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IROQUOIS MASKS AND MASKMAKING AT ONONDAGA

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INTRODUCTION

Few features of Iroquois culture have aroused a more sustained interest on the part of observers than the wooden masks or false faces. From the middle of the 17th century, when these carvings first caught the attention of the early travelers and missionaries, down to the present day, masks and the rituals associated with them have been a favorite topic of both amateur and professional ethnographers. Systematic investigation began in 1880 with the work of De Cost Smith and has been continued by William Beauchamp, Lewis Morgan, Arthur C. Parker, Harriet Converse, and Joseph Keppler. These students were primarily concerned with the role of masks in the religious patterns of the culture, and while they have provided abundant material on the mythological symbolism of the carvings and their use as ceremonial properties by the medicine societies, they tended to minimize or neglect other aspects.

The limitations of an approach solely in terms of religious function have been overcome to a considerable extent by the contributions of Frank Speck and William Fenton. Speck's attention has been directed toward the historical implications of masks. Through an analysis of masking as a culture complex common to many Indian tribes of northeastern America, he has traced the distribution and probable course of diffusion of masks in this region, thus placing the Iroquois materials in geographical and historical perspective. Fenton's treatment is, to date, the most comprehensive. He includes a consideration of the function of masks in the curative rites of the False Face Society, the historical problems related to the rise and spread of the masking complex, and is the first to approach the carvings from the standpoint of art. In his monograph "Masked Medicine Societies of the Iroquois," Fenton discusses the classification of formal types, the relation of these types to mythology and ritual, and the possibility of establishing local and tribal styles. He has also obtained infor-

mation on the technical processes of carving, the sources of formal characteristics, and the role of the individual in devising new forms. Although his most recent paper on masking presents some data on these topics, much is as yet unpublished.

My study differs from previous investigations both in scope and intention, as it is limited to an examination of mask carving on one Iroquois reservation. The Onondaga Reservation was chosen because of its accessibility, and I began work with the assumption, derived from the literature, that masks, insofar as they were still made and used by the modern Iroquois, continued to serve the same function and carry the same meaning as they had in the past.

Once I was in the field, however, the problem to be investigated became more structured. Onondaga is situated on the outskirts of Syracuse and is a highly acculturated community. Subjected to continuous pressure from Western society for more than 300 years, these Indians have lost many of their aboriginal customs and have assimilated the technology and, in part, the social organization and values of the dominant culture. In view of the widespread changes which have occurred, two questions may be posed. What factors account for the persistence of a traditional art in an acculturated society? How have the changes which have taken place in the society as a whole been reflected in the art—in its function, its meaning, and its style? The answers to these questions are sought in an analysis of mask carving in relation to its present sociocultural context.

Some limitations on conclusions which can be drawn from the data are imposed by the nature of the problem and the lack of adequate tools to cope with it. Artists are often unable, even when they are willing, to verbalize their conceptions of art, since many of their mental processes take place below the level of consciousness (Bunzel, 1929; Boas, 1955, p. 155). As yet no specific techniques for overcoming this difficulty have been developed, so that full insight into such problems as the motivation of the artist, the way in which he develops or acquires his skill, and the particular kind of satisfactions which he derives from his work remains beyond the scope of the ethnographer.

The conditions under which I did fieldwork constitute another factor which must be taken into consideration. I was on the reservation for a little less than 2 months, a period of time insufficient for me to become known and accepted by the community. Many of the Onondagas are suspicious and somewhat hostile toward outsiders, and the fact that I was a woman who was attempting to investigate a man's art did not improve my position. All my informants seemed to find it strange and a little unseemly that a woman should be interested in woodcarving, which is undoubtedly one of the reasons why

I was unable to persuade one of them to teach me the essentials of the craft. Similar difficulties were encountered when I sought an opportunity to observe the technical processes of carving, although in this case the principal obstacle was the lack of activity in maskmaking during March and April, the months when I was at Onondaga.

In other respects, too, my position in the community was not ideal. Because of the relatively crowded living conditions in most of the homes and the general distrust of strangers, I had little freedom in my choice of living quarters. The only family which was both able and willing to take me in was Christian; the wife was White and the husband, though Indian, quite thoroughly westernized. Their circle of friends and acquaintances did not include Onondagas who continue to make and use the masks since these people belong to the "pagan," less acculturated, portion of the population. I was, therefore, not able to make contact with my informants on an informal, friendly basis, or to converse with them casually in a variety of situations, but was forced to seek them out with no previous introduction and depend on one or two fairly structured interviews. Although I attempted to secure roughly comparable data from each carver, I had little success with the older men who were for the most part unwilling to talk to me.

The fact that I had no knowledge of the native language constituted another handicap. Though not necessary for communication, it would have been an excellent means of establishing rapport. Furthermore, insofar as conceptualizations about art are verbalized, many of them may be phrased in Iroquois but not carried over into English, which means that they are lost to the observer who has no command of the native tongue.

I had hoped to obtain some information concerning the artistic standards of the carvers by showing them photographs of masks which have been made on the reservation during the last few years. This plan was blocked by difficulties of an interpersonal sort since after I had taken pictures of a group of Onondaga masks, the carver who had originally given me permission to do so was told that under no circumstances should he allow Whites to photograph them. He asked me to refrain from mentioning to anyone that I had already taken pictures, a request which obviously prevented me from showing them to my other informants. However, I was able to use photographs of Iroquois masks which I had obtained from museums, and I found them very effective as a means of eliciting the carvers' judgments and opinions about masks and as a rapport device. The mere fact that I possessed such photographs seemed to change my informants' conception of me from that of a stranger who asked prying questions to that of a person who had a genuine interest in masks and who, perhaps, knew something about them. This technique also led

to more specific information, as it encouraged carvers to "free associate" about masks they had seen in the past, those they had made, and the ceremonies in which they are used. Invariably the Indians became more relaxed and talked more spontaneously after I had brought out the pictures.

The data from Onondaga were gathered and written up in 1950-51. Since that period, continued research has produced new evidence on the origins and historical background of Iroquois culture as a whole, and this has been incorporated in the monograph where relevant. The principal findings about the function and meaning of maskmaking on modern Onondaga, however, have not required reformulation and have, if anything, been strengthened by recent developments in other aspects of Iroquois life.

PATTERNS OF ART IN IROQUOIS CULTURE

Until recently the Iroquois Indians were believed to have made their appearance in the northeastern portion of the United States relatively late in the prehistoric period. At the time of their discovery by Europeans, those known as the Five Tribes were settled in the northern part of New York State where they occupied an intrusive cultural and linguistic position in an area inhabited by Algonquian-speaking peoples. Certain elements in their culture suggested a southern origin: a horticultural economy, matrilineal clans, and a group religious system centered in an annual cycle of harvest festivals, and theories of provenience postulated a migration from the southeastern United States (Fenton, 1940 a, p. 164). Archeological evidence, however, has failed to demonstrate a migration route, and excavations over the last several years indicate an Iroquois development in situ from centers in southeastern Ontario and northwestern New York (Ritchie, 1961, pp. 30, 35). Indeed, the shamanistic traits in their fraternities and secret societies point toward the north.

The Iroquois lived in semipermanent villages of from four to five hundred inhabitants. The characteristic dwelling, known as the longhouse, was a large, rectangular, communal structure of poles sheathed with bark. The decay of these bark houses and the exhaustion of the soil necessitated a removal to a new village site every 10 to 12 years. Horticulture was the primary source of subsistence and was a cooperative enterprise carried on by the women. Corn, beans, and squash were the staple crops and were personified in the religious system as the three sisters who supported life. The men assisted in clearing the fields and supplemented the diet by hunting and fishing.

The basic social unit was the matrilineal family headed by the eldest woman or matron. These families were united into exogamous clans which were not totemic although they bore animal names—Bear, Wolf, Snipe, etc. Four clans constituted a phratry, and two phratries, a tribe. Marriage was monogamous and arranged by the matrons. Matrilocal residence, matrilineal descent and inheritance, and the independent property rights of the wife gave women a status equal or superior to that of men within the longhouse. Outside of the home, women exercised an indirect influence in politics and participated in most religious activities.

The political organization has been extolled by many western observers as one of the most advanced in aboriginal America (Morgan, 1851; Wallace, 1946). It consisted of a league of five originally autonomous tribes (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca) which were culturally distinct and spoke separate dialects. At some time late in the 16th century these tribes banded together in a confederacy for the preservation of peace and order. The organization they created reflected symbolically the structure of the longhouse and the kinship system. The most powerful tribes were accorded the status of "elder brothers" and were given special responsibilities: the Mohawk guarded the "eastern door of the Longhouse," the Seneca protected the western entrance, and the Onondaga living in the center were the Keepers of the Council Fires and the perpetual hosts for all meetings. The "younger brothers" were the Oneida, the Cayuga, and later, the Tuscarora, a southern Iroquoian-speaking people who joined the union in 1772. The League did not achieve unanimity of purpose and action until the Colonial Period (Hunt, 1940), but did succeed even in its early phase in preventing warfare among its members. Kinship ties helped to insure solidarity as clan affiliations crosscut tribal lines.

The League's constitution was based on a combination of myth and historical fact and was transmitted orally from one generation to the next. Authority was vested in 50 peace chiefs or sachems whose actions as a governing body were at all times subject to the force of public opinion. Although chieftainships were hereditary within particular families, the office was essentially elective. The matron, in consultation with the other adult women of the household, selected a candidate who was then confirmed by the clan council, the tribal council, and finally the federal council. Women also had the power to depose unworthy chiefs and sometimes acted as regents for those too young to hold office. The federal council assembled once a year at Onondaga to determine foreign policy, settle internal disagreements, and act as the final court of appeals. The chiefs voted by tribes and a unanimous decision was required. Oratory, which was highly esteemed

by the Iroquois, played a prominent part in these sessions and, along with the games, feasts, and dances which always accompanied them, made a council meeting a time of social and ceremonial, as well as political, importance.

The central themes of Iroquois religion were fertility and health. A pantheon of deities, headed by the Great Creator and representing the beneficent and reproductive forces of nature, was opposed by the evil spirits who brought disease and destruction to mankind. Following the harvesting of each of the principal crops, an annual series of public ceremonies gave thanks to the deities through prayers, songs, dances, and offerings of food. Tobacco was used in most rites since it was a sacred plant, and smoking or burning it was regarded as a pledge of sincerity. The Keepers of the Faith, an elected priesthood, were responsible for the preparation and conduct of these celebrations, the most important of which was the Midwinter or New Year's Festival (also called the Feast of Dreams). Occurring in February and lasting a week, New Year's was a time of revelry when people, often in masquerade, went from house to house, demanding gifts and asking others to interpret their dreams. The carnival spirit was combined with religious solemnity in the games between the phratries, the dances, and the curative rites. The festivities culminated in the burning of a white dog, the spirit of which ascended to heaven carrying the prayers of the faithful to the Creator.¹

A number of medicine societies, many of them secret, were dedicated to the art of healing and the exorcism of evil spirits. Each society propitiated a special class of supernatural beings and had its own rituals and characteristic paraphernalia. The Bear Society appeased the spirits of bears with offerings of tobacco; the Otter Society drove out sickness, caused by water animals, by sprinkling its patients with water; the False Faces cured with masked dances and hot ashes rubbed or blown on the body; the Little Water Company knew the songs and dances to revive the dying. Some societies restricted their membership to those who fell sick and called upon them or who dreamed of joining; others encouraged participation by anyone who wished to help in the curing process.

Witchcraft was another source of evil and was punishable by death; persons in positions of power, such as matrons and chiefs, were often suspected. Witches were thought to roam about at night, sometimes taking the form of animals and injuring their victims by charms or mere volition.

The plastic and graphic arts of the Iroquois did not attain the degree of complexity that was evident in other aspects of their cul-

¹ At Onondaga the Burning of the White Dog has been obsolete for more than 70 years (Smith, 1888, p. 189).

ture. A practical people with a talent for organization, they were preoccupied with politics and diplomacy, and seem to have taken a greater interest in these activities than in the development and elaboration of material things.² Yet many Iroquois artifacts were notable for their simplicity and vigor, and for the manner in which form was adapted to function, whether domestic or ceremonial. In the decorative arts, designs and techniques were similar to those of the surrounding Algonquian tribes and were most probably derived from them (Speck, 1925, pp. 1-12).

The Iroquois worked in a variety of materials. Pipes and maskettes were carved in stone. Bone and antler were fashioned into combs, beads, rattles, and small figurines. Although the maskettes and figurines may have served as charms, their exact use is unknown; the forms are angular and unrefined with little or no detail. Pottery was made by the coiling process and was unpainted. The typical Iroquois pot had a globular body and a flaring collar ornamented only with incised lines, although toward the end of the 16th century there was a vogue for drawing crude faces at the corners of the rim. In contrast to the sculpture in bone and stone, clay pipes were modeled with naturalistic figures of men and animals; these effigy pipes have been judged by one student to be the finest of their type north of Mexico (Murdock, 1934, p. 300). Splints of black ash, bark, sweetgrass, and cornhusks were made into baskets and other containers, while braided or coiled cornhusks were used in the construction of mats, dolls, and masks. Clothes were of animal skins embroidered with geometric and curvilinear patterns worked in porcupine quills, moose hair, grass, and shell beads. Quantities of shell beads known as wampum went into the production of necklaces and belts. The designs were of geometric motifs and highly stylized figures which had a symbolic significance, for wampum was used as currency, as a record of tribal events, as a pledge of good faith, and as personal adornment.

Wood, being plentiful, accessible, and having sacred associations for the Iroquois,³ was extensively used for tools, weapons, domestic utensils, game implements, musical instruments, and ceremonial properties. Although the majority of these objects were undecorated, some were expertly carved with figures or geometric designs. Especially fine were the spoons and bowls which were the cherished possessions of individuals who took them to the festivals for eating

² In Kroeber's opinion there have been some Iroquois specializations in material culture but none of a high order (1947, p. 92). Two other students believe the Iroquois were concerned with utility rather than dramatic effect and consider their art to be less highly developed than that of the Algonquian (Douglas and d'Harnoncourt, 1941, p. 154).

³ The Sacred World Tree, symbol of peace and unity, figured prominently in Iroquois mythology and ritual and was a frequent motif in their decorative arts (Parker, 1912).

the sacred food. The handles depicted men and animals, either singly or in groups, and again a simple, abstract treatment of the forms was characteristic. Carvings were sometimes painted in polychrome, although for the most part the finish was that of the natural wood.

