



Baule Mask

The Baule belong to the Akan peoples who inhabit Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Three hundred years ago the Baule people migrated westward from Ghana when the Ashanti rose to power. The tale of how they broke away from the Ashanti has been preserved in their oral traditions. During the Ashanti rise to power the Baule queen, Aura Poku, was in direct competition with the current Ashanti king. When the Ashanti became more powerful, the queen led her people away to the land they now occupy. The male descendant of Aura Poku still lives in the palace she established and is honoured by the Baule as their nominal king. The Baule belong to the Akan peoples that inhabit Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Three hundred years ago the Baule people migrated westward from Ghana when the Asante rose to power.

The Baule grow yams and some maize as primary crops. They are also exporters of cocoa and kola nuts, which are grown on local plantations using large numbers of exploited migrant labourers, most from Burkina Faso. Many locally grown crops were introduced from the Americas during the Atlantic slave trade. These include maize, manioc, peppers, peanuts, tomatoes, squash, and sweet potatoes. They also raise farm animals including sheep, goats, chickens, and dogs. Markets, which are primarily run by women, take place every four days and are the enter of the local economy. Local produce and craft items are sold alongside imported goods from all over the world.

There are two forms of masks namely animal and human and or both. It is not uncommon for other human masks to have an animal attribute, or a human figure as a crest. Human masks are crafted and used only by men to make contact with Gu, ruler of the world. The holes on the sides of the mask help attach the mask to the face of the wearer. Baule masks are all unique, however, all have similar qualities. Baule carvers are most concerned with depicting accurate human or animal features in their sculptures. Through apprenticeship, the young man learns the proper aesthetics of Baule sculpture, which include a smooth patina, clear lines, balanced proportion and well rounded and slight asymmetry.

