

African chokwe masks essay sample



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The term Chokwe has at least 30 different spellings. Their history dates back to the 15th century, when a Lunda queen married a Luba prince Chibinda Ilunga. Because a member of the Lunda aristocracy disapproved of the marriage, the queen and prince migrated south to present-day Angola. There they founded several kingdoms, each headed by a god-king. The masks they created probably played important roles in religious beliefs and institutional practices, but today many Chokwe masks have been used primarily for entertainment. Pwo, is an archetype of womanhood, they are portrayed and envisioned as ancestors, and often encourage fertility. The eyes closed to narrow slits to mimic a deceased person. Recently pwo has become known as mwana pwo, a young woman. One of the purposes of the mask is to teach the young women refined attitudes and feminine gestures and how to move gracefully and elegantly through the movements of graceful movement of the dancers. The mask is worn by a man wearing a net tunic.

The mask is also worn by boys undergoing initiation and other ceremonies to assist in fertility and prosperity (index. html). According to Manuel Jordan, the masks facial features include masoji, or tears, below the eyes, and that the women wear a clay-packed wig that is reminiscent of those favored by women in areas of Angola. The masks, according to Jordan, contain “ traits such as the half-closed, almond-shaped eyes within concave eye orbits, filed teeth, and C-shaped ears”. Sometimes the painter includes a carved head-band around the forehead and traditional scarifications are usually engraved. In my mask, I incorporate the large hairdo that was often utilized as a sign of status. I have also drawn the scarifications that are used in the culture to mark women (like if she has been married), and I have also included the

masoji (tears). Another important aspect of the culture is the use of cingelyengelye - a cross with triangles located on the forehead. That was thought to be passed down from Portuguese Capuchin monks who gave out medals of crucifix's to the people in the area. I have drawn the c-shaped ears, the filed teeth, the almond " shaped eyes," a head-band around the forehead, and a " wig."

Works cited

" Index. html." Index. html. Web. 05 Nov. 2012. < <http://www.zyama.com/chokwe/index.htm> >. Jordan, Manuel. " Revisiting Pwo - Chokwe Masks - RAND AFRICAN ART." Revisiting Pwo - Chokwe Masks - RAND AFRICAN ART. 01 Jan. 2004. Web. 03 Nov. 2012. .