With European contact beginning in 1615, the Iroquois entered into a period of commercial and military expansion which brought about far-reaching changes in their culture. As middlemen between the colonists on the seaboard and the Indian tribes in the interior, they came to dominate the fur trade. Firearms obtained from the Dutch, and later from the English, enabled the League to develop the most powerful fighting force in the northeast. By 1700 they had conquered all the surrounding tribes and, through war or diplomacy, extended their influence from New England to Illinois and from the Ottawa River to Tennessee. Taking an active part in the intercolonial wars, they fought unceasingly against the French and their allies, the Canadian Algonquians, and were to a considerable extent responsible for the triumph of the English on the American continent.⁴ The constant warfare, the wholesale adoption of captives with the consequent introduction of alien customs, and the close cooperation with the English, all had repercussions on Iroquois society. The economy shifted from horticulture to hunting, raiding, and commerce; militarism increased and warriors gained in prestige and political power; the efforts of missionaries began to undermine the aboriginal religion; and European trade goods became an essential part of material culture.

The effect of contact upon art was immediate and profound. Manifold changes occurred in native materials, techniques, and designs until, within a few generations, almost all Iroquois work showed some European influence. Certain arts died out completely. Such was the fate of pottery, which was soon made obsolete by the acquisition of metal containers. Work in stone and bone diminished and by the 19th century much of the skill in the handicrafts had been lost. The initial results of acculturation were not, however, wholly destructive. Some of the existing crafts were stimulated, at least for a time, and in one instance a totally new skill, silversmithing, was introduced.⁵ With metal tools obtained from the Whites, woodcarving became easier. This craft reached its height in the 18th century and some authorities do not date the figures on bowls and spoons before that period (Beauchamp, 1905 a, p. 154). Better

⁴ The alliance of the Iroquois with the Dutch and the English has been termed "the pivotal fact of early American History" (Hunt, 1940, p. 6).

⁵ The introduction of trade goods had a similar effect on the arts of the Northwest Coast (Garfield, 1950, p. 69).

tools and new materials—cloth, glass beads, yarns, and ribbons—brought about a florescence in embroidery and the development of new designs. Geometric motifs became less common, giving way to elaborate and quasi-realistic floral patterns which indicate French influence (Speck, 1945, p. 62). Silversmithing was acquired from the Dutch in the 17th century and seems to have taken hold very quickly. Crosses, brooches, bracelets, and rings were made by the Europeans for the Indian trade and later by the Iroquois themselves. Form and decoration resembled work of European origin, circles, diamonds, hearts, and stars being the most popular designs. During the Colonial Period there was a smith in almost every Iroquois village and the craft flourished until the middle 1800's.

The American Revolution marked the decline of the League and the end of political independence. While the Iroquois were unable to come to a unanimous decision as to which side to support, most of the tribes fought on the side of the English, and at the close of the war about two-thirds of the population fled to Canada. Those who remained here were granted a portion of their original territory under Government treaty, although these lands were subsequently reduced by forced sales and the encroachments of White settlers. Today there are approximately 7,000 Iroquois living on seven reservations in New York State, and several thousand more, principally Oneidas, in Wisconsin. The population, which had suffered heavily from the wars as well as from alcohol and disease introduced by the Europeans, has been steadily increasing during the last 100 years. Inter-marriage with the Whites began soon after contact, and it is estimated that the United States Iroquois are now about 55 percent full-blooded (Douglas, 1931 a). The League, although greatly weakened and deprived of many of its powers, continues to function and has undoubtedly been a factor in allowing the Iroquois to preserve their tribal identity. Acculturation has obliterated much of the aboriginal culture, but it has taken place at a rate that has allowed them, as a society, to adjust rather than disintegrate.

Although in many aspects of Iroquois life change has been resisted and the old ways have been retained, the material culture has largely succumbed to the pressure of western civilization. As a result, many of the arts have lost their function in the society, and, in most instances, when they have not disappeared completely, they have been reduced to the production of curios and knickknacks for the tourist trade. A number of the old artisans have died, and there is little incentive in the younger generation to continue the traditional arts or to institute new ones. An effort to remedy this situation was undertaken in 1935 when the Indian Arts Project, sponsored by the Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences, was established. Operating

as a relief measure under the Federal Government, the project was carried on for 6 years on two New York reservations: Tonawanda and Cattaraugus. With the help of the few craftsmen who still remembered the old techniques, some of the Iroquois arts were revived: bead weaving, quill embroidery, pottery, and woodcarving. This venture has been moderately successful in reestablishing high standards of workmanship and in providing an outlet for native products, but it must be noted that the initial stimulus came from the outside, and that, for the most part, the market is White rather than Indian.

MASKS IN IROQUOIS CULTURE

ORIGIN AND ANTIQUITY

While it is well established that woodcarving is a traditional Iroquois art dating back to the prehistoric era, there has been considerable disagreement among students as to whether the wooden masks or false faces are an indigenous and ancient part of the culture.

Questions concerning the origin of false faces are but part of the more general historical problem of determining the center of the masking complex in the Eastern United States. According to Dall (1884, p. 145) the use of masks by Indians east of the Mississippi was rare and did not form a prominent part of their festivals or customs. Although this statement is inaccurate, it is true that an uneven distribution of masks prevailed among the tribes of this region. Masks have been recorded only for the Iroquois of New York, the Hurons of southern Ontario and the extinct nations affiliated with them, some of the Algonquian tribes of the Atlantic slope, the Iroquoian-speaking peoples of North Carolina (the Cherokee), the Siouan tribes of the southeast, and the Creek (Seminole). In view of this distribution and the fact that the Iroquois appeared to occupy an intrusive linguistic and cultural position in the northeast, Fenton (1941, p. 416) originally suggested three possibilities: Iroquois masking may be a diagnostic trait pointing to their alleged southern origin; it may be related to northern shamanism and the use of masks across the Arctic littoral; or it may have originated with the Iroquois themselves. He postponed final judgment on this question, but was inclined to believe that the Iroquois acquired their masks from the north and that the immediate source was the Huron tribes.

Speck's conclusions also are tentative and differ from those of Fenton in that the former considers the Iroquois to have been the agents of diffusion rather than the recipients. His opinion is based on the distribution of masks in relation to the stationary wooden face images which were common throughout the middle Atlantic Coast region. Although the southern coastal Algonquians only had these

stationary faces carved on posts, and the northern Iroquois and the Cherokee had only portable masks, the Delaware and related Algonquian peoples who lived adjacent to the Iroquois had both types of images. Therefore, Speck (1945, pp. 74-76) concludes that in early times: the tribes in the central sector of the eastern Algonquian territory from the Hudson River to the Carolina Sound area practiced certain rites connected with graven post images; the early Iroquois performed rites with masks distinct from the usages of the Algonquians; and the mask complex gradually spread to the nearby Algonquian tribes who adopted it in addition to their own stationary icons. Masks, then, were presumably an indigenous trait which the Iroquois brought with them when they migrated into the northeast.

Historic depth, like origin, has been a subject of controversy, and again two opinions prevail. Some believe that false faces were used by the Iroquois before the contact period, while others date their introduction late in the 17th century. The first historic record of masks of the Iroquois type comes from the French Jesuits who observed them among the Canadian Hurons in 1637, where they were worn in dances to drive away pestilence and were hung on poles at the top of each cabin when not in use. However, Jesuit accounts of similar ceremonies at Onondaga at approximately the same time make no mention of masks of any kind, and although the Onondaga were apparently holding masked dances by 1676, there is no assurance that the masks were of wood. The first positive evidence of false faces among the New York Iroquois comes from De Nonville in 1687. Writing about the Seneca he says, "They make some very hideous masks with pieces of wood which they carve according to their fancy . . . one foot and a half wide in proportion. Two pieces of kettle very neatly fitted to it and pierced with small holes represent the eyes. . ." (Beauchamp, 1905 a, p. 184). In 1743, this type was seen at Onondaga and false faces were recorded after the Revolutionary War as being numerous among all the Iroquois tribes.

The fact that the first travelers and missionaries found no public use of masks, and for a long time knew of none among the Iroquois, led Fenton (1941, pp. 412-416) and Beauchamp (1905 a, pp. 184-185) to the conclusion that false faces and their rituals made their appearance among the Seneca in western New York not earlier than the middle of the 1600's and from there spread slowly eastward to the other four tribes. Those students who take issue with this theory find support for the antiquity of masks in archeological materials. Parker (1909, pp. 181-182) cites the small stone masks and the faces on pots and pipes, some of which he takes to represent masked figures. In his opinion, this evidence and some accounts of idols in the early 1600's that may refer to masks are proof that the Iroquois

masking complex can be dated before the period of White contact. Converse and Keppler (Keppler, 1941, p. 19) take the same view and point out that the failure of early writers to mention masks is no guarantee that they did not exist at that time, as it is probable that the first Europeans were never permitted to see a mask or to witness the more secret ceremonies in which they were used.

The new archeological evidence bearing on the problem of Iroquois provenience has done much to resolve previous differences of opinion. The probability that Iroquois culture originated and developed in New York State, and the discovery of representations of masked faces on clay pipe bowls in prehistoric Iroquois sites near Onondaga, offers support to those who insist that masking was an indigenous and ancient trait.⁶ Fenton's latest discussion (1956, p. 351) takes these facts into account, and he is now in substantial agreement with Speck, viewing the early Iroquois as a center for the development of portable masks and as possible agents of diffusion to other areas.

Complete certainty on the question of origin and antiquity may never be achieved. The climatic conditions of northern New York prohibit the survival of direct evidence in the form of wooden masks, and the reports of early European observers are equivocal in that they are incomplete and open to different interpretations. Careful historical reconstruction through research into the mask complex as it exists today among the Iroquois and neighboring tribes is still needed. If, for example, it could be demonstrated that the masks and rituals of the northern Iroquois have more traits in common with Iroquoian-speaking peoples to the south, the Cherokee, than they have with those of the Algonquian peoples adjacent to them, it would provide confirmation for the hypothesis that the Iroquois possessed masks in the prehistoric period.

Regardless of what can or cannot be proved in the future, the fact remains that masks have become deeply embedded in mythology and ritual and can be fully documented as a significant part of Iroquois culture for almost 300 years. Furthermore, the "idols" mentioned in the earliest accounts of travelers indicate that although the masks themselves may not have been acquired until late in the 17th century, the notion of representing supernatural beings in wood was neither incompatible nor foreign to the Iroquois of the prehistoric era.⁷

⁶ Wray (1956, pp. 7-8) points out the resemblance between the stone and shell maskettes present in all early Seneca sites and modern mask types.

⁷ In his journal of 1634-35, Arent van Curler reported that "the (Mohawk) chief showed me his idol; it was a head with teeth sticking out; it was dressed in red cloth. Others have a snake, a turtle, a swan, a crane, a pigeon or the like for their idol, to tell the fortune; they think they will always have good luck in doing so." [Wilson, 1896, p. 88.]

THE FALSE FACE SOCIETY

Although one of many religious organizations concerned with the preservation of health, the False Face Society has always enjoyed preeminence among the Iroquois, and on some reservations it is the only medicine society which has persisted up to the present day. Its particular function is the propitiation of the gods of Wind and Disease, a class of evil spirits greatly feared for their power to send plagues and pestilence among men. These supernatural beings are not named individually but are simply called False Faces; the Onondaga word is *Hodo'wi*, a term also used for those masks which represent the spirits. They are usually described as elusive creatures who have neither bodies nor limbs, only hideous faces which paralyze all who behold them. In ancient times they were occasionally glimpsed by hunters in retired parts of the forest where they darted from tree to tree, their long hair snapping in the wind. At Onondaga they were said to live in a great cave where there were stone images carved in their likeness and an atmosphere so charged with malign influences that anyone who dared to enter was immediately stricken with sickness (Smith, 1888, p. 187).

Of the several legends recounting the origin of the False Face Society, that most generally known among the Iroquois concerns a test of magical power between the Great Creator and the first *Hodo'wi*.⁸ Boasting that it was he who ruled the world, the *Hodo'wi* attempted to prove his superior strength by summoning a distant mountain. When he failed to accomplish this feat, the Creator caused the mountain to stand directly behind the *Hodo'wi* and then commanded him to turn around. Angrily doing so, the *Hodo'wi* struck his face violently against a rocky ledge, breaking his nose and twisting his mouth with pain. In punishment for his boastfulness he was forced to suffer this distorted visage, and to help human beings combat sickness and other evil influences. It was he who first instructed men in the art of carving masks reminiscent of his own features and taught them the ceremonies in which they are used. The Seneca say he still lives on the rim of the world where he walks with great strides, following the path of the sun. He carries a long staff and a giant mud turtle rattle, and his face is red in the morning, black in the afternoon (Fenton, 1941, p. 420).

Originally the False Faces were a true secret society. When the members appeared in character they were always masked and their names were known only to their leader, a woman who had charge of the regalia. Initiation and exodus were by dreams. To fall sick and

⁸ This legend has been recorded by Parker, Keppler, and Fenton, and was repeated to me several times at Onondaga.

dream of the *Hodo'wi* indicated eligibility to be cured by the society. This constituted initiation, and membership ceased only when one dreamed of release.

The rise of Handsome Lake,⁹ a preacher and prophet of the early 1800's, brought about a period of suppression and persecution for all the medicine societies. Claiming that they were working great harm to men and animals, the prophet demanded that tobacco be thrown into the fire and the companies disbanded. The chiefs met in council and complied with his order, but because the tobacco ceremony was omitted, many members of the societies declared the action of the council illegal. Branded as witches, they continued to hold their meetings in secret, and their very existence was concealed, both from White investigators and the Indian converts to the new faith. However, as the religion of Handsome Lake spread and was accepted by an increasing number of the Iroquois, it became more conservative. Gradually the new beliefs blended with the old and the tabooed societies were able to come out from underground. They began to hold their rituals openly again and to enter into public ceremonies, until eventually even the adherents of Handsome Lake joined without qualms. It was about this time that the policy of the False Faces toward membership underwent a change. Secrecy in regard to the identity of members was no longer considered so essential and the emphasis on dreams as a prerequisite for initiation became less pronounced. By 1900 on Onondaga, it was enough to show some symptoms of False Face sickness and make a feast (Smith, 1889, p. 279). Typical symptoms included ailments of the shoulders, joints, and head, especially toothaches, earaches, nosebleeds, and inflammation of the eyes.

Although there are local variations in False Face rituals, the essential elements are common to all the Iroquois and have changed little over the course of the years. They are best preserved among the Seneca, to whom the other tribes tend to look for the correct forms. In addition to holding private curing ceremonies, the False Faces appear publicly three times during the year. In the spring and fall they exorcise disease from the reservations, visiting the homes of all believers, where they stir the fire, sprinkle or blow ashes on the inmates, and dance. In return, they are given tobacco and corn mush which they carry away with them in kettles. A good deal of levity may enter into these proceedings as some of the band indulge in antics, rush about the house, try to upset the stove, and in general cause havoc.

