



HEMBA SO'O PASSPORT MASK

\$680

c. 1950 • Democratic Republic of Congo • Wood • Collection #CAA0821

W: 7.0" D: 5.0" H: 16.5"

This mask, with its pointed nose and menacing wide grin, was intended to frighten and unnerve its viewers. Known as "so'o", these masks are carved to resemble a "chimpanzee-human" and are used in funerary rites by the Hemba people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The so'o hybrid form embodies the culture's ideas of the afterlife, wherein human bodies are discarded for animal forms and worldly distinctions become vague and confused. This so'o mask has been rendered in miniature as a passport mask, common among many cultures throughout Africa. Continued...



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Sewn into clothes or worn on the back, they were portable versions of family heirloom masks that could fulfill all of the same ceremonial functions when the larger masks were unavailable.

