

Hofstra University Museum JPMorgan Chase Art Travelers through Time: Literacy and History through Art



Mali, Bamana Antelope
Headdress (*Chi Wara*, *Ci-Wara*
or *Tyi Wara*) 19th-20th century
Wood
Gift of Josephine and Sol Levitt
HU89.13



Eliot Elisofon, Smithsonian
Institution Collection SIRIS

WHAT: *Chi Wara*, Antelope Headdress of the Bamana tribe; members of the “Mande” culture

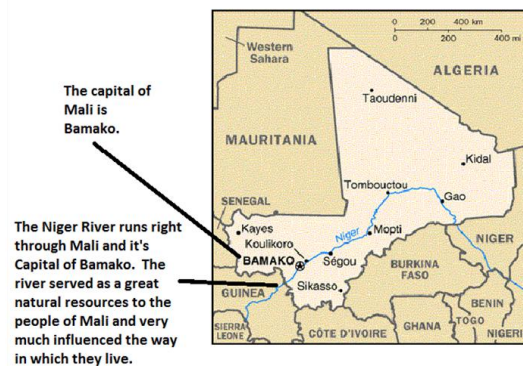
WHERE: Western Africa; Mali

WHEN: 19th-20th Century


WHY: In African cultures, real and imaginary animals often play important roles in stories and celebrations. The Bamana people of Mali in West Africa are farmers and their story of an antelope-like being, **Chi Wara**, honors the importance of hard work and harmony in farming life. According to legend, before Chi Wara took pity on the Bamana people, they wandered the dry land to find food. Chi Wara, which means “work” “animal,” taught their ancestors how to farm so they could live in one place. This magical creature is a combination of three animals’ body parts and traits: an aardvark’s body with his big ears and short legs and whose habit of burrowing in the earth mimics farming; an antelope’s horns, reminiscent of the hoes used to cultivate the land and also of the tall millet stalk which is food staple of Bamana life; and the textured skin of the pangolin whose sharp claws dig into the earth similar to the digging when planting seeds.

The Bamana celebrate the spirit of Chi Wara with dances and singing at planting and harvest times to insure a good harvest. The celebration includes two male dancers, one wearing a male headdress (sun) and one wearing female headdress (earth), symbolizing the cooperation needed for a successful harvest. The dancers wear a costume made of natural grasses or raffia, the vertical strings symbolizing rain. The mask is made of simplified, almost abstract forms. Today the festivals are more entertainment than a social ceremony.

Map of Mali, Africa



Looking at Africa as a whole, Mali is located in the northwest. It borders the countries of Mauritania, Algeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, Cote D'Ivoire, Guinea, and Senegal.



Vocabulary

Characteristics

Legend

Crops



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

In what ways are world communities similar and different?*

In Africa, traditional communities are separated by specific tribes living and staying together as a group with their own traditions. In what ways is this similar/different from American culture?

Social Studies Activity: Class discussion - Compare and contrast what you know of the Bamana culture to American culture and/or the school/classroom culture. What are the important aspects of each: consider stories, rituals, values, and climate. Make a chart comparing the cultures.

Writing Activity: Create a story (individual or group) involving an animal and ritual that represents an important aspect of your classroom or your home culture. Write and illustrate your classroom story.

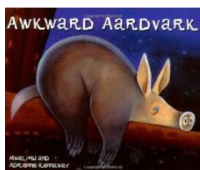
Art Activity: Have students create an animal using characteristics of three different, but real, animals. Have students describe their new animal and what its purpose is.

* Based on Focus Questions from the NYS 3rd Grade Social Studies Curriculum



Resources

Related Children's Books

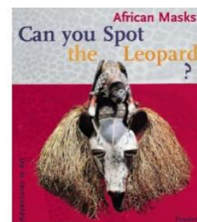


Awkward Aardvark by Mwalimu and Adrienne Kennaway

Aardvark's snoring keeps the other animals awake night after night. This is the story of how Awkward Aardvark came to sleep during the day and eat termites at night.

Can You Spot the Leopard? African Masks (Adventures in Art) by Christine Stelzig

This visually focused art book looks at over 30 masks from a variety of African peoples. The text consists of a mixture of speculation and folklore to discuss the representation of various animals.



Web Link



Chi Wara Mask Ceremony:

Youtube Video

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hailQwhA_7U)

[hailQwhA_7U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hailQwhA_7U)