

A Philosophical Analysis on the Aesthetic Foundation of the Sri Lankan Mask Tradition with Reference to Aristotle's Mimesis

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The Greek version of Aristotle's Poetics discusses poetry, other art forms, and the idea of "mimesis," which is Greek for "imitation," as they relate to his aesthetics. His definition of aesthetics included mimetic art forms including poetry, music, theatre, and painting. Masks, a type of mimetic art, are a cover for genuine personalities and a depiction of many ceremonial behaviors. The dramatic exorcism act known as "Sanni Masks" is a part of the Tovil rituals in Sri Lanka and represents the illnesses of eighteen demons. The research problem of this study is, how can we understand the Sanni Masks' aesthetics and philosophical background in relation to Aristotle's concept of mimesis. The research paper describes that the concept of mimesis and its relevance to the Sanni performances in Sri Lankan Sanni ritual practices. The main objective of the study is to identify the philosophical and aesthetic approach to the Sanni masks and to explore the Sanni masks in standard aesthetic theory of mimesis. *The Ritual Drama of the Sanni Demons (1969), Folk Drama of the Ceylon (1952), Ceremonial Dances of the Sinhalese, Masks (1994), Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art (1951), Aristotle's Art of Poetry (1940), Masks and Masks System of Sri Lanka (1978)* have been used as the literature. These data were gathered as part of a qualitative study utilizing the textual analysis approach, and contextual analysis was used as secondary sources to draw a conclusion. In conclusion, Sri Lankan Sanni Masks comprise imitation dramatic acts that aim to heal people by curing the eighteen diseases caused by demons. These Sanni Mask performances entertain the general public while conveying the Buddhist philosophy behind Sinhalese ceremonies and psychological underpinning of Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Aesthetics, Mimesis, Sri Lankan, Sanni Masks, Philosophy