

IGNCA Book Shelves

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Masks

Masks are associated with the primordial thought process linked to the Homo-Sapiens from time immemorial. Superstitions and beliefs about masks abound every community. The masks also hold deep significance in the socio-cultural study of any community. Masks cannot be studied in isolation and have to be viewed in the matrix of beliefs, practices and rituals of the community. It is precisely because of this reason that there are not many publications exclusively on masks. They form part of studies. In some masks, are treated exhaustively and in some, they are merely part of rituals and practices. IGNCA has 185 books in its library that have major references to masks from various countries all over the world. In addition, there are 75 articles in various journals that treat the subject exhaustively. Following is the glimpse of some of them:

Art and Culture of Nepal by Saphalya Amatya: This book has an extensive account of mask making in Nepal. Masks are used in ritual dances and religious festivals in Nepal. Very strict procedures are involved in mask making, especially those used for sacred rituals. They are made only in the Kathmandu Valley and Solu-Khumba area in the Northern region.

Folk and Tribal Designs of India by Enakshi Bhavnani: It deals with folk and tribal crafts of India. In folk dance and drama, masks play an important role. Wooden masks made in Orissa are used in the mime in folk opera groups in presenting stories from *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and local sacred legends. Papier-mache masks representing Goddess Durga and other masks in the operatic plays represent the various good, bad and comic characters, and are accordingly made to bring out the highlights of the theme and the personality they represent.

British Museum: a guide to the Babylonian and Assyrian Antiquities: It is a guide book which describes the antiquities exhibited in the Babylonian and Assyrian Rooms in the Second Northern Gallery, and in the Nimrud and Nineveh Galleries. Few masks are also exhibited - Priests wearing bird-headed masks and performing a religious ceremony, Assyrian priests wearing lion-headed masks and carrying daggers, priest wearing a fish-mask.

Primitive Art by Erwin O. Christensen: The book provides a fascinating introduction to the whole subject of Primitive art, enabling the reader to compare the similarities of and difference among works of many styles and in various materials. It deals with masks from the various parts of the world - Africa, North America (two important regions Eskimo and North-West Coast), Iroquois, Melanesia, Indonesia, Micronesia, Mexico, Middle America, North-West Pacific Coast, Peru and South-West United States.

The Tribal Art of Middle India: a personal record by Elwin Verrier: Authored by a world-renowned anthropologist this is a 1951 publication. It mainly deals with the Tribal arts of the Central Provinces (now Madhya Pradesh). One whole chapter is devoted to masks. This chapter deals in detail with different types of masks. For example, Muria masks, Baiga masks, Bhuiya masks, Kond Masks, Gond Masks and masked dancers.

Two thousand years of Nigerian Art by Ekpo Eyo: Nigeria had produced a great variety of art traditions. This volume describes in detail various types of masks - Epa masks, Gelede masks, Egungun masks, Ogun masks, Bassa-Nge masks, Edo Village (Ekpo) Masks, Ibibio (Ekpo) masks. Ogoni masks. Mama (Mangam) cap masks and Mambila masks.

The False Faces of the Iroquois by William N. Fenton: It deals with the Iroquois masks (called false faces) and Husk Faces, Masks present in the community and the behavior of the actors who perform in

the ceremonies. Also deals with twelve types of the masks - eg. the crooked-mouth masks, spoon-lipped or spoon-mouthed masks, hanging mouth masks, smiling masks etc.

The Folk Art of Java by Joseph Fischer: This book focuses mainly on folk arts of Java. It includes traditional children's art wayang theatre, ceramics that reflect folklore and ritual, roof tiles, bronze bells, brass votive figures, and village masks and puppets. In Java, the topeng (mask) is one of the most widely found traditional art objects. Dance masks of Rama, Sita and Hanuman are used in public performances of the various episodes of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*.

