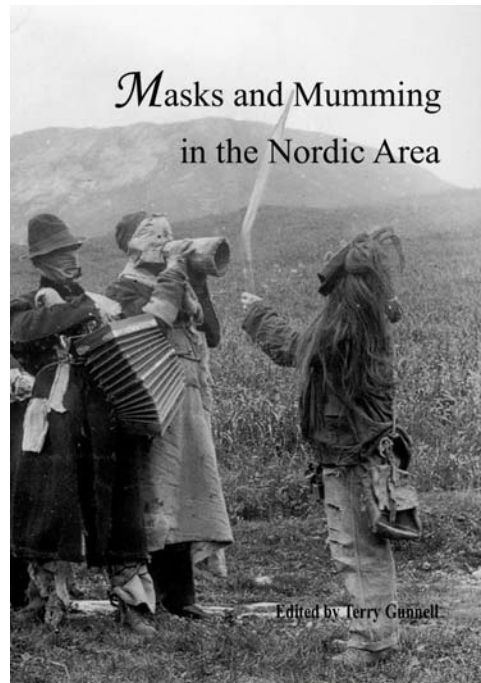




Masks and Mumming in the Nordic Area

ed. Terry Gunnell



Published by The Royal Gustavus Adolphus Academy for Swedish Folk Culture 2007
840 pages; 170 photographs and maps

There has been a long-standing, widespread misunderstanding that traditional mask and mumming traditions are something that belong predominantly to the south and the “primitive”, and that the “cold and rationalistic” Protestant countries of the north had no form of theatre until comparatively recent times. Another misconception is that all early dramatic cultural expressions in the Nordic area were adopted from the countries to the south. To a large extent, these concepts stem from the fact that most research work into Nordic mumming traditions past and present has been written in the Nordic languages, and thus been inaccessible to many English speakers. As the surveys and case studies contained in this book show, the mumming or guising traditions of the Nordic area, running from Greenland to Orkney and Norway to Finland and Estonia, actually have deep and firm roots, many of which appear to go back to medieval if not pre-Christian times, and are still reinventing themselves in the present day. This volume (840 pages in length) is the work of twenty-three scholars. In addition to seven detailed surveys of the traditions of each area, it contains eighteen case studies offering different ways of dealing with material of this kind. All of the above are richly illustrated with new maps and a wide range of illustrations of Nordic mumming traditions past and present. The project is based on a NOS-H supported project which began in 1999. It is hoped that it will be an inspiration to others in various fields to go further into this intriguing subject and fill in any gaps that may have gone unnoticed. If nothing else, the book should alter the image of the “dour” inhabitant of the Nordic countries.

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