⁹ Handsome Lake was a Seneca who had come under the influence of Quaker missionaries and experienced a series of revelations in which God instructed him to lead the Iroquois out of the degenerate condition into which they had fallen. He preached against witchcraft, whiskey, and the wholesale acceptance of White customs. His teachings are embodied in over a hundred moral injunctions, known as the Code of Handsome Lake, which are memorized and recited by religious leaders.

Besides the masks, they wear old, torn clothes which they sometimes stuff with tin pans to make them more grotesque. Each member carries a rattle of turtle, horn, or bark, while the leader, who is occasionally disguised as a woman, has a giant turtle rattle and a long staff to which miniature masks are attached. The third appearance of the False Faces occurs during the New Year's Festival, when they petition the *Hodo'wi* to withdraw the sickness for which these spirits have been responsible during the past year. Again they blow ashes, dance to the accompaniment of rattles, and beg for tobacco. Several False Faces, known as Doorkeepers, prevent anyone from leaving the ceremonies, and those who refuse to dance are thrown down, rubbed with ashes, and subjected to other indignities. Fenton has pointed out that individual talent in dancing and acting constitutes much of the effectiveness of these rituals. When an Iroquois dons a mask he behaves as if he were the supernatural being which he represents, acquiring its powers and dramatizing its attributes. He may even come to believe that he is that being and while the phenomenon of possession, a widespread psychological effect of masking, is probably rare among the modern Iroquois, cases have occurred within the memory of the present generation (Fenton, 1941, p. 422).

In ancient times carving was itself a religious ceremony surrounded by rituals and taboos. Masks were hewn from the trunk of a living tree in order that they, too, might be alive and contain the spiritual qualities attributed to the World Tree, symbol of peace and unity. Basswood was preferred because its fibers were absorbent and were considered to have remedial virtues. Having selected a tree, the carver burned tobacco at its roots, related the legend of the first False Face, and asked the tree for its life. The mask was then outlined, the features roughly blocked out, and the piece split away from the trunk. If the mask did not break and the basswood remained unshaken, it was proof that the tree had acquiesced to the appeal for its life. Sexual continence on the part of the carvers was necessary for a period both before and after the ceremony at which no ritually unclean person was allowed to be present.

This method of carving has not been preserved by the modern Iroquois and today the curative powers are imparted to the masks after the technical processes have been completed. In a ceremony called "doctoring," tobacco is burned, a bag of it is attached to each mask, and the appropriate words are spoken over them. This constitutes the initiation of the carvings into the False Face Society.

Once the masks have been initiated they have spiritual powers that make them dangerous if they are not treated with great care and respect. They do not like to be neglected, and unless they are used frequently they must be talked to, fed mush, and annointed with sun-

flower oil. When they are put away it must be face downward, as to be laid with the face up intimates that they are dead, which greatly offends them. If masks are hung on the wall, they should be covered or turned inward lest they cause possession. Some have special powers to warn their owners of impending sickness or death, which they do by sweating, falling from the wall, or speaking out; one old Seneca mask was thought to be able to instruct newer masks and was laid away with them for that purpose. Other false faces are notoriously bad tempered and hard to please. These are known as "poison" and are a source of much trouble and anxiety to their owners as they must be worn often and require a great deal of tobacco. To mock any mask, to speak disrespectfully to it or of it, brings dire consequences on the offender. Illness or a crooked face result and can be cured only when the mask is used in a ceremony and propitiated with an offering of tobacco.

STYLE

There is little stylistic relationship between the masks and the other woodcarvings of the Iroquois. Whereas simplicity and restraint are characteristic of the figures on bowls, spoons, and other objects, the masks show an elaboration of form and a concern with detail that sometimes tend toward the grotesque. Although this disparity in style seems to place false faces outside the main traditions of Iroquois art and could be attributed to the fact that they were acquired from another culture, an equally plausible explanation lies in the relation of form to function. As portraits of the powerful and dangerous *Hodo'wi*, the masks must reflect the attributes of these beings, and so it is not unnatural that they should have an emotional quality that is absent from carvings which serve a less dramatic purpose.

Although differing in detail, all false faces share certain characteristics which give them the same general effect and constitute a single style. The carving is in high relief and the features, though distinctly human, are always distorted or exaggerated. The eyes are deeply set and rimmed with wide pieces of sheet metal, while the nose is usually long with a high bridge and may be bent to one side. The most variable feature is the mouth which may be twisted, puckered, smiling, distended, or flaring; teeth or a protruding tongue are frequent additions. Most masks have deeply cut wrinkles around the mouth or eyes, and some have a crest of spines on the forehead or nose. Horsehair, either black or white, is fastened at the top and hangs down in long locks on each side of the face. As a rule, masks are painted one solid color, either black or red. Occasionally, however, both red and black will be used on a single false face, the coloration being divided by a vertical line down the center of the mask.

A second variety of Iroquois masks not previously mentioned is the husk faces which symbolize the three spirits of agriculture—corn, beans, and squash—who taught men the art of cultivating. These masks are by no means as numerous as the wooden type, since the medicine society in which they are worn is almost extinct; a few, however, are used for curative purposes in the False Face rituals. Made of braided cornhusks, which are woven or sewn into crude human faces with holes to represent the eyes and mouth, these masks are quite flat and look somewhat like animated doormats. Other masks that occasionally appear among the Iroquois are those depicting animals—bears, pigs, and birds—which are carved in a naturalistic fashion and may be survivals from ancient medicine societies, and a buckskin mask with a long nose that is used to frighten disobedient children. Maskettes in wood or cornhusk resemble their larger prototypes to which they are often attached. They are also kept as personal charms, used as tokens of membership in the society, and made for children when they are cured by the False Faces.

The first attempts to classify the wooden masks were made in terms of function with little regard as to how this might determine variations in the forms or the treatment of details. Converse recorded a number of types among the Seneca which were named according to use: Live, Doctor, Wind, Scalp, Clan, Harvest, Maternity, Night, Completing, and Counselor masks. This classification has been accepted by Keppler, the friend and protege of Converse, but it has not been substantiated by any other investigator. Morgan, Harrington, Parker, and Fenton have found only four classes based on function: Doctor, Doorkeeper, Beggar or Dancing, and Secret masks.¹⁰ Since these students worked among the Seneca both before and after Converse, it seems likely that she overinterpreted her material.

Formal characteristics as a basis for segregation were not seriously considered until Fenton began his series of systematic studies among the Seneca in 1936. Finding that the descriptions of collectors and museum curators were at odds with one another as well as in disagreement with the ideas held by the Indians themselves, he undertook to group over a hundred masks according to certain formal criteria and then checked this classification against the concepts of his informants (Fenton, 1941, pp. 397-429). He discovered that the mouth, which as the most variable feature is a likely base for distinguishing formal types, is the criterion most frequently used by the Seneca who divide their masks into the following groups: crooked-

¹⁰ According to Fenton, Doctor and Doorkeeper masks are the most sacred and take the leading parts in the curative rituals as they symbolize the first False Face. Those of the Beggar class represent the Common Faces of the forest and are less powerful though they are also used for curing. Secret masks never appear in public ceremonies; their function and symbolism are unknown.

mouth, hanging-mouth, straight-lipped, spoon-lipped, tongue-protruding, smiling, whistling or blowing, divided (red and black), and blind.

Combined with other features, mouth types constitute local and tribal styles, ceremonial classes, and mythological stereotypes. Crooked-mouth masks with a bent nose and many wrinkles are most common among all the Iroquois and portray the distortions suffered by the original False Face as described in the legend. Together with spoon-lipped masks, which are generally confined to the Seneca, they belong to the Doctor and Doorkeeper classes. Faces with a protruding tongue appear most often among the Onondaga, whereas those with a hanging mouth and a crest of spines on the forehead are considered to be "classic Seneca." The Beggar or Dancing class is the most plastic as it contains a variety of types. Smiling and whistling masks fall into this group; among the Onondaga they are apt to be heavy with thick lips and puffy cheeks. The divided masks that represent a "god whose body is riven in twain" and who is half human, half supernatural, are unfamiliar to most of the Iroquois, and Fenton believes that they may have been acquired fairly recently from the Delaware. Blind masks are an enigma to ethnographers. They have no eyeholes and were formerly used in the rites of the Idos medicine society, where the wearer demonstrated his ability to find and identify hidden objects. Today they never appear in public and the Indians are unwilling to talk about them, a secretiveness Fenton attributes to lack of knowledge, for blind masks have been ceremonially obsolete for over a century. Except in the case of the divided mask where red and black symbolize east and west, color seems to be irrelevant and is not correlated with any other feature. Although some Iroquois attribute greater power to black masks while others favor the red, the two colors are equally common.

As might be expected, Fenton found that the Seneca do not adhere rigidly to their own classification; types are not definable in terms of form alone. Since masks are usually carved according to dreams or visions, the conception portrayed by the carver may be ignored by the subsequent owner of the mask. Most masks regardless of form rise in status with age and use, so that many Beggar masks are in time promoted to the role of Doctor or Doorkeeper. Some Indians refuse to recognize any classification, saying that there are as many mask types as there are people.

One general observation may be added to Fenton's discussion, as it pertains to a consideration of tribal styles. While it is quite possible to plot the spatial distribution of variations in formal characteristics and so determine which masks are today most prevalent in a particular locality, there is little assurance that these types taken together comprise a traditional tribal style. For almost 200 years the Iroquois

have been living on reservations on which two or more of the five tribes are represented.¹¹ This proximity has tended to break down the minor differences between them and there is no reason to suppose that art forms escaped the process of intertribal acculturation. Even before the reservation period, the League brought the Iroquois into close association, socially and religiously as well as politically, and provided ample opportunity for the observation and exchange of ceremonial properties such as masks. The assumption of definite and distinct tribal styles in the precontact period is, therefore, a doubtful one. Certainly today the stylistic differences that are characteristic of the various reservations must be taken as the outgrowth of fairly recent local developments rather than the persistence of ancient tribal traditions.

There is very little material on which to base an accurate account of the stylistic development of Iroquois masks. Because of the perishable nature of wood, a hundred years is probably the maximum age of any mask now in existence, and many of this vintage were destroyed by the Christians and the early converts of Handsome Lake who were taught to regard them as idols and "devil faces." Of those that have survived, either on the reservations or in museums and private collections, few have been accurately dated. The carvings themselves offer no clues to age, for many modern masks are given an antique finish to make them look old. Historical records as a source of material by which to chart fluctuations in style are of limited value, since early descriptions of masks are too few and too general to permit a detailed reconstruction.

Keppler (1941, p. 18) has ventured the opinion that at first all masks were carved in the likeness of the original False Face, depicting his twisted mouth and broken nose. Divergence from this basic type occurred as certain formal characteristics which proved ritually efficacious were emphasized and others that seemed useless were eliminated. Further variations may have evolved when the carvers sought to reproduce the mysterious maladies which distort the human body, or when they attempted to frighten the spirits of disease by heightening the fearsome appearance of the masks.

Keppler's theory of development has some basis in the origin legend and the present widespread distribution of crooked-mouth masks, although there is little evidence to support his assertion that the variety of masks observed today all evolved from a single basic type. Certainly, style was affected by the function and meaning of the carvings. Fenton (1956, p. 352) considers the false faces to be "grotesque portrayals of specific disease somatotypes," and he points

¹¹ Cattaraugus Reservation, while predominantly Seneca, also has the Cayuga and Onondaga; Tonawanda: Seneca and Cayuga; Allegany: Seneca and Onondaga; etc.

to the striking parallels between the stylistic features and the motor behavior of the dancers on the one hand, and the illnesses of face and body which the rituals seek to relieve.

European contact had an influence on style, if for no other reason than that the introduction of metal tools revolutionized carving techniques. The exact nature of the changes which followed, or how quickly they took place, cannot be described, since there are no accounts of masks before 1678, some 80 years after contact had been established. It may be assumed that the carvings became more ornate and detailed, that the workmanship became more finished, and that many new types, previously too difficult to attempt with the old methods of charring and scraping, were developed.¹² Spoon-lipped masks and those with widely flaring mouths may be examples of such innovations. As better tools made woodcarving less arduous and time consuming, more people may have engaged in maskmaking, which would be another factor in expanding the range of variability. New and more spectacular effects were also achieved through the use of new materials. Buffalo manes and braided cornhusks which had served as hair were replaced by long horsetails, eyes were rimmed with sheet metal instead of clamshells, and bright commercial paints were substituted for earth pigments.

During the last two centuries the majority of false faces have undergone few fundamental changes, although the trend toward diversification and the adoption of new forms has continued. Some innovations seem to have been inspired by western rather than native concepts, such as the horned masks devised by a Seneca artist in 1900 which have a diabolical appearance and may, according to Fenton, be caricatures of White gods. Very modern types include representations of Felix the Cat, Mickey Mouse, and Charlie Chaplin that have been added to the Beggar class, while masks with cigars in their mouths are among those made professionally and offered for sale at Cattaraugus. False faces of this type are relatively rare, however, as compared with the number carved according to the old patterns. In the latter, the basic features, the proportions, and the treatment of details combine to produce an effect differing little from that described by John Bartram in 1743.

We were entertained by a very comical fellow in as odd a dress as Indian folly could devise. He had on a clumsy vizard of wood, coloured black with a nose four or five inches long, a grinning mouth set awry furnished with long teeth, round the eyes circles of bright brass, surrounded by larger circles of white paint, from his forehead hung long tresses of buffalo hair, and from the catch part of his head ropes made of plaited husks of Indian corn In my whim I saw another vizard of this kind hung by the side of one of their cabins in another town. [Bartram, 1751, pp. 43-44.]

¹² The introduction of metal tools had essentially this effect on woodcarving of the Northwest Coast.

This description substantially agrees with that of Morgan in 1851, with the accounts given by Beauchamp, Converse, and Parker in the early 1900's, and could be applied to many of the masks which are carved today.

MASK CARVING AT ONONDAGA RESERVATION

THE COMMUNITY

Onondaga Reservation lies in a valley 1 mile south of the city limits of Syracuse, not far removed from the ancient tribal site on Onondaga Lake. The Indians were guaranteed possession of their lands by Government treaty in 1795, the terms of which provide an annual allowance of salt and cloth to every member of the tribe. Considerably reduced by forced sales in the early 1800's, the reservation now encompasses about 6,100 acres of farmland and scrub timber. The population is a little less than a thousand, an increase of almost 100 percent over the last 10 years owing to an influx of Iroquois from Canada who have come seeking jobs in Syracuse.