Ritual Arts of Oceania: *New Ireland in the collections of the Barbier - Mueller Museum* by Michael Gunn: This is an exhibition catalogue of 40 art works from New Ireland, selected for their beauty, rarity and originality. New Ireland is part of the larger world of the Bismarck Archipelago. The archipelago consists of three main island groups - New Britain, New Ireland and the Admiralty Islands. The volume also deals with various masks - traditional masks, tubuan (tumbuan) masks of the Dukduk, Lorr skull masks, Ratthan and barkcloth masks, kavat and vungvung masks of Baining (New Britain), hemlaut masks. Susu masks, Sulka masks (New Britain), bukumo masks (New Britain), Nataptavo masks (New Britain), Nausung masks (New Britain), Valuku masks, lorr mask (New Ireland), lali masks (New Ireland), Dance masks (New Ireland), Malagan masks (New Ireland), Tatanua masks (New Ireland) etc.

A mask in the Ceremony by Elzbieta Porebska Kubik: In Romanian. The aim of this publication is to present masks used in various regions of Poland, Europe and the world in their ritual functions. This yearly publication includes information on rites with masks presented by the invited groups, as well as materials from popularized scientific meetings devoted to various problems connected with masks.

Classical Dance and Theatre in South-East Asia by Jukka O. Miettinen: It focuses mainly on rich classical traditions of South-East Asian dance, theatre, mask theatre and puppet theatre, which are still performed. Separate chapters are devoted to Myanmar Thailand, Java and Bali. It includes Khon masks, jauk masks (Bali), Topeng masks of Sidha Karya, Barong masks (Bali), wayang wong masks, Rangda masks. These masks are used in dance-drama.

The Art and Architecture of Japan by Robert Treat Paine and Alexander Soper: The book gives a detailed study of the arts and architecture of Japan. It also deals with various types of masks - Bugaku masks, Gigaku masks, Noh masks, The masks of Masukami etc. Masks were introduced into Japan early in the seventh century, and many from that time are preserved in Horyuji. The Gigaku masks then popular were derived from Turkestan. Later in the eighth century the Bugaku masks, deriving from India or Indo-China, were brought to Japan.

Masks of difference: Cultural Representations in Literature, Anthropology and Art by David Richards: This volume describes a narrative of sorts: a linear scheme of progressive accumulation, structuration and narration which is followed by a collapse or decay of narratives to allow a new process of accumulation, structuration, narration. The author also emphasizes the ways in which the paintings, literary texts and ethnographies construct through their compositional strategies a structure for the processing and enunciation of the anomalous materials of otherness. The author called this book 'Masks of Difference' because the mask seems to have exemplary qualities as a conceit or metaphor for discourses, which attempt to characterize the cultural identities and differences, which epitomize the representation of savage or primitive peoples.

Masks of West Africa by Leon Underwood: To the West African people the mask stood in its original right, as an individual expression of the likeness of the deity or spirit represented. Most of the masks come under the term fetish, as representations of spirit-deities. The form of the mask was ordered by religious concepts, which permitted to the carver latitude of individual expression in his representation of the spirit-deity. The African mask focuses the broader effect in its elaborate framework of ritual, in which myth and belief are ceremonially expressed in music, dance, pageant, drama and sculpture. The fetish dancer who wears it is supposed by its aid and his skill to evoke the presence of the spirit-deity it

represents. His or her body is often covered completely by a costume but for the small eye-apertures in the mask.

Some of the journal references are as follows: South American Masked Dance by Gerard Behague in the special issue of `The World of Music' on Masks; Transforming Mask: Masks of the Himalayas by Mort Golub in `Arts of Asia' ; Chaitra Parva Rituals - Chhau Dances by Mohan Khokar in `Marg' ; Masks and Performing Arts: India and Japan by Masatoshi A. Konishi in `Journal of Association for Indian Music Society' ; The Use of Masks in Indian Dances and Dance-Dramas by Sunil Kothari in `The World Of Music'; Devil Dance masks of Sri Lanka by Alan Pate in `Arts of Asia' ; The Mask Dances of Kerala by G. Venu in the `Sangeet Natak' and Rupa Pratirupa - Man and Mask in Vihangama.

There are two books in the IGNCA related to masks. While *Rupa-Pratirupa: Mind man and Mask*, edited by S.C. Malik is a compilation of papers presented at an international seminar hosted by IGNCA, the book *The Ritual Art of Teyyam and Bhutaradhane* by Sita K. Nambiar has references to the masks used in the two dance forms. The masks exhibited at the international exhibition of Masks is well documented and is available for reference.

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