

Figure

Date

19th century or earlier

Primary Maker

Dogon people

Medium

wood

Description

Dogon mythology contains an episode where a nommo (mythical ancestor) in the form of a serpentine being named Lebe descended into the skull case of a Hogon, the religious leader or earth priest of a Dogon clan. This symbolizes the link maintained between the Hogon as spiritual leader of his clan and Amma, the creator god. While the top figure in this sculpture does not look very much like a serpent, the bottom figure has a beard, which would be consistent with its identification as the Hogon. Throughout much of Africa, spirit possession is expressed by the metaphor of the spirit “riding” the head of the devotee. The head is the locus of spiritual force or energy.

Dimensions

Overall: 8 3/4 x 1 1/2 x 1 1/2 in. (22.2 x 3.8 x 3.8 cm)