To a casual observer, Onondaga is not markedly different from other rural areas in this part of the State. The small framehouses are similar to those of the surrounding regions, and although many are old and some in a dilapidated condition, others are modernized to the extent of having plumbing and electricity; radios are common and television sets are not unusual. Even the Council House, the traditional focus of political and religious activities, is a commonplace, whitewashed structure resembling a country schoolhouse. Other public buildings are three Protestant churches, the Federal grade school, and the National Youth Association building which was constructed by the Government during the depression and now serves as a community center. For food and other necessities, commercial amusements, and education beyond the primary level, the Indians are dependent on Syracuse or Nedrow, a small White community on the edge of the reservation.

Although Onondaga is not a prosperous community, neither is there much real poverty. Most families own their own homes and hold an acre or more of land which belongs to the tribe and is tax free. Some raise a few crops for their own use, but much of the soil is poor and no large-scale farming is done. The principal source of income is employment in Syracuse where 90 percent of the men, and some of the women, have jobs in factories or shops or on construction gangs; a large proportion of this number, however, is periodically on Government relief.¹³

¹³ It was my impression that the majority of these men were unemployed by choice rather than necessity, as work is not difficult to obtain today.

Despite the fact that the Indians have taken over the material culture and subsistence patterns of the Whites, traditional Iroquois customs persist in some aspects of their lives. Insofar as the reservation is allowed autonomous government, it is controlled by a council of 26 chiefs who are chosen according to the ancient precepts of the League; women nominate their sons if they are worthy. Although somewhat disorganized and subject to internal dissension, the council constitutes a strong conservative block, holding tenaciously to the old ways and opposing innovations of any kind. Christians are not allowed to hold office even if they are eligible for chieftainships in the maternal line. Other evident retentions are: the native language, which is spoken by a segment of the population; the clan and moiety systems, which function in the seating of the chiefs in the Council House; and the religion, most evident when one moiety gives a ceremony for the other. Some of the aboriginal games have survived—gambling with dice made of peach stones or deer buttons, and “snow snake” in which a long slender rod of wood is thrown in a trough of snow. Lacrosse, the national sport of the Iroquois, still arouses enthusiasm; the Onondaga have their own team which plays at other reservations and occasionally at neighboring universities.

Although the Christian missions are strongly entrenched at Onondaga, the Episcopalians having the majority of converts, approximately one-third of the community adheres to the old forms of worship as modified by the teachings of Handsome Lake.¹⁴ Known as the Long House or Council House religion, it includes the recitation of moral precepts from the Code, the confession of sins, and the celebration of the traditional festivals. The False Faces are an integral part of Council House creed and ritual, as they continue to appear at the New Year's Festival when they dance and cure with ashes, to make their rounds of the reservation in the spring and fall, and to hold private ceremonies for those who request their services. Theoretically all members have at one time undergone treatment by the society, but many who have not been initiated in this manner participate in the curative rites and so have come to be regarded as part of the band. Possibly it is the relaxation of the original requirements for membership that is responsible for the uncertainty in the minds of the Onondaga as to the present size of the society. Estimates range between 13 and 100, the former probably being the number who have been formally initiated. In recent years a White man from Syracuse has been admitted. He visits the reservation frequently, takes an active part in the rituals, and is considered by his associates in the

¹⁴ This number is not an actual count but an estimate given to me by the woman who has charge of the Episcopal mission. She considers the Onondaga to be one-third Christians, one-third pagans, and one-third nothing in particular.

society to be an authority on the meaning and use of the masks. In this sense he is more "Indian" than the Indians themselves, insisting that the ancient concepts be followed and the ancient forms observed.¹⁵

The rivalry and suspicion which exist between the Christian church and the Council House do not prevent a frequent change from one congregation to another on the part of many of the members. Some vacillate continually between the two, forsaking the church when they feel they have been slighted or insulted there, only to return when something upsets them at the Council House. Even those who remain permanently affiliated with one religious system tend to take advantage of what the other has to offer. Thus Council House people usually bring their children to be baptized at the church, while many "good" churchmen who have been Christians for generations attend the festivals at the Council House and call in the False Faces when the White doctor fails to effect a cure. This inclination to "play it safe" is strikingly exemplified in the not uncommon practice of giving the deceased two separate services; a Christian burial and a Dead Feast at the Council House. Nor is a belief in witchcraft confined to one religious group. Although the fear of being "witched" and the conviction that some persons have the power to transform themselves into animals are more prevalent among the Council House people, the Christians too sense the threat of unseen evils. They may laugh at the more "backward and superstitious Indians"; but they do not care to walk out alone at night, have an uneasy feeling that a screech owl is an omen of impending danger, and tell stories of being chased by creatures that are half-human, half-animal.

The traditional arts have not fared as well under the impact of acculturation as have the religious and political systems, since the acceptance of western material culture leaves most of them no function in the society. Under the auspices of the National Youth Association, classes in Indian handicraft were held for a time at the community center by an Onondaga woman who has taught in summer camps. These classes did not include instruction in mask carving, and since they did not succeed in arousing much interest, they have been discontinued. Other than this there has been no organized attempt to develop or preserve the old skills and, with the exception of wood-carving, those which have survived do so because they have a commercial value as Indian souvenirs. Many of the women do a little beadwork at home. The belts, bracelets, lapel pins, and moccasins which they make are as much "Indian" as Iroquois in design; the

¹⁵ This man, Pete Hest, gave me little information beyond the fact that he likes Indians and has been associated with them at summer camps where he picked up his interest in Indian lore. He is regarded somewhat suspiciously by many of the Christians on the reservation who wonder what he is up to.

traditional floral patterns are rarely used while such Plains motifs as the arrow and the swastika are combined with simple geometric forms. More nearly related to the old culture are the cornhusk dolls and baskets, but colors in the latter are garish and the shapes adapted to the practical needs of the customers. One basketmaker, commenting on the fact that much of the work is neither "true Iroquois" nor of a high quality, put the blame on the necessity of conforming to White standards. "Most people don't appreciate authentic work. They judge by the size, not the quality, and want the most for the least money." The products of the women, along with bows and arrows made by the men, are sold at the New York State Fair held once a year in Syracuse and in roadside stands put up on the reservation to attract the summer visitors.¹⁶ Almost the only craft which is not produced exclusively for the tourist trade is woodcarving. Some of the men carve lacrosse sticks, snow snakes, unornamented wooden paddles for stirring food, and masks, all of which are still used by the Council House people. However, with the exception of lacrosse sticks, which are sold to university teams as well as to local players, none of these articles is made in any quantity.

The intermingling of Iroquois and White patterns as it exists at Onondaga today, particularly in the area of religion, seems to suggest that there is no clear-cut line between those Indians who have accepted western culture and those who have resisted some aspects of it. Yet there is a differential reaction to acculturation which is based, although not invariably, on tribal affiliation and which follows from the relationship between Onondaga descent, politics, religion, and language. Active participation in native politics is directly dependent on tribal affiliation and is restricted to Onondagas because chieftainships are hereditary within the tribe. The aboriginal religion is indirectly linked with Onondaga descent in two ways: by the rule that chiefs must belong at least nominally to the Council House, and by the fact that Christians are more apt to marry out of the tribe. The association between linguistic patterns and descent is more tenuous, but it seems reasonable to suppose that regular attendance at the Council House, where the old language is used, would encourage its retention.

Those who are not Onondagas comprise a large proportion of the population, since they include the members of other Iroquois tribes living on the reservation as well as the descendants of those who have

¹⁶ Any attempt on the part of an outsider to compete with these local establishments is deeply resented, as in the case of a woman who has recently arrived on the reservation, set up a large crafts stand and undercut the other craftsmen. It is rumored that she buys her wares cheaply in Canada, and she is generally disliked for "muscling in."

intermarried into these tribes or with the Whites.¹⁷ These people have no voice in the government and are allowed to hold land only if one of their grandparents was an Onondaga. Thus they are disposed to discard the aboriginal values and adopt western ones, as by birth, if not by choice, they are already marginal to the old culture. As one of this group put it, "Anyone not an Onondaga is always regarded as an outsider."

There is, of course, a great deal of variation within the two groups, and possibly a careful analysis would reveal the existence of a number of subgroups, overlapping but distinguishable on the basis of individual reactions to change.¹⁸ Nor can it be claimed that tribal affiliation is the only or even the most important determinant of acculturation, although it seems to carry a greater weight than any other obvious factor such as age.

There are indications that the compromise between the old culture and the new, and between the people who identify with them, is an uneasy one both for individuals and for the community as a whole.¹⁹ The suppressed animosity between the church and the Council House, the ambivalence evident in the sudden shift from one religion to the other, the conflict between those who wish to preserve the native traditions and those who wish to make the reservation "progressive," and a certain defensiveness on the part of those who have clung to the old ways, are some of the more overt manifestations of the tension and anxiety which result from the attempt to strike a balance between two divergent cultures. Among some of the Indians, particularly the younger generation, Iroquois retentions seem to be one of the reactions to the insecurity which they feel in their situation—a self-conscious return to the aboriginal culture which they have idealized and which they believe offers a safer, more satisfactory way of life. This nativism, which is individual, spasmodic, and unorganized, is an important element in mask carving and will be discussed subsequently in greater detail.

THE CARVERS

Maskmaking at Onondaga is neither a profession nor a full-fledged craft recognized by the community as such. Rather, its status is that of a part-time activity carried on by a small group of men who do not depend upon it as a source of income. Those who engage in the art

¹⁷ Since descent is matrilineal, this does not include the offspring of marriages in which the woman is Onondaga. In these cases, even if the father is White, the children retain their tribal membership.

¹⁸ The categories which Voget (1951, pp. 220-231) used in his analysis of Iroquois society on the Caughnawaga Reservation in Canada might, with more careful investigation, prove to apply equally well to Onondaga. On the basis of differential reactions to acculturation, he divided the community into four groups: native, native-modified, American-modified, and American-marginal.

¹⁹ By "identify" I mean that people define themselves as belonging to a particular group (in this case Indian or White) and refer their behavior to the values which they attribute to that group.

are a fraction of the total population and few even in relation to that segment which identifies with the aboriginal culture. There are not more than 12 living on the reservation today who are known to be maskmakers, and of this number it is only the younger men—those between the ages of 25 and 45—who have done much carving within the last few years (see table 1, p. 381). I was told that in the past more of the older generation made masks but that now the work is hard on their eyes and in general too arduous.

The amount of time devoted to carving is not great, although it varies from one carver to another. No one works at it regularly throughout the year, and some seem to regard it almost as a hobby or recreation to occupy their spare time. While several of the men have made as many as a dozen masks, others have turned out only one or two. Eddie Schenandoah, who is at present employed in Syracuse, is one of the most productive of the carvers whereas Allison Thomas, whose job as caretaker of the community center leaves him free for most of the day, has done comparatively little. Thus, differences in creativity do not seem to be related to the amount of leisure time a man has at his disposal. More probably such differences are dependent on the individual's interest and success in carving, and on whether he finds the work easy or difficult.

At only one period of the year does maskmaking approximate a full-time occupation. This is in the winter, a couple of months before the New Year's Festival. Several informants remarked that although they have no particular desire to carve during the rest of the year, they "begin to get a feeling for it" at about this season and then work steadily in order to be ready for the annual appearance of the False Faces in the Council House.

With few exceptions those who carve the masks are those who use them. They are adherents to the native religious system who have never been Christians, are apostates from the church, or attend the Council House as well as the church. Most seem to be active participants in the False Face rituals and members of the medicine society. They are also central to the old culture through tribal affiliation, language, and association with native politics. Two are chiefs and three are the sons of the present head of the council and themselves eligible for office. The carvers who are marginal to the old culture are those who do little or no mask carving today. Floyd Doctor is a Seneca and, as far as I know, is not a member of the Council House. He picked up the art on the Tonawanda Reservation "because there was nothing else to do during the depression," but has done very little with it since he came to Onondaga. Two other men call themselves carvers although they are avowed Christians and belong to the more acculturated portion of the population. Of these, however, Stanley

Pierce admits that he has not carved for many years, while Andrew Pierce claims to make masks but is repudiated by the Council House people who say that although he has made bows and arrows, he has never carved a false face.

The carvers are not regarded primarily as craftsmen either by the community or by themselves. The reservation as a whole speaks of them as Council House people and members of the False Face Society, while the Christians add the statement that they are lazy. The prevailing sentiment among this group is that only Indians who do nothing else do carving, an assertion which has some basis in fact, as the maskmakers tend to belong to the less prosperous element on the reservation, being frequently out of work and on Government relief.

Among themselves the carvers seem to identify with each other more on the basis of their membership in the medicine society and their common interest in masks than on their technical and artistic ability as craftsmen. Several, when they were asked for the names of other carvers, included Floyd Henhawk, who makes the turtle rattles used by the False Faces and who wears the masks but has never made one. Nor could any one of them give me a complete list of those in the community who do or who have done carving, four or five persons being the most some could recall, while others could think of only one or two. The two men who were most frequently mentioned and who come closest to having the status of craftsmen are Eddie Schenandoah and Kenneth Thomas; the first is known for his ability to turn out a mask in a week, and the other for his careful, finished work.

The general lack of recognition accorded the carvers as such is due, at least in part, to the small number of masks that are produced today and to the close association of these carvings with religion rather than with any of the other crafts. Maskmaking is not necessarily related to the carving of lacrosse sticks, snow snakes, etc., since only three of the men who carve masks also make these objects. The others limit themselves to the false faces and say that they have no intention of trying anything else. Nor is maskmaking associated with the women's crafts. The wives of some of the carvers do beadwork, but women whose husbands are not carvers are just as apt to engage in this work. There is a somewhat closer link with the cornhusk masks which some of the mothers and aunts of the carvers have made in the past. Very few of this type, however, are made today.

The fact that mask carving was formerly a ceremonial procedure suggests that this art has always cut across the other craft specializations and been associated with the medicine societies. There are, however, no historical materials to validate this supposition, just as there is no information as to the amount of carving which

was done, its relative importance in Iroquois culture as compared with other activities, the age of the carvers and their position in the society, or the kind of prestige and satisfaction they derived from their occupation. Quain (1937, pp. 267-268, 279) mentions that skill as a craftsman was one of the ways to gain esteem without reference to inherited claims, but taken in context, his statement implies that it was their contribution to the general welfare of the society rather than their artistic achievements per se which brought the craftsmen recognition.

