

THE SECRET COMES FORTH: The Depiction of Animals in Bozo and Bamanan
Puppetry in Mali
by Elisabeth den Otter

“A scorching afternoon in June on the banks of the Niger River in Mali. The youth association of the village of Kirango is celebrating its annual masquerade, with circle dances, masks, and large puppets in the shape of mythical animals. Songs tell about their beauty and power, accompanied by drums, gourd rattles and clappers. Through the masquerade exciting stories are told. They are a vehicle for expressing deep feeling, often symbolically. They also serve to confirm cultural identity; during the masquerade, society presents itself: ‘This is how we are and what we think about life.’”

The rest of the article is in Puppetry International magazine #41, page 5. Here are the author’s bibliographical references, and some links to enrich your experience:

See a much longer version of “The Secret Comes Forth,” with sound excerpts. While there, check out Elisabeth’s other publications on the subject, as well as photos and videos:

www.elisabethdenotter.nl/site1/Homepage_of_Elisabeth_den_Otter/Publications.html

A short YouTube film shows fragments of the DVD “La fête des masques Bamanan de Kirango (Mali).” Very interesting!

www.youtube.com/watch?v=AREsSXmsBbc

LITERATURE

Arnoldi Mary Jo, *Playing with Time: Art and Performance in Central Mali*, Indiana University Press. Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1995

Arnoldi, M. J. and E. den Otter, Puppets Masquerades in Kirango, Mali: Continuity, Innovation, and Changing Contexts. In: *Mande Mansa: Essays in Honor of David C. Conrad* (eds S.Belcher, J.Jansen, M.N'Daou). Münster: LIT Verlag, pp.7-15, 2008

Dieterlen, Germaine, *Essai sur la religion Bambara*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951

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Soleillet, P., *Voyages et Decouvertes de Paul Soleillet*. Paris, Gros, 1881

Sundström Lars, *Ecology and Symbiosis: Niger Water Folk*.
Studia Ethnographica Upsaliensia XXXV, Uppsala 1972

Cd's/Dvd's/YouTube videos Elisabeth den Otter:

-CD "Mamou Thiero: chansons Bozo / Somono". Samaké Records 07, 2009

-CD "Chansons Bozo de Kirango (Mali)". Samaké Records 05, 2008

-CD "Dònfòli/Play the music. Bamanan and Bozo songs from Kirango, Mali"
Royal Tropical Institute/PAN records no. 4010 KCD, 1998

-DVD "Fête de circoncision/fête des masques Bozo, Kirango (Mali)"
Samaké Records 02, 2006

-DVD "Fêtes des masques des enfants de Kirango (Mali)"
Samaké Records 03, 2006

-DVD "La fête des masques Bamanan de Kirango (Mali)"
Samaké Records 06, 2008

[YouTube link from Bamanan]