

TITLE: Ram's Head
ARTIST: Bobo Tribe
DATE: Unknown
SIZE: 12 3/4" x 13" x 18"
MEDIUM: Wood Sculpture
ACCESSION # : 2006.46
ADDITIONAL WORKS BY ARTIST IN COLLECTION? YES x No _



Contextual Information

Bobo masks are made to bring "bush" spirits of the lands to the people's aid. The most important duty of the Ram's Head Mask is to purify the lands. This is done by holding a ceremony before planting. The ceremony includes a dancer who wears the mask and a raffia costume. Bobo farmers consider purification of the land necessary for a successful harvest. The ram is a symbol of purity and strength for the Bobo tribe. The Bobo believe both purity and strength are needed to grow food and fibers that they sell to generate funds.



Top: Mali in Africa. Bottom: Burkina Faso in Africa.

Bobo People

The Bobo Tribe lives in two regions, the "next-door-neighbor" countries of Burkina Faso and Mali. Bobo people settled in this area dating around 800 A.D. Agriculture, that is non-industrialized farming, is the center of Bobo life. The major crops they harvest include maize, yams, and cotton, which they sell to textile mills. Bobo people also keep bees to collect their honey. All Bobo people are descendents of a common ancestor called *Wakoma*. The man that heads each household is also called *Wakoma*. It is understood he is called *Wakoma* because he is the one who carries on the lineage of that family. In each village there is a council of elders to preside over political issues. Collectively the Bobo Tribe does not organize a centralized political system and instead relies on family lineage to create a coalition of elders to preside over villages.

Media Description

The Ram Masks are carved out of wood. They are then painted. Traditionally, the only colors used were red, white, and black. Recently, the colors yellow, blue, and green have begun appearing on the masks. During ceremonies, dancers wear the masks as well as floor-length raffia costumes. Purification rituals last for three days and happen before planting season to drive off evil forces in the land, and after harvesting season to protect the land.

This side
and reverse:

Bobo Tribe,
Ram's Head
Mask,
Wood, 12
3/4" x 13" x
18", Mali
and Burkina
Faso.



Glossary

Raffia: a fiber obtained from the leaves of the raffia palm, used for tying plants/objects and for making mats, baskets, hats, and costumes.

Resources

http://www.forafricanart.com/Bobo_ep_37-1.html

<http://pagesperso-orange.fr/africart/pages/artbf.htm>

What's Your Story? Activity Lesson Plan: K-5



Ram's Head Mask during a ceremony, Christopher D. Roy, <http://pagesperso-orange.fr/africart/pages/artbf.html>.

Session Activity: To the Bobo people the ram is a representation of protective forces. The ram cleanses the land of the Bobo people and chases away evil spirits that could bring harm to the village. When a Bobo person puts on the mask and wears the raffia costume, that person becomes powerful enough to keep people safe. Have children discuss such costumes in American society that seem to do the same thing — for example, the uniform and hat of the police officer or the uniform and hat of a fire fighter.

Objectives:

1. Students will learn the cultural significance of the Ram's Head Mask in the Bobo Tribe.
2. Students will make connections between the Bobo Tribe and American culture.
3. Students will express their ideas in the form of a short narrative using vocabulary and writing skills.

Materials:

Construction paper, glue, scissors, hole puncher, yarn, magazine photos, pencils, crayons, markers.

Activity Procedures: Begin with an introduction on the Bobo Tribe. Present students with images of the Ram's Head Mask, and explain the significance the mask holds in the tribe. Have students discuss why they believe the Ram's Head represents a

protecting force. Following their interpretation of the Ram's Head Mask have students describe costumes/objects in their lives that represent protective forces. Ask them to parallel a costume and/or object with the Ram's Head Mask. Ask questions such as, "Why are they similar?" "Do they promote the same idea?" "What makes them different?" Then have each student create a story book, describing a character and situation where the chosen objects protect people. This book should include pictures, photos and drawings of the chosen costume/object. After they have created their short story books, students will read and present the finished products to their fellow class members. Have time allotted for students to discuss other books. Pick out similarities among the costumes/objects of their books and similarities with the Ram's Head Mask.

Sunshine State Standard: K-5

Standard: Writing Applications

Description: Student will write narratives based on real or imaginary events that includes characters, observations, plot, sensory details, and logical sequence of events.

Sunshine State Standard: 6-12

Standard: Analyzing History

Description: Recognize sources of information, such as artifacts, images, and auditory and written sources.



What's Your Mascot? Art History Lesson Plan: 6-12

Session Activity: Animals symbolize character traits of individuals and nations. The Ram's Head represents strength to the Bobo Tribe. In America the symbol for the country is the bald eagle. This animal was chosen because it represented characteristics the United States wanted to embody. Some historians believe Benjamin Franklin wanted to choose the turkey as the United States "mascot." Have the students begin with an open discussion as to why they believe the turkey is not our country's national animal. Then have the students research the historical meaning behind the bald eagle and create a multimedia presentation for the class. Have students research two and three dimensional imagery utilizing the bald eagle as a patriotic symbol to include in the presentations. Suggest a search on the internet or a search using a personal camera within the local community. Captions with identification information must be included with images used.

Prompts:

1. Why was the bald eagle chosen to be the United States national animal?
2. What characteristics does the bald eagle have that we embody as a culture?
3. Is this animal an accurate representation of the United States?
4. What are some of the similarities and differences between the bald eagle's representation in America and the ram in the Bobo Tribe?
5. What public artworks do you recall that utilize the bald eagle as a patriotic symbol?