

# Basic Detail Report

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## Mask (Bedu)

### Date

mid 20th Century

### Primary Maker

Nafana

### Medium

Wood and pigment

### Description

This large wooden geometrical shaped plank mask is known as a Bedu, and it originates from the Nafana people of north-eastern Ivory Coast. The masquerading of the Bedu is reserved during the Nafana lunar month celebration called Zɔɔɔnyepɔ, "the dance and Bedu moon." For the entire month, pairs of dancers perform nightly with the masks worn over their faces, with the extremities of the mask towering above their heads. The ceremony serves to rid communities of diseases, prevent agricultural disasters, cure human infertility, and functions as a way to instruct the community on socially acceptable behavior. The Bedu is carved whole from the trunk of large trees called Onyina. The mask is carved in resemblance of antelope head with the curved circular section at the top representing the antlers and the arrow-shaped body signifying the face of the animal. The masks are worn in pairs by the dancers, one male and the other female. The gender identity of a mask is distinguished by the features presented; female masks incorporate a large disk, while male masks often have antlers. For example, the circular outline on the top section of this specific Bedu is meant to signify antlers, therefore denoting that this mask would be worn by a male performer. The checkerboard style decoration covers the main body of the mask with triangular sections of red, black and white pigments circle the finial. The red and white pigments are made by combining powdered clay with shea butter mixture. The black pigment is made by crushing charcoal into a fine powder and combining it with the same shea butter mixture. The pigment are applied to the Bedu with the fingers, a piece of cloth, or a tool similar to a palette knife.

### Dimensions

74 1/2 × 31 × 3 3/4 in. (189.2 × 78.7 × 9.5 cm)