

1. Description-

1.1 Name of Society, language, and language family:

. Dogon, a language of Mali, different from Dogoso, Dogose' in Burkina Faso.

1.2 ISO: 639-3 dts

1.3 West African Republic of Mali

1.4 Brief History: "The Dogon people live in the West African Republic of Mali, a large land-locked country of 1,240,000 square kilometers, about the size of Alaska."(1,p6). The Dogon tribe lived in mostly in the Bandigara Cliffs, they were known as the cliff dwellers. There are three distinct related features that the Dogon country consists of which is the cliffs, large plateau above them, and sandy plains below them. The Dogon people did a lot of art work and sculpture.

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

In 1930, an American missionary, Reverend Francis J. McKenney and his wife Laura traveled on horseback from Mopti to Sanga where they set up a mission station. They were there for 42 years. During that time, Sanga changed from a remote village to having a church and mosque, schools, and a dispensary. It came to serve as a place for tourist visits in Dogon country. (1p.11)

1.6 Ecology:

Terrain: "The Dogon live in and around one of the most spectacular topographic formations in West Africa, The Bandiagara Cliffs. These cliffs, which reach a height of six hundred meters run in a southwest to northeast direction for 200 kilometers, roughly parallel to the course of the Niger river. The Dogon country consists of three distinct but related topographic features, the cliffs, a large plateau above them, and vast sandy plains below known as the Seno. The Dogon country is not a hospitable environment. The Rocky plateau is traversed by only one permanent watercourse, the Yame Rive, making even subsistence agriculture a very difficult task." (1p.7)

1.7 Population size, mean, village size, home range size, density:

Within the three topographical regions the Dogon population of about 300,000 is most heavily concentrated in the Cliffs of Bandiagara. There are about 700 Dogon villages most with fewer than 500 inhabitants. (3p.1) "The Size of villages traditionally varied between 500 to 1,000 inhabitants." (2p. 21-23)

2. Economy

2.1 Main Carbohydrate staple(s):

Millet and sorghum, beans and fonio

Millet and sorghum, were rotated with beans and fonio. Fonio is well suited for growing in difficult areas and is easily sown by broadcasting the seed. In more modern times peanuts serve as an alternating crop with millet (like beans). (2p.21)

2.2 Main Protein-lipid sources:

Goat, sheep, cow and the baobab leaf (2p.56) (2p.121)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?

Bows and arrows were used against slave raiding. (2p.11)

Blacksmiths make guns. (2p.42)

2.4 Food Storage:

Four types of granaries: two for the men and two for the women. The guyo ya (female) square granary is where the wife keeps personal belongings and the baobab leaves and beans used for the daily sauce. The guyo totori or the less common round granary is where some special harvest of baobab leaves or beans are kept. The man has the guyo ana (male) or high granary with two small doors, one above the other, for storing of millet and sorghum. (2p.46-47)

2.5 Sexual division of production:

Men do most agricultural work, build houses, repair granaries, plait straw for the roofs, and make utensils. (2p.48) Women fetch water, cook, weed fields, harvest certain crops, and make pottery. (2p.48) Women also brew beer and cut firewood, and pound millet. (2p.48, 55)

2.6 Land tenure:

Traditionally land was transmitted within the family group. Following French rule, individual ownership of property was allowed. A man's property is inherited by his eldest son who provides support for his brothers and sisters or insures an equal share of the inheritance. Houses may never be sold because the site where they stand belongs to the descendants of the old inhabitants. Fruit trees may be sold but previous owner reserves ownership of the field where they are planted for his own use. (5p.1 par5) "All fields within view of the village belong to the oldest men in town as part and parcel of their position as elders of a lineage. So for a young man it is imperative to have an old relative alive: he can cultivate close to the village." (2p.31) The basic division of land is the field. "It's cultivated in squares, eight cubits a side, surrounded by embankments of earth." (6p.76 par 6)

2.7 Ceramics:

Pots are made from the red clay at the base of the cliffs. They are baked in a fire pit that must be lit by a girl. It's believed that the fire quickly if an adult woman lights it. Dung is mixed with the firewood to slow the fire and make decorative black spots. (2p.56)

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

They talk, drink, buy, sell, show and look at the market. (2p.56) Market takes place at the foot of the cliff, near the rivulet. (2p.55) Beer is bought at the market and shared by a group of old friends, all members of the same clan. Drinking etiquette is followed by starting with the oldest and moving to the right. Every measure must be shared. Etiquette drops as more beer is enjoyed. (2p.62) Friends of the group walking by are asked to have a sip or join in a meal. Also may be offered to any passerby. (2p.64)

2.9 Food Taboos:

The Binou sect uses tontems. Totem animal is worshipped on an altar. You are not allowed to eat the meat of your totem animal. Example: buffalo. (7p.1 par 6) (1p.23) Pregnant women can't have too much salt, they believe it will render the child hairless. No eating of totemic food taboos of her lineage and her husband's (2p.70)

2.10 Canoes/Watercraft: None found

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): None found

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): No weight given in numbers, but the Dogon man is described climbing the cliffs with no equipment only his muscle by using ropes made of baobab bark. (3p.1, par 3)

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): None found

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

No age was found but was stated that girls are betrothed at a young age and once engaged they may visit their fiances in the dune where they pass the night. They are not considered husband and wife until after the birth of a child. (1p.12) (2p.68)

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

Children are highly prized by the Dogon. (1p.12) No number found but stated until a few decades ago they were not considered husband and wife until after the birth of the third child, today they are considered married in most instances after the birth of the first child. (1p.12)

