

Figure

Date

20th century

Primary Maker

Lobi people

Medium

wood, stain and encrustation

Description

A thil or nature spirit (pl. thila) may get the attention of a human by causing illness or trouble or simply appearing as an animal or object repeatedly until the person consults a diviner to help find out the reason for the problem or unusual appearances. Then the thil, through the diviner, gives instructions for a wooden figure (bateba) to be carved for it and placed in the family shrine, which is usually a small room in the house but may also be on the roof terrace, in the courtyard or somewhere else. The thil will probably also specify other objects that it wants to have placed in the shrine: pots, bottles, iron objects, rocks, terracotta's and other wooden figures. All of the objects will receive repeated sacrifices. Diviners may also use the wooden figures as intermediaries between the human world and the thila. Periodically, the thil may ask to have additional figures and materials added to the shrine. While size is not necessarily an indication of relative importance, it seems likely that these small figures were accessories to the main bateba of their shrine.

Dimensions

Overall: 9 5/8 x 2 5/8 x 3 3/8 in. (24.4 x 6.7 x 8.6 cm)

