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Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE: July 17, 2009

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SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH FOR AUGUST: [YUP'IK MASK](#)

A Yup'ik mask is the Sheldon Jackson Museum's Artifact of the Month for August. The mask is characterized as a plaque mask because of the broad flat surface and central face. It has been identified by Yup'ik scholar, Ann Fienup-Riordan, as being similar to the type used by an angalkuq or shaman in ceremonial activities. Probably this mask was used during dances to call forth the spirits of the animals represented by the carvings or to show gratitude to those animals who gave themselves to the hunters for food.

Sheldon Jackson collected the mask at Andreaski (St. Mary's today) in 1893 on his summer trip with the Revenue Cutter Service as the General Agent of Education. Jackson collected numerous masks between 1890 and 1900. Unlike at.óow (ceremonial objects) of southeast Alaska that were owned collectively by clans, Yup'ik and Inupiaq mask makers/owners could dispose of a piece as they saw fit. Dance masks made for specific occasions were destroyed or set aside after a festivity but when an art market became available in the 19th century, many were retrieved and sold to teachers, missionaries, traders and ethnologists. The angalkuq sometimes retained his masks and reused them but by the late 1890s when Jackson was collecting, the angalkuq were reluctantly starting to relinquish their ceremonial ways. The more than 370 masks in the Sheldon Jackson Museum collection were bartered for or purchased out right by Jackson and others who collected for Jackson.

A request has been made for this unique and often published mask to be part of an exhibition at the musée du quai Branly in Paris, France from February 2010 to August 2011. According to the letter of request, "This anthropological exhibition suggests the deciphering of major artistic and material humanity production of the five continents. The purpose of the curator is to show the invisible of the image, the impression searched by the image maker."

The mask can be seen at the Sheldon Jackson Museum beginning August 1 through August 31. Summer hours are daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. with \$4 admission. Visitors 18 and younger, Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, and those with passes are admitted free of charge.

The images can also be viewed on our website at
http://www.museums.state.ak.us/sheldon_jackson/artifact_of_month.html.

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