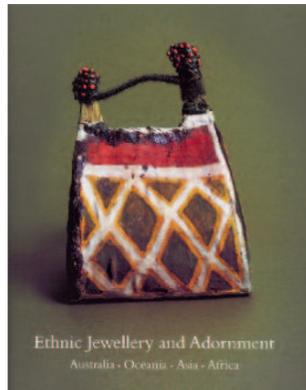
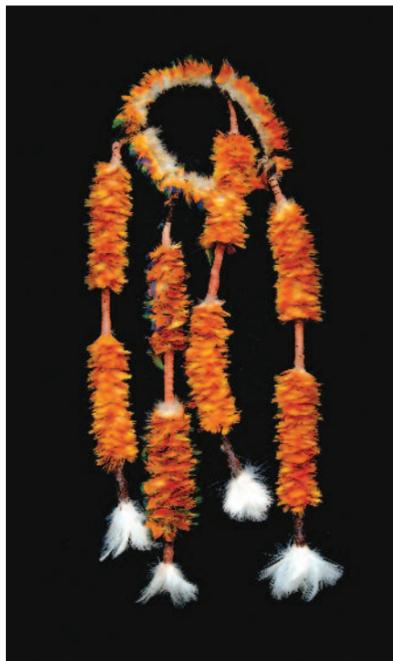


BOOKS



Ethnic Jewellery and Adornment:
Australia, Oceania, Asia, Africa
by Truus Daalder
Published by Ethnic Art Press,
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THIS survey of jewellery and body adornment is a weighty tome, not for the faint hearted or weak of limb. It is a survey of jewellery and body adornment of tribal peoples of Australia, Oceania, South East Asia, China, Mongolia, the Caucasus, Middle East and Africa. The meticulously compiled book features works from the collection of Truus and Joost Daalder supplemented by Australian and Oceanic examples from the South Australian Museum. The Daalders *Torres Straits Islander man's ceremonial headdress, used in dancing, early 20th century, feathers, cane frame, pigmentation, ht 45 cm. Collection South Australian Museum*



Tasseled ceremonial armbands (kum-bul-it), early 20th century, blue mountain lorikeet feathers, ht 37 cm. Elcho Island, Maningrida, Arnhem Land, NT. Collection South Australian Museum



Melanesian dancing apron for chiefs, also used as bridal attire, from Admiralty Islands area, c. 1930, shell and trade beads, woven fibre, feathers and seeds, made by the Manankol people, ht 65 cm. Collection South Australian Museum



Silver necklace worn by unmarried Lisu women at New Year festivities, mid 20th century, 22.5 x 34.5 cm. Myanmar (Burma), Kachin State and Thailand

confine collecting to areas where authentic examples can still be acquired, so although extensive their collection is not encyclopaedic. Researched and written by Truus Daalder with authoritative essays by Barry Craig and Philip Jones of the South Australian Museum, the book enunciates the social role of jewellery within these societies. Daalder has read widely and the carefully referenced information is dense, starting with the migration history of the various tribes and continuing through to the use of each object. There are numerous fascinating insights. The highly traditional ornaments can tell the informed viewer a considerable amount about the identity of the wearer as a member of a particular community, and Truus guides the viewer through the tribes and the collection. However, I would have liked to see some of the many, presumably fascinating, historical photographs referred to in the text of the book.

The objects illustrated are contextually discussed. For example, we learn that in warlike hunter societies, such as New Guinea and the Torres Straits, the most flamboyant objects, feather headdresses, are or were reserved for the warriors; *Mongolian Ordos woman's head-dress, 19th or early 20th century, silver, coral, Peking glass, turquoise, malachite, agate, enamel and cloth, ht 39 cm*



in parts of South East Asia, where a daughter is/was an opportunity to promote her parents' wealth, the most showy silver jewellery was reserved for unmarried daughters; whilst in Mongolia where married women have higher status and social prominence, they wear the most elaborate headdresses.

