

Nom : Edo Mask

Description : Mask, Benin kingdom court style, Edo peoples, Nigeria, 18th century, Copper alloy, iron

This mask is worn during the Ododua masking ceremony that protects the king and commemorates the founding of the Benin kingdom. It is similar in form and shares iconography with other masks of this type. The cone shape relates to a special fiber cap worn by certain priests, chiefs and the king. The deadly snakes and crocodiles refer to dangerous spiritual forces that are controlled by herbalist-diviner specialists and the king. Unique to this mask are the small fish seen in relief under the lips and on the sides of the mask. They represent fish used as sacrificial offerings to the "gods of the Benin nation" at a palace shrine.

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Source : Musée national d'art africain