



Shaman's Figure

Date

1850-1870

Primary Maker

Tlingit

Medium

Cottonwood bark, teeth, sinew, green, red, black paint, hair, leather, bone, twine

Description

Carved to represent a shaman in his ritual practice, this small figure exhibits the long, never-cut hair of the profession and wears a fringed skin apron and a string of bone pendants. A traditional shaman's necklace is a collection of bone and ivory pieces, some carved as

amulets, that bring the powers associated with their sources to assist the shaman's efforts. A number of such images made of wood or bark have been identified from the Tlingit, some of which form a part of complete model shaman's kits, including the figure, masks, apron, necklace, amulets, rattles and a box in which they are kept. Some of these are thought to be merely models, sold as a novelty, while others were employed as potent symbols or receptacles of the shaman's power, used to touch upon the patient's body to assist in discovering the source of their affliction and to serve as a thought- or power-focusing object that the patient kept for a period of recovery.

Dimensions

Overall: 2 1/2 × 1 1/4 in. (6.4 × 3.2 cm)