

Twin entertainment mask



- *nda*
- Côte d'Ivoire
- Baule
- Painted wood
- H. 29 cm
- Collected in the mid 1930s, former Roger Bédiat collection.
- INV. 1007-65

Twins are among the figures in the Baule universe that populate the entertainment dances known by many names (*gbagba*, *ambomon*, *ajemble*, *mblo*, etc.). For the Baule, twin births are welcomed and occasion special ceremonies, particular names for the twins and the next born child are chosen, and a twin shrine is established. To the best of my knowledge, the masks representing twins have no spiritual significance. Their appearance in the dance merely recalls a happy occurrence.

The artist who carved this mask followed Baule canons of artistic excellence closely when he took exceptional care to vary all the elements of the decoration he applied to the two identical faces. Not a single feature is repeated. Though both faces have a full complement of scarification, all the elements that can be varied – those on the forehead, cheeks, and at the corners of the mouth – are different. Only the mark the Baule call simply “mark” (*ngole*) at the corners of the eyes and at the base of the nose is the same on both faces. The coiffures also differ as they do on virtually all Baule twin masks. The use of two colors to differentiate the faces is common. In dances where pairs of masks appear, red and black paint are used to indicate which mask is male, which female. The use of a given color for a given sex, however, varies so that it is impossible to determine the sex of a mask persona from its color. In the case of twin masks, both are perfectly likely to be of the same sex.

Susan Vogel in *Art of Côte d'Ivoire from the Collections of the Barbier-Mueller Museum*, 1993, Part II, p. 118.