

THE DOGON PANTHEON

The Dogon have an animist religion, which means that they believe that all natural objects and forces have a living soul. In the world of the Dogon people, everything has meaning and significance. For example, the Baobab is a sacred tree which can never be cut or sold; the fox, the snake, and the crocodile are sacred animals that have a place in Dogon mythology and may never be killed.

AMMA was the main god of the Dogon. He created the sun, the earth and the people. After Amma created Mother Earth out of clay, he raped her and she gave birth to several sets of twins, which form a pantheon of Dogon mythical beings.

AROU was the youngest of the four supernatural brothers who were the ancestors of the Dogon. Arou led his people on a mythical voyage to Bandiagara which became the homeland of the Dogon. When the four brothers reached the cliffs of Bandiagara, Arou gave a shout to claim the land. Enraged by his youngest brother's boldness and disregard of the proper order of descent and inheritance, Dyon, the eldest brother, abandoned Arou by the side of the road. This is where Arou encountered an old woman who offered him gifts of supernatural powers. These gifts served the Dogon as tools for defense, to domesticate animals, and to make rain.

BLACKSMITH was the first of the eight human ancestors who came down from the sky to earth. He arrived in an ark containing everything that was necessary for people to survive. He taught people how to make tools and plant seeds for growing food.

CROCODILE was a sacred animal that was believed to have led the Dogon people to water during their mythical journey across Africa. The Dogon were on their way to their current homeland, which is called "Falaise de Bandiagara."

DOMNO was one of the four mythical brothers (see Arou).

DYON was the eldest of the four mythical brothers who rode a horse carrying Arou, the youngest, on his shoulders (see Arou).

LEBE SEROU was an agricultural god who was worshipped in the Lebe cult. According to myth, the four tribal founders (Arou, Domno, Dyon and Ono) each carried a piece of earth connected to their primordial ancestor, Lebe Serou, to their new land. The most important aspects of the Lebe cult are keeping the order of agricultural life, and the renewal of the Dogon lands and people.

NOMMO were fish-like creatures with a human torso and the tail of a snake. The Nommo are the mythical twins born out of the second mating of Amma and Earth. They are water spirits.

ONO was one of the four tribal ancestors of the Dogon who founded Dogon Country (see Arou).

PALE FOX was an unnatural and socially disruptive creature born out of the first mating of Amma and Mother Earth. All divine children were born as twins with a male and female counterpart; however, the pale fox was born without placenta and did not have a female twin. That is why he is a symbol of loneliness. The myths of the pale fox tell about the chaos that resulted from an imbalance of male and female qualities.

SNAKE was a sacred animal who misguided the enemies of the Dogon while they were on their mythical journey to Bandiagara.

YORUGA was a male god born out of the union of Amma and Mother Earth. Since he broke out of the womb too early, he and his sister were imperfect. All of mankind is descended from these two beings; and just like these divine twins they can never be perfect either.