Taking into consideration what is known about the aboriginal patterns and the foci of Iroquois culture, it is probable that occupational differentiations were never well developed but that, to the extent of this development, craftsmen were accorded less prestige than those whose contributions were in the realm of politics, oratory, and warfare. One can guess that masks were never made in any quantity and that although certain men might have been judged to be better carvers than others, it was their proficiency in manipulating the carvings as religious symbols in the curative rituals rather than their ability to create them that set these individuals apart from the rest of the society. It is even conceivable that mask carving was itself a religious technique and was regarded as were clairvoyance and prophecy—a special form of supernatural power or *orenda*. The power to carve would then have been bestowed, along with the power to heal, on any individual who was initiated into the False Face Society.

If this historical reconstruction is correct, it is evident that what may be termed the sociological aspects of maskmaking—the position of the art in the culture and the role of the artists in the community—have not changed materially under the impact of acculturation, but are essentially the same today as they were in the aboriginal society.

ECONOMICS OF MASK CARVING

Masks were originally clan property, were later acquired by the medicine society, and finally came to be individual possessions which were handed down within families. Exchange in ownership was a ritual rather than an economic transaction and was effected by the new owner adding his bag of tobacco to those already attached to the mask (Keppler, 1941, p. 17). There is not enough historical data to permit an accurate account of the economic significance of the carvings in the aboriginal culture. However, since they were ceremonial objects, masks probably had little if any commercial value within the society, an assumption which explains why the Europeans were able to purchase them at a very low price during the 18th and 19th centuries (Beauchamp, 1905 a, p. 191). Later, when the Indians

TABLE 1.—Carvers at Onondaga

Name	Approximate age	Economic status	Tribal and political affiliation	Religion	Type and amount of carving done to date.
Allison Thomas.....	35-40	Formerly worked off and on in Syracuse; now caretaker of the community center.	Onondaga; son of head chief of the clan.; eligible for chieftainship	Once Christian; now Council House. Member of the False Faces and occasionally the leader.	2 large masks and some small ones.
Kenneth Thomas (brother of Allison).	30-35	Unskilled laborer in Syracuse; frequently unemployed.	do.....	Member of Episcopalian church, attends with wife who is Christian. Also attends Council House and participates in False Face rituals.	4 large masks and many small ones. Snow snakes, bows and arrows; tried 3 lacrosse stick once.
Lee Thomas (brother of Allison).	30-35	Occasional work in Syracuse; seems to have no steady job.	do.....	Council House and False Faces.....	1 large mask alone and one with his brother Kenneth. Many small ones.
Eddie Schemendoah.....	20-25	Works in Syracuse fairly steadily.	Onondaga; mother was formerly clan mother.	do.....	11 large masks and some small ones.
Pat Homer.....	40-45	Seems unemployed.....	do.....	do.....	12 large masks and some small ones. Also a few bows and arrows.
James Homer (nephew of Pat)	20-25	do.....	do.....	Council House and probably False Faces.	1 large mask.
Howard Hill.....	60-70	Retired; small income from lacrosse sticks and paddles.	Onondaga chief.....	Council House and probably False Faces in past if not now.	Large masks, paddles, snow snakes, lacrosse sticks.
George Smoke.....	70-80	Retired.....	do.....	Council House and formerly leader of the False Faces.	1 large mask; a few canes.
Levy Green.....	Over 60	do.....	Onondaga; may be a chief.....	Council House and probably False Faces in past if not now.	Masks.
Elijah Hill.....	Over 60	do.....	Onondaga.....	Council House.....	Do.
Floyd Doctor.....	40-45	Employed in Syracuse.....	Seneca from Tonawanda.....	Does not seem to have any particular religious affiliation.	Masks, bows and arrows, lacrosse sticks at Tonawanda. Not much carving in past few years.
Andrew Pierce.....	55-60	Formerly skilled laborer in Syracuse; now retired. Owns much land around reservation; income from crafts stand.	Onondaga; eligible for chieftainship but refused to give up Christianity.	Christian, regular attendant at the Episcopalian church.	Bows and arrows, ax hand les. Claims to carve masks.
Stanley Pierce (nephew of Andrew).	40-45	Steady work in Syracuse.....	No tribal affiliation; mother White.	Christian, attends Episcopalian church.	Formerly carved masks at Tonawanda, but makes none now.

realized that the carvings had a monetary value for the Whites, their attitude began to shift in the direction of greater conformity to western standards. This change may be responsible for the fact that masks are now private rather than community property.

Today at Onondaga the economic aspects of maskmaking are still minimized by those who identify with the traditional Iroquois patterns. In this respect the art differs from the beadwork and basketweaving of the women, which are openly acknowledged to be commercial enterprises, as well as from carving on some other reservations where masks are made specifically for the tourist trade and it is possible to order "a genuine Iroquois false face" by mail. Some Onondagas maintain that masks, being ceremonial properties, should never be sold, although the more prevalent opinion holds that it is use which makes the carvings sacred and that they may be sold if they have never been "doctored" or worn in a ceremony. The chiefs have forbidden sales at the State Fair and from the roadside stands on the reservation and do all they can to prevent the old masks from falling into the hands of the Whites. The position which the carvers themselves have taken toward selling their work is somewhat inconsistent. They assert quite positively that although it is permissible to sell and trade masks among the members of the False Face Society and the other Council House people, it is wrong to deal with outsiders, particularly as Pete Hest has told them to keep all the carvings they make. Actually, however, most of them have on occasion done business with the Whites or with those Indians who have no scruples about selling to the Whites; some have even parted with their "doctored" masks when they were in need of money. How this contradiction between their statements and their actions is rationalized, I do not know. When questioned individually, each carver intimated that although he had never sold a "doctored" mask, he knew of others who had done so, but that these were cases in which there were extenuating circumstances, usually of a financial nature. It may be that they regard the traditional prohibitions as ideal standards of conduct which they feel obliged to follow only when they do not conflict with economic necessity. It is also possible that the leniency which the individual carver displays, toward those who accept the norms but occasionally fail to observe them, may serve to assuage his own feelings of guilt when he finds himself in a similar position.

The attitude of the more acculturated Onondagas is far more explicit. The Christians and others who have no respect for the injunctions of the Council House look upon the false faces as Indian curios which may have a monetary value. Of these people, however, only Andrew Pierce has openly attempted to commercialize the art

by setting himself up as a dealer in masks. Along with the bows and arrows, snow snakes, and a group of miscellaneous items which he calls Indian relics, he has a collection of carvings which he lends to the members of the False Face Society, but will also sell to anyone willing to purchase. Most of the masks Pierce has at the present time have been obtained from carvers who have pawned them to him for a few dollars. When they attempt to buy them back, he refuses to sell at the same price, holding them instead for what he can get from White collectors. In the past he had several steady customers in Syracuse, among them a wealthy brewer who bought the carvings now owned by the city's Historical Society. Since Pierce does business publicly from a small craft shop, he has incurred the enmity of the Council House for defying the ruling of the chiefs. By the carvers he is regarded as a middleman who buys cheap and sells high, making a profit on other people's work.²⁰

There seems to be no standard price on masks. The cost of a particular carving depends on how valuable it is to the individual who is selling it, how much he is in need of money at the time, and "what he thinks the traffic will bear." Pierce values his masks at anywhere from \$5 up to \$300, although doubtless the latter amount is the asking price and he would accept less. He puts the highest figures on carvings which appear to be old and those which he considers to be traditional Iroquois types, because White customers will pay more for masks that "look Indian." To achieve this effect he sometimes adds teeth or tusks to those masks which he believes are not "fierce enough," and substitutes clam shells for the tin around the eyes. "When masks have tin on them, people think they are made by Whites instead of Indians." As the Council House people refuse to discuss price, at least on an abstract level, I have no information as to what monetary value they place on false faces. Pierce's criteria—antiquity and conformity to tradition—are probably always important determinants both within the community and outside of it, while other factors, such as technical excellence and the time spent on the carving, may also enter in.

In contrast to the large masks, the small ones have lost their religious associations for most people and are made specifically for sale. They can be bought at the State Fair, at the roadside stands, and at the community center for one or two dollars. Most of the younger carvers make some of this size which they sell whenever they have the opportunity. Lee Thomas formerly did a brisk business

²⁰ This may be the reason behind the carvers' assertion that Pierce is not a mask carver. However, I was unable to obtain the information that would resolve the discrepancy between his statements and those of others.

with the girls at Syracuse University, who bought them to wear as lapel pins.

It has been pointed out that none of the crafts is an important source of income to the Onondaga. The volume of business which is done in beadwork and basketwork is small, and in the case of masks almost nonexistent; even Andrew Pierce, who comes closest to openly advertising his wares, probably sells no more than three or four masks in the course of a year. The lack of explicit commercialization is not, I think, due primarily to the traditionally sacred character of the carvings, since the religious prohibitions against selling put no restraint upon the Christians and can, when necessary, be circumvented by the Council House people. Rather it is the economic situation which prevents the carvers and the community as a whole from regarding maskmaking as economically profitable. Within the reservation there is very limited demand for false faces. The group which has a use for them is a small proportion of the population, and most of these Indians already own carvings which they have inherited from their families.

Nor is there a large market outside which can be exploited. The Whites in Syracuse and the surrounding areas have come to look upon the Onondaga as a minority group which lacks the qualities of strangeness and savagery that are usually attributed to native peoples. Since these particular Indians do not fit the conventional stereotype, it follows that they are not quite authentic and that the articles which they make are not "genuine Indian" handicrafts. Few tourists, therefore, visit the reservation with the intention of buying souvenirs, while those who do are more apt to purchase the smaller and cheaper items—the baskets, maskettes, bead belts and bracelets—than they are the larger and more expensive masks for which they have no practical use.

The geographical situation of the reservation affects not only the expectations of the Whites but also the attitude of the Indians. Living as they do almost in the suburbs of Syracuse, most Onondagas find that it is easier and more profitable to hold a job in the city than to attempt to create a market for their native products. It seems that it is expediency and particularly financial considerations, not religious sanctions, which have kept the Onondaga from developing the economic potentialities of mask carving.

RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF MASKMAKING

In many respects the false faces appear to serve the same function and elicit the same emotional responses of fear and reverence today as they did in the aboriginal culture. The formal features of the curative rituals have been retained, the mythology and religious concepts validating the rituals are still known, and the ancient precepts

concerning the treatment of the masks are generally observed by those who use them.

Accounts of the miraculous cures wrought by a particular mask or the unusual powers possessed by another are cited by the Council House people as proof of the positive supernatural attributes of the carvings, while their potentialities for evil are illustrated by stories of what has happened to persons who have been unfortunate enough to offend them. One informant told me of a man whose face became twisted because he had mocked a mask, and another related an incident in which a woman was thrown into convulsions when she laughed at the False Face company.

The masks which are currently worn by the members of the medicine society are hung together in what is called the "*Hodo'wi* Room" of the community center. Most of these were made specifically for the last Midwinter festival and all have been "doctored" in the approved manner by laying them face up on the floor of the Council House and burning tobacco. Each mask has a bag of tobacco attached to it and shows evidence of having been fed with corn mush. The zeal of the Indians in carrying out the prescribed forms extends even to those masks which are no longer in their possession. Alison Thomas told me that he and some of the other carvers intend to visit the Albany museum to "pay our respects to the old fellows up there." Because those masks have been neglected for many years they need to be talked to and propitiated with tobacco.

Yet despite the declarations of faith and the careful observance of the traditional customs, there is some evidence that the old beliefs have faded or changed. Very few of my informants ever referred to the supernatural beings which the masks represent. This omission may have arisen from a reluctance to reveal information of a sacred nature to an outsider rather than from ignorance, although there was little reticence in discussing the religious function of the masks. Those few who did mention the *Hodo'wi* by name tended to do so in the past tense. I was told that they used to live on the edge of the reservation, that they used to be seen occasionally in the woods, that the old people used to dream about them; always with the implication that these events had taken place in the distant past. One young carver made his doubts about the existence of these spirits quite explicit when he observed that although he had been on every part of the reservation, he had never been able to find one. It was this same man who openly expressed skepticism about the efficacy of the False Face rituals. In telling me of a ceremony which had been given for him when he was a child, he wound up with the statement, "I did get well, but of course I had been sick a long time and was due to get well anyway."

Fear of the carvings, of seeing them or touching them, seems to be confined to a few of the younger women. The wife of Allison Thomas is said to be afraid to be alone in the community house; she thinks she hears the masks talking at night and believes they were the cause of a blizzard that occurred one winter. Several of the other women called the masks "nightmares" and "scary," but in these instances I felt they were reacting less as Indians to the symbolic content than as women to the grotesque appearance of the carvings.²¹ The older women take the masks for granted as do the men, who show no overt signs of fear or caution when they are near them. They handle the carvings, even those which have been "doctored," with familiarity and, what is more significant, allowed me to do the same.

Along with the probability that faith in the spiritual powers of the false faces is no longer complete and unquestioning, there are obvious indications that some of the practices and professed beliefs have been recently acquired, or at least reinforced, from the outside. Most of the members of the medicine society, and particularly the carvers, have access to the literature on Iroquois masks and rituals through Pete Hest. Their interest in and knowledge of these ethnographic works came out many times in the course of interviews. One man told me that although today at Onondaga the masks are called *hodo'wi*, the real name is *gagohsa* (the Seneca term), and that he knew this was correct because he had seen it somewhere in a book. Another, in trying to explain that the Onondaga do not classify their masks according to Doctor, Doorkeeper, Beggar, and Dancing, as do the Seneca, read the information from a pamphlet by Beauchamp. The illustrations in Wissler's "Lore of the Demon Mask" and Speck's "Iroquois" were cited as a source of inspiration to the carvers when they are in need of "new ideas."

Dependence on the literature is coupled with a tendency to look to Pete Hest for the correct forms of behavior. It is he who has told the men that they should continue to carve masks, that they should keep all they make, that they should not allow the Whites to profane them by photographing them. His role in the medicine society is quite definitely that of expert and teacher. Under his guidance about 10 of the members gather at the community center on winter nights. Here in the room where the masks are hung they eat corn soup, learn the traditional songs from the older men, and study "Indian lore." Although his injunctions to observe the ancient customs are not always obeyed, his knowledge of them commands much respect, for I was repeatedly referred to him as the authority on masks and as the one person who could tell me everything I wanted to know. To what

²¹ Women in our culture to whom I showed pictures of Iroquois masks reacted in much the same way and used almost identical words—"hideous," "frightening," etc.

extent he is directly responsible for the preservation of the False Face Society it is difficult to judge. However, he is certainly an important influence in shaping the attitudes and actions of the younger men. As one informant put it, "If Pete Hest is not ashamed to act like an Indian, we should not be."

