



Figure

Date

not dated

Primary Maker

Dakakari people

Medium

pottery and pigment

Description

Woodcarving is almost always men's work but pottery making is usually women's work. That includes making images in clay such as this memorial sculpture from the Dakakari of Northeastern State in Nigeria. In fact, making sculpture to decorate graves is the prerogative of women of only a few families. The Dakakari bury their dead in tombs covered with mounds. The mounds over tombs of ordinary men and women are covered with ordinary household pots. But important men, especially those who were wealthy and generous, are marked by various sculpted terracotta images. The most important of these images represent highly stylized animals. Human figures are not images of the deceased but are considered to be servants and are referred to as "sons of the grave" although they may be either male or female. Sometimes there may be groups of human and animal figures placed together with pots and potshards on a single grave mound. This female "son of the grave" is very typical with

its large hollow body, short flipper-like arms, and straight, tubular legs joined to a base. The head is thrown back and the mouth open, considered a sign of mourning by the Dakakari. The body is covered with scarification consisting of short parallel lines of the sort worn by young Dakakari women. The orange color is a wash of locust bean "tea" splashed over the low-fired clay figure after it was removed from the open firing pit.

Dimensions

Overall: 16 1/2 x 8 x 6 in. (41.9 x 20.3 x 15.2 cm)