An interesting fact that I had not considered before was pointed out in Dr Philip Jones' essay – that Aboriginal Australians have no social hierarchy as seen in peoples of Polynesia and Indonesia, and the lovely objects illustrated in that section are therefore egalitarian. They are not badges of office but made and worn by who ever has a responsible role in the ceremony for which the object was created. In a society unfamiliar with metal-working techniques or precious stones, the ornaments are fabricated from feathers, seeds, fur and resin. They are also ephemeral, having no further use afterwards and can be cannibalised for materials for another occasion. He notes that there is a close conformity to local styles with most following an unvarying tradition enunciated in the song cycles of the dreamings which cover the ceremonies. Daalder gives us a potted history of the movements of peoples into the islands of Oceania before explaining the sociology of objects, such as an intricately patterned dancing apron, incorporating trading beads, worn originally by Manankol men but then adopted by women for their wedding days. Another interesting piece from the maritime Solomon Islands culture, linking adornment with practical matters, consists of a clam shell disc inlaid with a stylized motif of a frigate bird – a creature so vital in their lifestyle as it directs fishermen to shoals of fish.

The Indonesian archipelago of South East Asia has many rich and imaginative cultures influenced by centuries of trading and waves of invasion. Many artefacts show Han Chinese or Indian influence. I was drawn, however, to the plain woven silver jewellery from the island of Sumbawa, about which little is known. Although made in the early 20th century, it is in a style which is fashionable in avant garde jewellery galleries today. Daalder tells us the tribes of South East Asia are also influenced by the Han Chinese, inasmuch as many originated in China and had been forced south by the Han or in more recent times escaped the supremacy of the communists. The colourful costumes of the hill tribes and ethnic minorities of

Pair of silver fibula, mid 20th century, ht 18.5 cm. Central southern Morocco, the oases of Jebel Bani: Berber people



Melanesian frigate bird pendant, Solomon Islands, early 20th century, carved from turtle shell and mounted on a disc of clam shell, diam. 18.2 cm



Turkomen amulet, possibly worn as a pectoral piece, silver, parcel gilt inset with carnelian, green stones and glass beads. Central Asia, ht 22.5 x 10 cm

these areas are described in detail. Common inspiration for making objects includes fear of evil spirits, so many are amulets or include protective devices. The wondrous torques of the minority Miao peoples of south west China have closures to prevent evil spirits from stealing the soul of the wearer. The Daalders have been able to make a strong collection of this work as each village or region has its own style of costume, which is still in daily use by the women. Himalayan cultures make great use of coral and turquoise in their jewellery and amulet boxes. We are told that there is a close relationship between jewellery and spiritual concerns, and that these materials are believed to possess protective properties. In Tibet they are primarily worn as a badge of



Tibetan noblewoman's gold and turquoise temple pendants. Lhasa, early 20th century, ht 13.6 cm



office by high ranking nobles with their wives suitably co-adorned. The various styles of amulet boxes which are part of these cultures are often marked with any of the eight auspicious symbols of Buddhism, such as thunderbolts, lotus, wheel of law or the endless knot. Indian jewellery is better known than most but I was struck by an unusual example, consisting of a gold earring from Tamil Nadu, filled with lac (from which shellac and lacquer are derived), fashioned as a sunburst to be worn around the ear. Very elegant.

As I am partial to Turkoman jewellery, I was particularly interested to read Daalder's explanation of why such a relatively small national and nomadic group had made such a diverse range of immediately recognisable jewellery. It was partially explained by the women carrying the wealth of each family on her body – up to 17 kilos – and that the wealth was probably the result of aggressive slave trading; but where made and by whom is disputed by experts.

I was also particularly interested to learn more about Berber jewellery and the blue men of Africa as I had bought a striking fibula many years ago in Marrakesh. In the process I was educated on the jewellery of the Jewish Diaspora and many other things. You never know what you might learn from this invaluable reference book.

Dr Dorothy Erickson

The RRP in bookshops is \$175. Copies may be ordered directly from Ethnic Art Press: www.ethnicartpress.com.au for \$155, postage in Australia included.