The carvers' reaction to Whites who show a familiarity with Iroquois ethnography is, to a lesser degree, similar to their reaction to Hest. The willingness of the younger men to explain the purpose of the masks and describe the rituals in which they are used contrasts sharply with the behavior of the older ones—who, for the most part, refused to talk to me at all—and seems to indicate a desire on the part of the former to prove themselves "real Indians." A concrete instance of their efforts to make what they consider to be the proper responses occurred when I inquired if the masks in the community center should be hung facing out, as they were when I first saw them. Allison Thomas, to whom I made this remark, then admitted that he was breaking the rules, and the next time I came to the center, each mask was hanging with its face turned to the wall. Several of my other informants seemed almost apologetic because they could not fulfill the expectations of the White visitor. One explained that he could give me very little information because he had not "studied up lately," while another said that he did not know much about masks but "If I had education, I could tell you more."

The material which has been presented does not permit a definitive statement as to the attitude of the modern Onondagas toward their masks. The problem of ascertaining belief is always difficult, and in this case particularly so, since the Indians themselves are probably not completely conscious of their own convictions. However, the fact that most of the older men will not discuss the masks and their rituals with outsiders suggests that they may have retained their faith in the curative powers of the carvings, whereas the beliefs of the younger men seem to have changed. Although conviction may be acquired with age or experience with illness interpreted as due to the False Faces, I feel that the majority of the men carving today do not regard the masks as sacred but simply know that they should so regard them. Their actions, insofar as I was able to observe them, and their statements to me seem to add up to a self-conscious effort to adhere to those patterns of behavior which they have learned are appropriate for Indians.

LEARNING AND MOTIVATION

Maskmaking is regarded by the Onondaga as a skill which requires no training or instruction of any sort. The reaction of the carvers when they were asked who had taught them the art was one of astonish-

ment and the answer was invariably "no one." Some seem to be of the opinion that carving is a native characteristic, insisting that "all Indians carve," "it comes natural to us," "it's just in us." Even Floyd Doctor, who admitted that he learned to make masks when the Indian Arts Project was established at Tonawanda, made the statement that carving is instinctive. Others, although they emphatically denied that they had been taught to carve, said that they had picked it up from watching the old men. "It's a matter of interest. If you see other people carving, you will want to start too." Only one of the carvers said that he had acquired his interest from a relative, in this case an uncle. The rest could not remember that any member of their family had ever carved before.

While there is certainly more verbal instruction than the carvers are willing to admit, it is quite possible most do master the essentials of the art without formal training. The technical processes of wood-carving are fairly simple as compared to pottery or metalworking and are such that they can be acquired by observation and imitation as described by one of the men. "A man will stand around and watch another man work. Then he will get his own piece of wood and start as best he can." Nor is there any expenditure of time or money involved in gathering the materials and equipment, since wood can be easily obtained anywhere on the reservation and the only indispensable tool is a knife. I was told that many boys, even Christians, start a maskette and then become discouraged when the wood splits or it turns out to be more difficult than they had supposed. As Christians have no use for the masks, they rarely continue, while Council House people who are not successful in their first attempt are also likely to give it up. Floyd Henhawk is one of those who said he had tried carving but found it too difficult.

In the last few years there has been an opportunity to learn mask-making not mentioned by any of my informants. The class in Indian lore inaugurated by Pete Hest brings the carvers together at the community center on an average of once a week in winter, and many work on their masks during these sessions. Although Hest is not himself a carver, he encourages the Indians in their efforts and there is undoubtedly some instruction or at least advice offered to the beginners by the more experienced. Indeed, one of the men told me that he was in the habit of giving pointers to others and helping them over some of the more difficult problems.

Two of the carvers, Lee and Kenneth Thomas, have received art training outside of the reservation, as they studied drawing while attending high school in Syracuse. Lee still does some painting, mostly watercolors of Indians wearing masks. Neither of them, however, could see any connection between these classes and their

woodcarving. Lee in particular felt that he gained nothing from the experience. "I didn't like it because the teacher made me draw the way she wanted. I like to follow my own ideas."

Since maskmaking is learned informally, and often by the method of trial and error, it is not surprising that the carvers minimize this phase of the art. Yet their refusal to recognize that there are certain situations, such as the class at the community center where teaching does take place, constitutes a negative reaction out of proportion to the facts.

It has been conjectured that maskmaking was originally regarded by the Iroquois as a supernatural technique which was automatically acquired with initiation into the medicine society. Granting the validity of this assumption, the statement by one of my informants that carving is a religious power indicates that some traces of this belief have survived. Certainly if such a retention were widespread it would account for the current opinion that instruction is unnecessary. There is, however, another factor in the attitude of the Onondagas which is brought to light by their assertions that carving is instinctive, natural. Through reading the literature and through contact with men like Hest, they have been impressed with the fact that masks are an old Iroquois custom and an important part of their cultural heritage. Therefore, in their effort to preserve that heritage, it is natural that they should maintain, and perhaps even believe, that carving is an inherent characteristic which no "real Indian" has to be taught.

The problem of motivation, like the problem of religious conviction, is not easily solved. The statements of the carvers are of little value in this connection, since for the most part they seem to be reasons given after the fact. "I got interested in carving and decided to try it"; "I saw other people doing it"; "I had some free time." One man said that everybody would carve if he had good tools and a good place to work; another that he had taken up the art because he had nothing else to do and had continued because people had praised his work, calling it outstanding. No one mentioned the profit motive. Actually, the lack of a market for masks makes it improbable that anyone engages in the occupation for economic reasons.

It is possible that some do carve to gain recognition and prestige among the small group which has an interest in masks. Among the older men faith in the spiritual powers of the carvings may still be the primary incentive. Nor must it be overlooked that maskmaking affords a socially sanctioned outlet for creative impulses. Kenneth Thomas is one of those who seem to derive satisfaction of an esthetic nature from carving, as he lavishes much time and care on each mask and turns out technically perfect work. Eddie Schenandoah is per-

haps another. Yet despite the fact that no one motive can be postulated for all the carvers, either individually or as a group, the one common factor among the younger men seems to be their desire to conform to the old way of life. Since carving is regarded as a typical Iroquois activity, it provides an obvious means of relating to the aboriginal culture, allowing the Onondaga to fulfill the conception which they have of themselves as Indians.

TECHNICAL AND ESTHETIC PROCESSES

The ancient method of mask carving has long been obsolete. I was told that no one on the reservation ever works on a live tree and none of my informants could remember hearing that anyone had done so within the past 100 years. Most of them, however, knew that it was an old Iroquois custom, and one man expressed a desire to "try it sometime." Today there are no religious proscriptions placed upon the carvers, and few traces remain of the rituals which were formerly interwoven with the technical processes. One carver did say that tobacco may be burned when the wood is being cut from the tree, but I could not be sure whether he was describing a current practice or simply stating what he knew to be the ancient, and therefore proper, procedure.

Basswood still has the prestige of tradition and is generally preferred because it is a soft, light wood. The carvers find it easy to work and say that the finished product is light enough to wear with comfort. Other types of wood which are used include poplar, well-seasoned white pine, and butternut. As the latter is heavier than basswood, it is not so apt to split. Cedar is considered too heavy, and willow, though light, is difficult to carve because it has knots. All of the carvers work the wood when it is very dry or almost rotten, since by then it has already cracked and they can allow for this fact in the carving. Sometimes the bark is stripped from a standing tree so that it will die and be thoroughly dried out before it is felled. Although a few of the Onondagas told me that masks should be started in green wood and worked gradually over a long period of time, this method was advocated only by noncarvers and is probably a retention from the days when carving was done on a live tree.

The carvers' basic tools are knives and chisels, but they employ any tool which facilitates their work and allows it to progress more quickly. The initial processes, which consist of cutting the wood into the shape of a semicylinder and roughing out the features, are performed with hatchets and saws. The holes for the eyes and the mouth are made with drills, while small knives and files of various kinds are considered necessary for refining the forms and finishing the details. The crooked knife, traditional tool of the eastern In-

dians, is used along with chisels for hollowing out the back. Although vices are owned by several of the carvers, they are never used for masks. One man thought this tool might be helpful but the others said that it would crack the mask after it had been hollowed. The carver generally places the piece to be carved on a larger block of wood or braces the carving against his chest or knees. Always working with the grain of the wood, he carves either toward or away from his body—whichever is easier in relation to the way he is holding the mask.

While most masks are made from a single piece of wood, additions such as teeth or tusks may be pegged in. Some men sandpaper before they paint because they like a glossy surface; others prefer the rough texture of the knife marks. Red is the favorite color; occasionally, however, the carvings are given a dark brown finish which makes them look antique. After the mask has been painted, the hair is tacked on. This may be short fur which encircles the face like a ruff or it may be the more traditional long horsehair. The latter, which is obtained from a slaughterhouse in Syracuse, is dried out and then pounded with a mallet to soften it.

There are certain individual differences in the methods of the carvers. Some start to hollow the back before they have progressed very far with the features, others finish up the front before they begin on the back, and still others work the back and front alternately. One man pointed out that he always tries to keep the features at the same stage of development, since if one part gets ahead of the rest it results in a poor carving. Several of the carvers said they found it necessary to try their masks on while they were working them to check the position of the eyeholes and to be sure they fit without rubbing or scraping the face. The speed with which the men carve also varies considerably. Kenneth Thomas works very slowly, taking 3 to 4 months to complete one mask, whereas Eddie Schenandoah is able to finish one in a week or less.

Most of my information on the techniques of carving was acquired by questioning the men about their usual method of procedure rather than by observation of the actual processes, since I was on the reservation during March and April, months which are "out of season" for the maskmakers. None of the carvers were working on masks at this time, nor could any of them be persuaded to start a large one for my benefit. The excuses given were that they had just finished carving for the Midwinter Festival, that they were too busy, or that they had no properly seasoned wood. However, after I had displayed a great deal of interest and curiosity, and had offered to pay him any amount of money he thought fair, Allison Thomas agreed to make a maskette for me.

This carving was done in a room of the community center adjacent to that in which the masks are hung. The greater part of it was accomplished during an evening session of about 4 hours, an hour on the following morning being sufficient to complete the job. He made no sketches before he started nor were there any masks or pictures of masks in the room to which he could refer as models.

The only wood which Thomas had on hand and which he thought suitable for his purpose was a small cylindrical piece of cedar. He began by scraping the bark off the outside with a large knife, then placed the piece on a larger block and split it down the center, using his knife as he would a chisel by pounding on the top of it with a hammer. Choosing one of the halves, he did some more scraping on the rounded side, changed his knife for a smaller one and made two diagonal cuts across the top for the eyebrows, commenting that masks needed all kinds of knives, big blades and little blades. "This one (mask), I don't really know how it's going to look. It just keeps on forming." His wife, who was present at the time, said, "Make a funny one."

Using the point of his knife, he traced some lines on the wood, seemingly trying out various possibilities, and indeed did remark, "This helps me plan the features." He then dug two little holes below the brows, held the piece away from him to scrutinize it, and made a cut near the bottom for the mouth. Taking up the larger knife again, he sliced off the lower edges to form the chin. Another cut below the first gave him the position of the lips and he began to dig between and around them, saying as he did so that if he had been making a large mask, he would have started using chisels at this stage of the work. Before he had gotten very far with the mouth, however, he returned to the eyebrows, cutting in above and below them so that they stood out from the face. "I switch all over when I work. If I were to work on just one feature it might spoil." He also made the comment, which he repeated several times later on, that this mask was completely different from any he had previously carved or had ever seen. "I never made one like this before. It forms as I make it. I don't need any designs; it's right in my head."

In rounding off the forehead, Thomas left a crestlike projection in the center which joined the eyebrows and became the top of the nose. Deep cuts around the nose and eyes brought them into relief and formed the cheekbones. He continued to work on these features for some time, and then went back to the chin, doing some slicing on the sides to make it narrower and taking a large triangular piece off the back which caused it to jut forward. This last operation was performed with a saw on the log of wood he was using as a work bench. For the

most part, however, he worked on his lap or braced the piece against his chest.

Still using his knife, he marked a rectangular area on the back and started to splinter out the wood in long strips. On a large mask he would have drilled holes 3 or 4 inches deep along the lines he had drawn and employed a chisel for the hollowing process. After making a depression of about half an inch in the back, he drilled the eyes and mouth from the front, again placing the mask on the log and holding it steady with his knee. He then worked alternately on the back and the front, giving special attention to the eyes, and remarked, "I never made eyes like this before." By this time all the forms were fairly well defined except the mouth, which had been neglected and which he said was the hardest thing to do because it was apt to split. If it is only a small split it can be glued or filled with plastic wood, but if too large it spoils the mask. In fact, when he did get around to the mouth, a small portion of the lower lip broke off. Before repairing the damage, he went to work with a file, cutting two grooves above the eyebrows, widening the eyes, and rounding off the sharp edges of all the features. The chip from the mouth was then glued back into place and the mask was set aside for the night, as Thomas said he could do nothing more until the glue had dried.

When I arrived the next morning, he was already at work again, hollowing the back and refining the forms with knives and files. Even after he began to sandpaper, which is the final process, he kept returning to these tools to clarify details and define the features more sharply. He used sandpaper wound around a small screwdriver to smooth the inside of the mouth and the eyes to which he again referred. "He's got goggles. I never made them like this." He finished the inside of the mask as he would have a large one, filing the edges of the back to even them off and going carefully over all the rough spots with sandpaper. He did not take equal pains with the sides of the carving, however, explaining that "You don't have to work real good on the sides because you use hair." When he came to paint, he used a bright red enamel for the main color, accentuating the eyes with white and the brows with black. The horsehair could not be put on until the mask had dried, but he had prepared two little strands and showed me how they were to be fastened to the top with tacks.

The finished product was about 6 inches high, a variation on the crooked-mouth type of false face with round eyes and all the features somewhat flattened (pl. 104). Thomas was quite proud of it, saying that he was going to make a large one like it in basswood which he far preferred to cedar. I believe it was the eyes that particularly pleased him, as he felt they were unusual. Actually, round eyes are as com-

mon as any other shape, although he had made them oblong on his two previous masks. He charged me \$2, the standard price for a maskette of this size, and later gave me some Indian tobacco in a matchbox so that I could care for it in the proper fashion.

