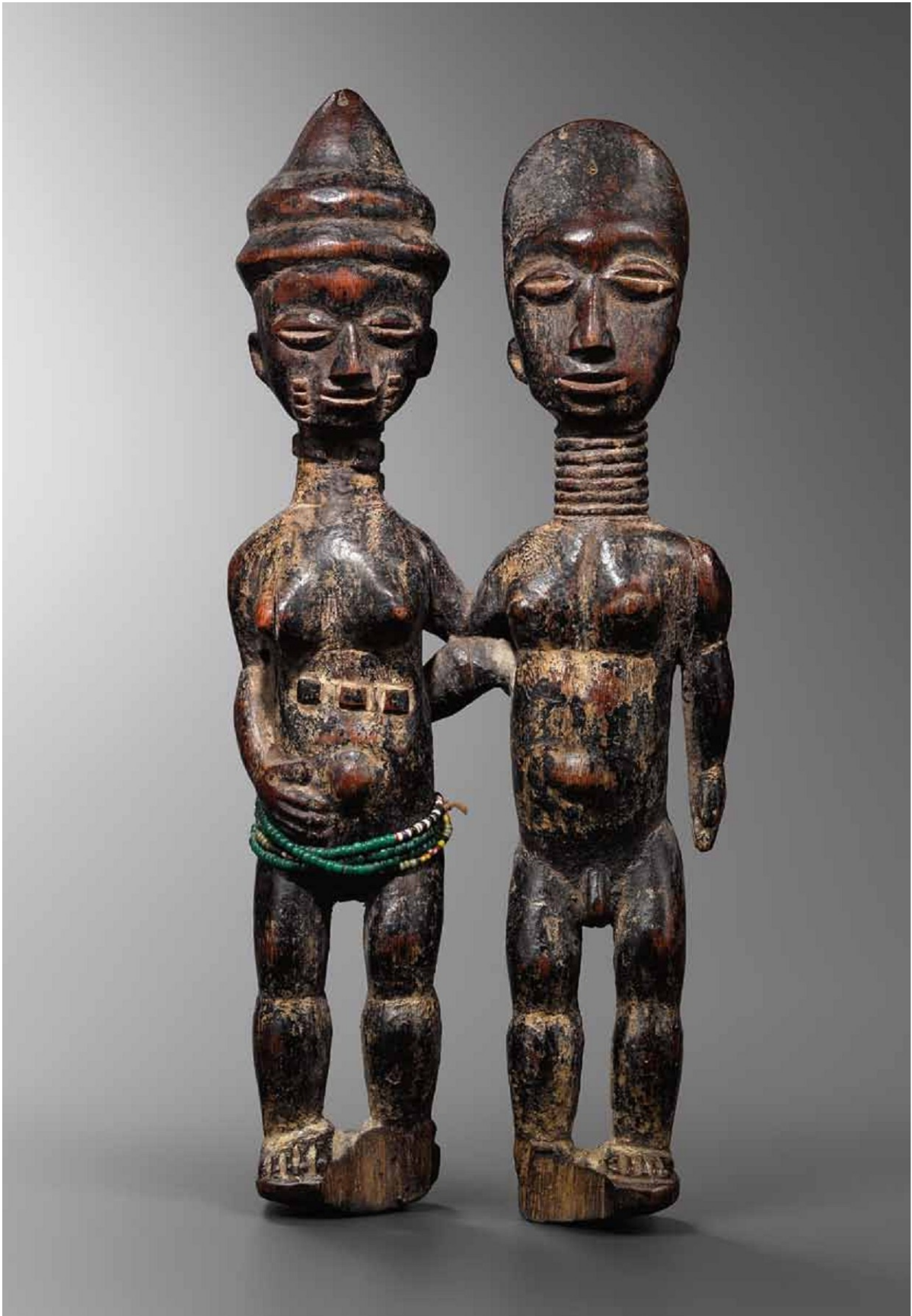
brilliant, silky patina

Height 47 cm

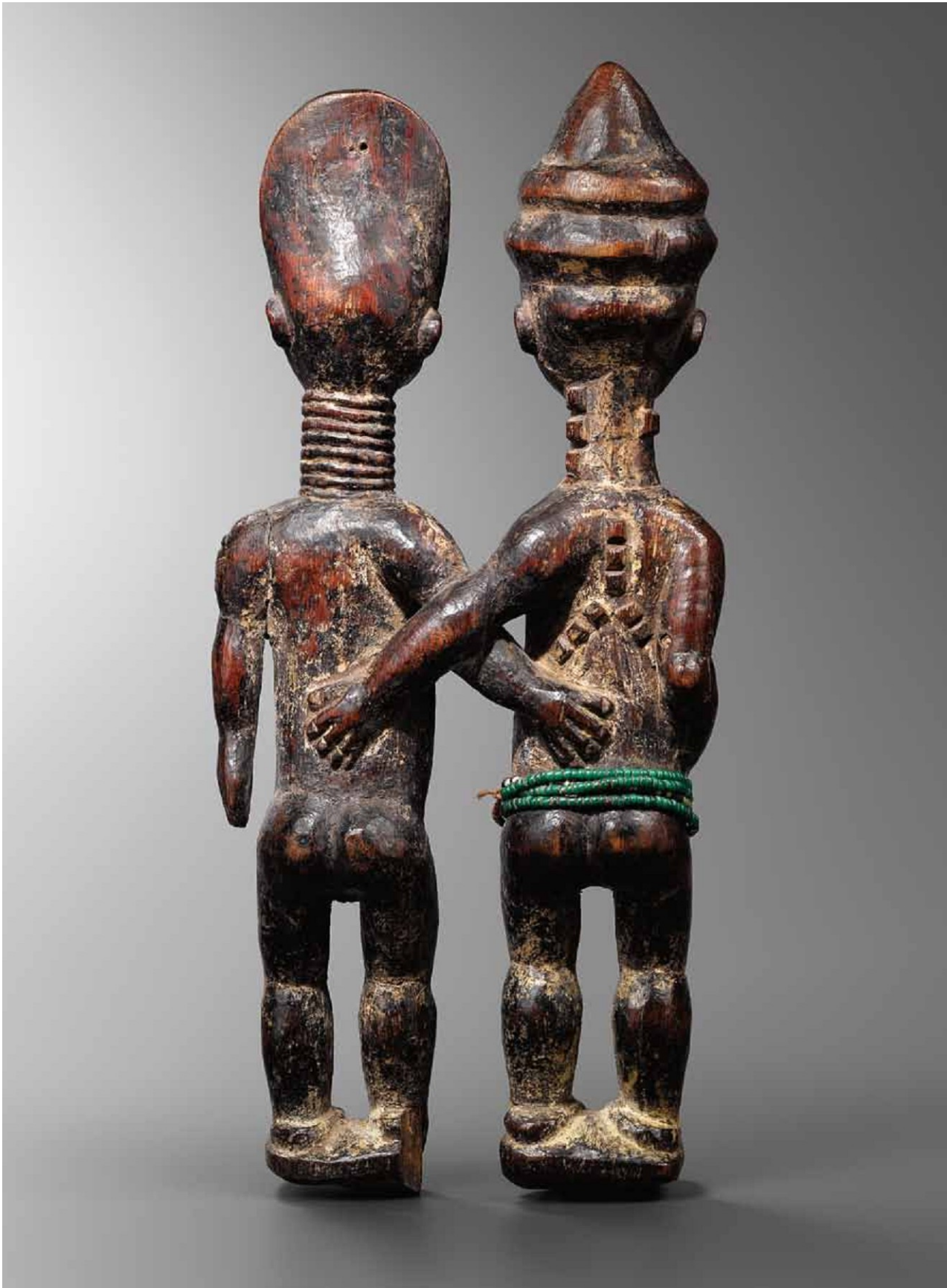
End of 19<sup>th</sup> century, beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century

Provenance:

› Carlo Monzino, Milano









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Tribal art classics XI  
31 Rue des Minimes  
B 1000 Bruxelles  
Belgium  
Tel. 0032 25 12 93 08  
Mobile 0034 617 66 60 98  
adrian@schlag.net  
www.tribalartclassics.com

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