The frame of mind in which the carvers approach the problem of making a mask seems to be that expressed by Thomas in his comment, "It forms as I make it." Several of the men said that they occasionally drew a sketch before starting to carve or outlined the features on the wood with a pencil, but they made it clear that this was not their usual method of procedure. The others declared that no preparation of this nature was necessary and all of them, even those who admitted that they sometimes worked from a drawing, said they never knew what kind of a mask they were going to make when they started and had no idea how it would turn out until it was finished. "I never have any plan when I start, no ideas at all. Funny, it just comes to you as you go along." "I just go to work and let it turn out as it will." "The first piece I made I didn't even outline it in pencil. Just drilled the eyes and started digging in."

It is difficult to say how literally these statements can be taken. Certainly a great deal of planning and thought goes into the creation of a mask, and the comment, "I didn't even outline it" suggests that outlining is in fact a common practice and not an exception. However, it is not necessary to assume that the analysis of the esthetic problem always takes place on a conscious level. The way in which Thomas worked, without sketches, handling his tools with skill and moving swiftly from one step to the next, seems to indicate that he was drawing upon a vocabulary of forms with which he was so thoroughly familiar that he seldom needed to stop to make a conscious choice. The result was a mask which, like most of those that are carved today, was well within the limits of the Iroquois style. This conservatism combined with the apparent lack of a carefully worked out plan can best be attributed to the fact that the patterns of art are largely unconscious and that the carvers fail to realize how deeply they have been conditioned to the traditional forms which, with some modifications, they invariably repeat.

When questioned specifically as to where they obtained their ideas or designs for masks, each carver mentioned at least one of the three sources from which their knowledge of the traditional forms is derived—the mythology, the literature, or the old masks. Lee Thomas said that he sometimes made his carvings in accordance with the origin legend, depicting the twisted mouth and broken nose of the first False Face. Allison cited the illustrations and descriptions of masks in the publications of Wissler, Beauchamp, Speck, and Fenton which are kept in the *Hodo'wi* room of the community center. The

others, while they denied using pictures, acknowledged the influence of the old masks, both those on the reservation and those they have seen in museums. Several said they had visited the collections in Syracuse and Albany for the express purpose of "getting ideas," and one man admitted that he had once made an exact copy of a mask in a museum, although he "didn't think much of it" after it was finished. Most of the men regard the old carvings simply as a source of inspiration rather than as models. "I just like to look at them. Makes me want to carve."

It is worth noting that none of the carvers spoke of dreams or visions of the *Hodo'wi* which Fenton has reported dictate the formal treatment of the masks. While it may be that my informants do carve according to dreams and deliberately withheld this information, Pete Hest, who seems to have their confidence, is familiar with what he calls "the Fenton theory" and told me that it is "ridiculous."

Certain practical considerations may enter in as a limiting, though not a determining, factor in design. One man pointed out that since the vision of the dancers is greatly restricted by masks ("hard to see while dancing except just a small bit in front"), there is much bumping and jostling during the course of the rituals. This means that masks with long sharp noses, while they may be considered artistically effective, are regarded with disfavor from the standpoint of comfort and safety.

All the sources of design cited by the carvers—the mythology, the literature, and the old masks—encourage the retention of the traditional patterns and stabilize the style. To a degree, the Indians recognize and accept their dependence on these sources, since for them tradition is a positive value and they feel that they should produce carvings which are typically Iroquois. At the same time, however, they minimize the extent to which they rely upon models, either masks or pictures of masks, and stress the necessity of imagination and originality. "Sometimes I look at old masks but carving is mostly a matter of imagination"; "I never copy; I get my ideas out of my own head"; "I use my own ideas because I like to be original"; "I just start thinking about masks and get an idea."

There can be little doubt that the carvers really do believe that their ideas come from their own heads. Nor do they see the contradiction between their statements to this effect and their efforts at conformity to Iroquois style, a fact which was strikingly illustrated when Allison Thomas told me he never copied old masks and then proceeded to describe an antique false face he had seen at the Allegany Reservation and which he intends to reproduce as accurately as he can from the detailed sketches he has made of it.

I can only interpret the discrepancy between words and actions

as further evidence that the patterns of art operate, in part, below the level of consciousness. There is, however, another contradiction which cannot be explained solely in terms of unconscious processes since it is verbalized by the carvers. On the one hand they assert their originality and independence ("I use my own ideas"), and on the other they admit that they sometimes use models ("I get ideas from looking at old masks"). Here it seems necessary to assume that there is, in their eyes, some sort of an equation between being original and being Iroquois, perhaps even a belief that the first value follows naturally from the second and is dependent upon it. Such an equation, if it does exist, is reinforced when the carvers derive traditional designs from sources which appear to them to be completely novel, as in the case of Floyd Doctor who said that he had once gotten a "new idea" from an advertisement on a billboard. Because the picture was that of a man smoking, and closely resembled the blowing or whistling type of false face, he was able to reinterpret the new forms in terms of the old and produce a conventional Iroquois mask. Another carver claimed to have made a "different kind" of mouth by exploiting the fact that the piece of wood he chose had a branch on it which he could utilize for this feature. Again the result was a blow-lip mask (pl. 97, *b*). This process of reading-in allows the carver to fulfill without conflict the two apparently contradictory conceptions which he has of himself; that of the artist who is original, who innovates, who follows his own ideas, and that of the Indian who adheres with only slight deviations to the traditional patterns.

STANDARDS OF TASTE

Some generalizations can be made about the particular qualities or characteristics which, in the opinion of the Onondaga, constitute a good or successful mask. They are derived from my appraisal of the masks which are carved today (pls. 94-99), from the comments of the carvers and others about the appearance of the masks, and from the reactions of a small group of Onondagas to a series of photographs which included both Iroquois and "foreign" masks, the latter chiefly those of the Northwest Coast Indians. The information obtained from these three sources suggests some of the criteria which determine the stylistic elements of the carvings and which serve as a basis for critical and appreciative judgments.

To a western observer the most striking characteristic of contemporary Onondaga carvings is their conformity to the traditional Iroquois style. With few exceptions, the masks which I saw, and which I believe to be representative of the work of the modern carver, resemble the conventional types described and classified by Fenton

from a study of museum collections.²² Some deviation from these types is evident, but it results from the modification or exaggeration of the old forms rather than from the invention of new ones. The spoon-lipped masks of Kenneth Thomas on which, in contrast to older specimens of this type, the spoons are smaller and the lower lip is elongated to form the chin (pls. 94, *a*, and 94, *c*), or the unusually enlarged and flared mouth on the blowing mask carved by Elijah Hill (pl. 98, *a*) are examples of such changes. The use of white paint to accentuate the eyes, the brows, the cheekbones, and the teeth may be considered another minor innovation since the ancient masks were painted a solid color. Yet this too is an elaboration, not an alteration, of the features and is quite consistent with the traditional treatment of the carvings which aimed at achieving a dramatic and striking effect.

Only two masks seem to me to be approaching the limits of Iroquois style. One of these, shaped like a skull with large, round eyes and bared teeth, resembles a death's head and has no precedent that I know of (pl. 98, *c*). The other is crudely executed with no detail or refinement of the forms, which suggests that its un-Iroquois appearance is due more to a lack of skill on the part of the artist than to a deliberate attempt to deviate from the conventional patterns (pl. 99, *top*).

Within the limitations imposed by the standard of traditionalism, there is considerable variation. Because each mask is made up of a number of independent elements—the shape of the face, the eyes, the nose, and the mouth, the proportioning of these features, and the treatment of details—different effects can be produced through different combinations of the same basic forms. Thus two masks with identical mouths may be quite dissimilar owing to the variations in the other features (cf. pl. 95, *b*, with pl. 95, *c*), while a difference in the mouth type and the amount of surface embellishments may serve to differentiate carvings which in other respects are essentially similar, (cf. pl. 94, *c*, with pl. 95, *b*, in which the outline of the face, the eyes, and the nose forms are much the same). These differences, taken in conjunction with the statements of the carvers that they like to follow their own ideas, indicate the presence of another standard: that of uniqueness or individuality. In the majority of carvings this second standard is subordinated to the first, since individuality is achieved by the use of the old forms and remains within the limits of the established style.

The fact that in some of the masks the formal elements are developed beyond the requirements of traditionalism and individual-

²² Although I was told by several carvers that the Onondaga do not classify their masks at all, I have used Fenton's criteria and distinguished them according to mouth types.

ity, suggests the possibility of technical excellence as a third standard. The quality to which this standard refers is not a specific characteristic but rather a way of handling the forms. It can be summed up in the word "finished" as opposed to "crude," as it requires a precise delineation of the large forms, a breaking down of these forms into smaller ones, an emphasis on detail, and an elaboration and refinement of the surface. Technical excellence is evident in the carvings of James Homer, Eddie Schenandoah, and Kenneth Thomas, particularly in the latter's spoon-lipped masks which are probably the most difficult type to execute successfully. Whether this standard is considered important by the other carvers but not attained because they lack the necessary skill, or whether there is a contrasting standard which prescribes a simpler, less finished treatment of masks, it is impossible to determine simply from an examination of their work.

The Onondaga make relatively few comments or evaluations about the appearance of their masks, at least to an outsider. One of the carvers, comparing the ancient masks with the modern, said that in his opinion, "We do finer work now than they did in the past," while another told me that he didn't think much of the masks carved today because they look too much like Halloween false faces. Still another declared that some masks are better than others, but did not specify which one or explain why. Only two carvers passed judgment on their own work. Kenneth Thomas said that every mask he did was an improvement over the last because he always thought of some way to make it better. Eddie Schenandoah admitted that although he tried to make the next one better, it never turned out quite as he had hoped. Neither of these men, however, was explicit as to the meaning he attached to "better."

Several carvers made general statements which indicate a preference for the traditional forms: masks should look old, they should look "Indian," they should be carved according to the origin legend because "that's the way the old fellows used to make them." Much more frequently verbalized is the value placed upon individuality. In referring to their own work, most of my informants tended to minimize the similarities between the carvings and to emphasize the differences. "We all like to make them our own way"; "We make each one different"; "The theme song of the Onondagas could be 'To Each His Own.'" Lee Thomas amplified his claim to individuality by pointing out that his masks could always be recognized by their wide mouths. The carvers also believe that whereas the Seneca carve only certain types of false faces, the Onondaga make all kinds and have a greater range of types than any of the other Iroquois tribes. Actually there is as much, if not more, variation among

the Seneca, since Fenton found formal types on their reservations which I did not observe at Onondaga (e.g., tongue-protruding, hanging-mouth, and divided masks).

By asking each of my informants to choose from a series of eight photographs of Iroquois masks the one which he liked the best and to give reasons for his choice, I was able to cross-check on generalizations derived from the other two sources and to obtain more explicit information as to the criteria by which the carvings are judged. Twenty persons were interviewed; fourteen men, of whom ten were carvers, and six women. In discussing the statements of these individuals, I have focused on the differences between the carvers and "the rest of the community" as represented by the other 10 informants.

The photographs that I used are those of masks owned by the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Only two of them are dated and identified as to tribe, but they are all traditional Iroquois types. They include three crooked-mouth masks, three tongue-protruding, one straight-lipped and one husk-face (pls. 100-103). Since I interviewed my informants separately, their reactions to the pictures may be considered independent in that, at the time they were looking at them, they were not influenced by the comments or opinions of anyone else.

There was almost complete agreement among the Indians as to which photographs they preferred. One or the other, or both, of two pictures was judged to be the best by 18 out of 20 people. The one chosen by the majority (7 carvers and 8 noncarvers) depicts a crooked-mouth mask with a broken nose and many wrinkles (pl. 100, *a*). This type is most common among all the Iroquois tribes and apparently carries the greatest prestige, for it represents the first False Face as he is described in the origin legend. The picture which ranked second is that of a mask which displays to a marked degree the quality I have labeled technical excellence (pl. 100, *b*). It was judged best or was preferred along with plate 100, *a*, by seven persons, six of whom are carvers.

While the choices made by my informants seem to indicate a uniformity in the taste standards of the group, the explanations which accompanied these choices were remarkably diverse. Nor was there any particular correspondence between the choices and the verbalizations about them, since different reasons were offered for selecting the same picture and, conversely, different pictures were selected for the same reason. Many people gave more than one reason, and only one man was not able to explain his choice.

A number of the Onondagas considered antiquity to be the most important criterion. "The oldest masks are best." "What makes

them good is that they're old; I don't like the shiny new ones." Others justified their preferences in terms of the origin legend, stating that masks which represent the first False Face are the "most real," "the most natural." Still others asserted that masks should be "fierce looking," "weird," "scary," and one man amplified his statement in a way which suggests that this criterion is related to the Indians' conception of the function of the carvings. "The idea of a mask is to have fright in it. They should be as frightful as possible because they're supposed to chase away the evil spirits."

A few people said that their preferences were based on originality. "A really original way of making"; "Somebody had a pretty good imagination on that one." Much more frequently verbalized, however, was the recognition that preference is likely to be the result of familiarity. "I like it best because it looks something like a mask I once had." "I've seen some that were similar." "It's most like our type, like the masks we use around here." Sometimes familiarity was combined with a sense of tribal pride at the supposed rarity of the mask outside of Onondaga. "I'll bet they don't have any like this on the other reservations. We have some like it around here though." Pictures were often rejected because they did not "look Iroquois."

In commenting on the photographs which they had selected as best, many of my informants expressed their admiration for the workmanship of the carvings and the technical skill of the carvers. "It's got the best carving." "It has lots of work on it." "They sure used good tools when they worked on that one." Pictures which were not liked were judged to be too plain, too simple, too crude. "It doesn't require much carving; could be made in a day."

The material which I obtained through the use of photographs essentially substantiates the generalizations derived from other sources. Both carvers and noncarvers consider as "best" those combinations of forms (i.e. crooked-mouth masks) with which they are most familiar; which are, in their opinion, the oldest, and therefore the most typically Iroquois. The representative function or meaning of the carvings also enters into their evaluations, for they prefer the mask which tells the story of the first False Face and does not merely symbolize, but literally depicts, his characteristics. Originality, as we define it, is rarely operative and then only within the limits of the traditional style. The taste of the Onondaga is narrower than some of their statements would seem to imply.

Insofar as there is a difference between the standards of the carvers and the rest of the community, it is one of degree, not kind. While it is true that a greater proportion of carvers chose plate 100, *b*, a mask which I consider to be more detailed and finished than those shown in the other plates, my informants may not have seen these qualities

nor made their selections because of them. However, whether they chose plate 100, *a*, or plate 100, *b*, the carvers seemed to be more concerned with technical characteristics ("lots of work," "used good tools"), whereas the noncarvers tended to emphasize the referential characteristics, the ideas and emotions associated with the masks. The women in particular described the masks as gruesome, awful, horrible; usually with the implication that this was the effect which ought to be produced. "The more hideous, the better." Yet some noncarvers seemed to make their judgments on the basis of technique, while many carvers mentioned antiquity, fierceness, etc.

The foreign pictures which I used included eight Northwest Coast masks that represented a wide range of types, four Chinese masks, two Hopi, and one Eskimo. Although I did not ask my informants to compare these pictures with those of Iroquois carvings, many did so. "There's a lot of difference." "You notice the difference between east and west." Frequently comparisons were evaluative. "Ours are more interestingly carved"; "There's nothing to these"; "They're so plain." One person, referring to the Northwest Coast masks, remarked, "All these look alike. Ours have more variety." Clearly, judgments about the variability within a given style depend upon the perspective of the observer. To an individual within the culture, differences loom large; to an outsider they are minimal. Another informant, with unusual insight, recognized one of the principal reasons why the familiar forms exert a greater appeal than the unfamiliar. "I like ours better even if they are hideous. I guess it's because I'm used to seeing them."

Some people rejected the foreign masks completely. "I don't like any of them"; "They don't look like masks." Others found them interesting, comical, or odd, and a few were frankly bewildered. "I suppose they mean something to the people who use them, but they're way beyond us." On the whole the carvers were more receptive than the other Onondagas, inquiring about the materials and the tools, and commenting favorably on the technique. "Nice carving"; "They do pretty good." One man was quite taken with the Eskimo mask, saying that although he considered it unfinished, he would try to keep it in his mind and make one like it.

There was little agreement as to which were the best of the foreign carvings. Seven different pictures were selected and no one of them was preferred by more than four people, in contrast to the agreement about the Iroquois pictures. The Onondaga react in a similar manner to their own carvings because the culture has prescribed the standards for an Iroquois mask. They have not, however, learned any positive responses to foreign arts so that, in a sense, each person is left free to choose as he pleases. Although, as might be expected, there was

a tendency to look for similarities to the Iroquois style, the carvings that were considered to fulfill these criteria differed widely. This does not imply that the choices made by my informants were haphazard, but simply that they were idiosyncratic; the factors which determined them must be sought in the area of personality rather than culture.

One final point may be raised. Do the Onondaga react to masks, either their own or those of other Indian tribes, in a way which we would recognize as esthetic; that is, do they react to the form as well as the content or meaning of the carvings? I believe that there is a concern with form for its own sake which some people do not verbalize, or perhaps even conceptualize, and which others express in terms of the standard of technical excellence ("It's got good carving"). It would seem that the Onondaga do not possess in their English vocabularies such words as "composition," "proportion," or "balance" with which to discuss the formal characteristics of the masks.²³ Yet there is no reason to suppose that they do not respond to these characteristics and that when they say they prefer a particular carving "because it is like the one in the legend," they may not also be expressing their appreciation of form in the only terms they have at their disposal. In this connection it is significant that there were among the series of Iroquois pictures three crooked-mouth masks which presumably have the same associations and symbolize the same supernatural being. One, however, was singled out as best (pl. 100, *a*), while the others were passed over with little or no comment (pl. 101). The difficulty, and perhaps impossibility, of isolating the esthetic response results from the fact that it is rarely explicitly stated and is always closely associated with other factors such as tribal pride, the value placed upon antiquity, and the representative function of the carvings.

An esthetic response does not depend upon the existence of an abstract concept of art. The carvers are not regarded, either by themselves or by the rest of the community, as artists but rather as members of the False Face Society. Consistent with the way in which the carvers are perceived is the disposition to view masks always within their ritualistic context. In appraising the photographs, many of my informants remarked, usually with disapproval, that the Iroquois masks had no bags of tobacco attached to them. They also questioned me about the symbolism of the foreign carvings and inquired about the ceremonies in which they are used, apparently taking it for granted that any mask has meaning and serves a specific purpose. Evidently the Onondaga have not assimilated the western conception of art as a thing in itself, a class of objects which have

²³ While it is probable that the native language also lacks an "esthetic vocabulary," there is nothing in the literature concerning this point.

some quality in common apart from their meaning and their function in the culture.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

An examination of mask carving as it exists today on the Onondaga Reservation has led to the conclusion that the retention of this ancient art is a nativistic reaction to the pressures of acculturation. Nativism need not imply a large-scale, organized movement involving the whole society; rather it may be defined as a self-conscious attempt on the part of some individuals to identify with the aboriginal way of life. Linton (1943, pp. 230-231) has pointed out that nativism is the perpetuation or revival not of whole cultures but of certain current or remembered elements of them which are selected for emphasis and given symbolic value. "The more distinctive such elements are with respect to other cultures with which the society is in contact, the greater their potential value as symbols of the society's unique character." Mask carving satisfies the requirement of distinctiveness, for False Faces have been a prominent feature of Iroquois society for at least 400 years, and quite possibly longer.

Since masks are still looked upon as ceremonial properties and continue to be an integral part of the rituals of the False Face Society, it may be argued that the perpetuation of the medicine society adequately accounts for the retention of carving. Aside from the fact that this explanation solves one problem only to raise another, it is equally plausible to assume that masks have been the crucial factor in the survival of the Society because they have served as striking and concrete reminders of its mythological concepts and its rituals. Moreover, it is precisely in this religious aspect of maskmaking that change seems to have occurred. Although the data do not permit a final judgment, it was my impression that while the religious forms have been preserved, the religious beliefs of many of the individuals who carry out these forms have faded and, in some cases, disappeared completely.

There are, on the other hand, fairly substantial data to support the hypothesis that a conscious desire to perpetuate the aboriginal patterns is the primary reason why masks are made and used today. Briefly restated, the evidence is as follows:

- (1) The dependence upon the ethnographic literature as a source of information about masks and their rituals and as a source of design.
- (2) The deference accorded Pete Hest who, although a White man, has been accepted into the False Face Society and is respected as an authority on the old customs.
- (3) The class in Indian lore which encourages carving, and which is under the guidance of Hest and was apparently initiated by him.

(4) The fact that many of my informants were willing to reveal information of a supposedly sacred nature to a stranger, a willingness which I have interpreted to be an attempt to prove themselves authentic Indians and to fulfill the expectations of the White visitor.

It seems evident that whether or not the masks have lost their old meaning, they have acquired a new one and now function as symbols of the old Iroquois culture and its values. Under these conditions it is not surprising that the style of the false faces has remained stable. Although changes in the direction of diversity and greater elaboration have undoubtedly occurred in the past, today the emphasis placed upon antiquity and tradition inhibits the virtuosity of the artist; his tendency to play with technique and devise new forms. Sometimes deliberately, sometimes unconsciously, the carvers repeat the old forms with the result that modern masks are essentially similar to those described by missionaries and travelers over 200 years ago.

It cannot be asserted that nativism constitutes the only incentive for the retention of masks and the rituals associated with them. Religious conviction, particularly on the part of the older men, cannot be entirely ruled out, and it is very probable that for some of the Onondagas carving offers a socially accepted means of satisfying creative impulses. Nor should the psychological effects of masking be overlooked: the drama that is provided for the spectator, and the emotional release felt by the wearer who is able to relinquish his identity and express himself more freely.

The explanations advanced for the retention of mask carving at Onondaga are not necessarily applicable to other Iroquois since the differences between reservations limit generalizations about any aspect of contemporary culture. Each reservation is unique in the degree and type of acculturation it has undergone, and this, in turn, is dependent upon the interrelation of such factors as the geographical position, the size of the population, and the particular facets of western culture to which the group has been exposed. St. Regis Reservation, for example, has a larger population than Onondaga and is located on the Canadian border between New York State and the Province of Quebec, far removed from any large city. Yet these conditions, which one might suppose would encourage the survival of the aboriginal culture, are apparently offset by the influence of the Catholic church. Eighty percent of the Indians are Catholic and many of the native religious patterns, including the use and making of false faces, have died out.²⁴

Precisely because of the differences, Iroquois reservations afford an

²⁴ Lincoln White, a resident of St. Regis, kindly supplied me with the information pertaining to this reservation.

excellent opportunity for comparative research, as the same traditional art can be investigated in a variety of sociocultural settings. A comparison of Onondaga with Cattaraugus Reservation, which approximates St. Regis in its population size and relatively isolated location, but differs in being less acculturated, might reveal more clearly the conditions which promote or hinder the commercialization of masks. Is it, as has been suggested, proximity to a large city which provides a more secure and profitable means of subsistence than the handicrafts, or are there other, more important, determinants? What is the effect of commercialization upon style? Fenton has reported the development of new types of masks at Cattaraugus and Tonawanda which may be a response to the demands of the tourist market. At Onondaga, however, any outside pressure upon the style seems to be of a sort that restricts innovation, because it is assumed that White buyers want false faces that "look Indian." For problems of this kind, comparative studies are essential. At the same time, the underlying unity of behavior and values that constitutes Iroquois culture regardless of reservation differences makes it reasonable to suspect that a conscious wish to preserve Indian identity plays a part in maskmaking wherever it survives among these people.

There remains the broader question of the extent to which retentions in language, government, and religion, other than the False Face Society, are nativistic in character. Again, no definitive answer is possible as fieldwork at Onondaga was too brief to permit an analysis of the total community. Recent developments in Iroquois culture, however, suggest that further research would have revealed the answer to be an affirmative one. In his series of articles, Edmund Wilson (1960) describes what he calls a nationalistic movement taking place on all Iroquois reservations in response to increasing pressure from White society over the last 2 years. On the economic and political level the movement involves resistance to encroachments on reservation lands and bitter battles in the courts over what the Indians regard as abrogation of their legal rights as a sovereign people. Accompanying this resistance is a reawakening of pride in the Iroquois past which is leading to a revival of the spirit of the League and a new interest in the Longhouse religion. At Allegany there is even talk among the more extreme nationalists of bringing back the White Dog ceremony, and among the young men of St. Regis, the fashion of wearing "scalp-locks" has been revived as a sign of Iroquois patriotism.

No such large-scale or dramatic revitalization movement was evident at Onondaga in 1950, but there were indications of a need for self-identification and an effort to find it in traditional symbols. The maskmakers exemplified these characteristics, and it has been pointed out that people who orient toward the old cultural forms in one

area of life tend to do so in others. Carvers are non-Christians who belong to the Council House and have some connection with native politics. They are also, when contrasted with the more acculturated portion of the population, of a lower and less secure economic status. When put in this broader perspective, mask carving appears to be but one of the ways in which the Onondaga seek to escape from their position as an underprivileged minority by an attempt to return to an idealized past. To an observer from outside the culture, carving is a particularly appropriate way since it is an ancient Iroquois custom. The attitude of the Indians themselves toward the art is best summed up in their own words: "All Indians carve."

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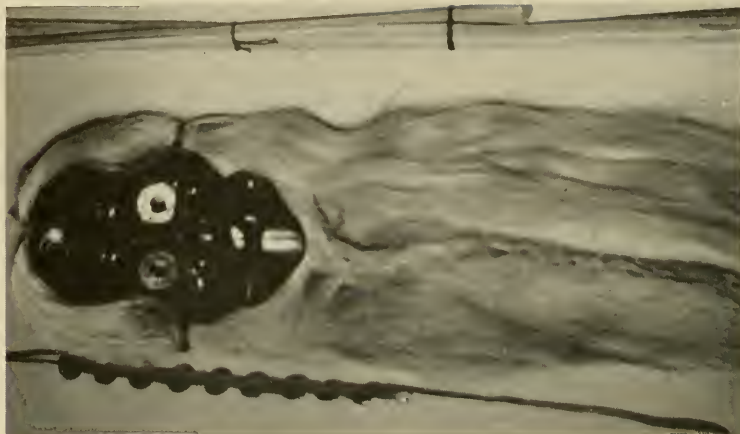
Top and center, Onondaga Reservation Council House. Bottom, Community center.



Onondaga Reservation maskmakers.



Onondaga Reservation residences.



c, By Kenneth Thomas.



b, By Eddie Schenandoah.



a, By Kenneth Thomas; horns added by Andrew Pierce.

SPOON-LIPPED MASKS



CROOKED-MOUTH MASK AND SMILING MASKS

a, Crooked-mouth mask by Eddie Schenandoah.

b, Smiling mask by Eddie Schenandoah.

c, Smiling mask by Pat Homer.



STRAIGHT-LIPPED MASK AND CROOKED-MOUTH MASKS

a, Crooked-mouth mask by Pat Homer.

b, Straight-lipped mask by James Homer.

c, Crooked-mouth mask by Lee Thomas.



c, Smiling mask started by Lee Thomas,
finished by Kenneth Thomas.



b, Blowing mask by Allison Thomas.



a, Mask by Allison Thomas.

BLOWING MASKS AND SMILING MASK



a, Blowing mask by Elijah Hill.



b, Straight-lipped mask; carver unknown.



c, Mask by George Smoke.

BLOWING MASK AND STRAIGHT-LIPPED MASKS



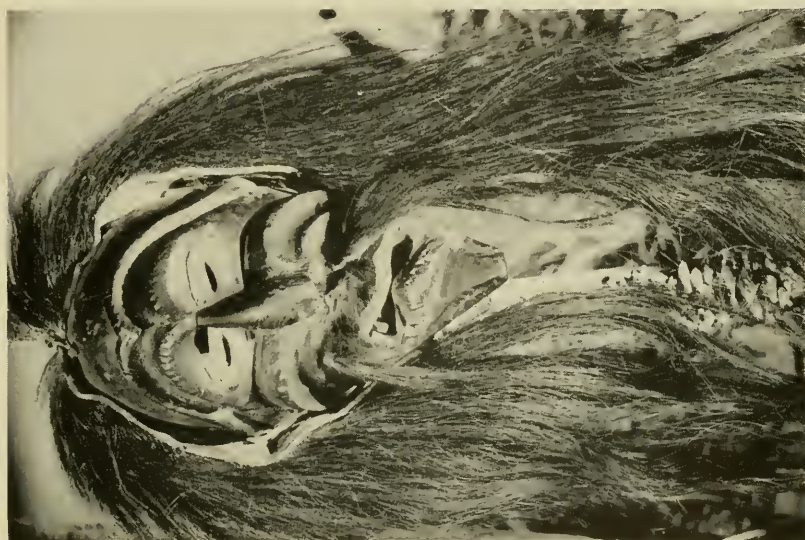
Straight-lipped mask and crooked-mouth mask by unknown carvers.



b, Tongue-protruding mask.



a, Crooked-mouth mask.



Crooked-mouth masks.



Onondaga 1888 DeCost Smith tongue-protruding masks.



Straight-lipped wooden mask and Husk Face Society mask.



Maskette carved by Allison Thomas.