4.4 Inter-birth-interval(f):

“ The first month after birth the mother is expected to spend almost all of her time with the baby. After the thirty-five days are over, however, the wife is considered to be in the same situation as just finishing her monthly seclusion, and should have intercourse with her husband.” (2p.75)

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

Males- between seventeen and twenty-two years old. (2p.22) Females-no specific age given only that they are betrothed and engaged at a young age. (1p.12)

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

No proportions found. “On the whole, Dogon marriage is very stable, compared to other African groups.” (2p.69) Yanu kedye is similar to divorce, a woman can leave her husband at the beginning of the marriage but once she has children divorce is rare and problematic and concerns the whole village. (2p.69) “Divorce initiated by either party is permissible, with custody of the children being given to the father.” (1p.12)

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

“Monogamy is the major form of marriage, although nonsororal polygyny with a limit of two wives is permitted. “ (5p.1)”Men are permitted to have more than one wife, although most have only one, and few have more than two.” (2p.67) “ In real life, most men only have one wife.”(4p.1)

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service dowry?:

They work in the fields of their future father-in-laws, may present some minor gifts-kola nuts, some jewelry for the girl’s mother, and gifts for the bride. Good working habits would get the fathers consent. This is a yanu bire (work wife). (2p.67) Money of a nominal sum is given to the father of a yanu kedye (cut wife). One who has been wooed away from another man. (2p.67) He works in the fields

- of the girl's parents to show reliability to get permission for her to join him in his house. (2p.69)
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns:
Strictly patrilineal, collective proper to youngest brother first, private property of the eldest son who must provide for his siblings. (5p.1) Private property of the woman goes first to her daughter, then to the youngest sister. (5p.1)
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:
Demands unquestioning obedience. (5p.1) Children are quickly integrated into the adult world.(1p.12) "A daughter may leave her parental home if it seems that she will be well cared for. She is expected to leave a child behind however, so the loss of a daughter is precipitated with a new child. Grandparents relate very well to their grandchildren, and the grand-father-grandson relationship is a most intimate one." (2p.69)
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: Not found
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):
Patrilineal and exogamous within the confines of broad groups of relations (1p.11) Blacksmith and leatherworker groups are not allowed to intermarry because of group identification. (2p.43) "The tendency toward marriages within a village structure, called endogamy, is strong, so husband and wife usually have numerous kin relations with each other." (2p.67)
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are the "other fathers" recognized?
No evidence of partible paternity. "The child is considered to be fathered by the first man a woman has had sexual relations with after menses." (2p.70)
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (eg. "receptacle in which fetus grows")
Women are held to possess the most fundamental power of all, the ability to create new life through childbirth. (2p.69) Male recognition of women's power is clearest during the menstrual cycle, they stay in a communal menstrual hut, men are prohibited from every kind of contact during this time. (2p.69)
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (ie. Semen builds up over time)?: None found
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape:
Nothing found specifically of rape or sexual coercion. "Relations between men who are rivals for a woman's affection will be acrimonious, but standards of harmony are vitally important"(2p.70) a woman may not wear a slip, pants, or any undergarment or she could receive a severe beating from her husband although physical violence is extremely rare. (2p.70)
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (eg. Cross cousin):
"The ideal marriage for a young man is considered to be that with the daughter of a maternal uncle." (1p.11)
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?:
"Boys and girls sleep in separate bachelor's quarter; girls visit the boys on their own initiative. This can continue for years, up to the time that one or two children are born. Then the young man builds his own house." (2p.68) Once engaged, girls visit their fiancés and pass the night. (1p.12)

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring:

If a woman first sleeps with a lover just after menstruation, then that man may claim the child, even four or five years after the birth. (2p.70)

4.20 If mother dies, who raises children?:

Not specific answer found. If grandparents are dead and mother moves to another village, they sometimes stay on the ward where they have grown up. (2p.69)

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: None found

4.22 Evidence for couvades: None found

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (eg lesser/younger vs. major/older): None found

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?:

The Dogon kinship system expresses the way of life in the village, when speaking to a kinsman, they always indicate the lineage and age of the relative. (2p.41)

4.24 Joking relationships?:

Joking between relatives is called gara, some villages are gara to each other. (2p.41) during funerals sometimes they become clowns mimicking the dead, making fun of mourners. (2p.42) joking exchanges occur between blacksmiths and leatherworkers. (2p.43)

4.25. Patterns of descent (eg. Bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations:

“Dogon family structure is patrilineal; that is, authority and clan membership pass through the male line.” (2p.67) The head of the patrilineage, or ginna, is the ginna bana the oldest living male. “He gives name to the lineage, inherits the compound, has control over a certain amount of land, and cares for the lineage altar.” (5p.1) Inheritance is strictly patrilineal. (5p.1) No single term for brother exist, they have to distinguish “younger brother” and “older brother. One's father's brother may be “big father” or “small father”. Men from one's mother's lineage are called mother's brother: all women are “big mother” or small mother. (2p.41) Oldest men live in lineage compounds in the center of the village, young men at the low end, as he grows older he moves up hill. (2p.30)

4.25 Incest avoidance rules:

Nonsororal polygyny was allowed (5p.1) “Marriage is proscribed between members of the same clan or with first or second cousins of different clans.” (5p.1) Within occupational castes such as blacksmiths, first cousin marriages are permitted. (5p.1)

4.26 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?:

“ No ceremony marks the beginning of a Dogon marriage. A new wife may be accompanied by a friend to her husband's house, but more often than not only those directly involved know anything of it. The only public ceremony occurs during a yearly rite when all the new husbands publicly thank their fathers-in-law for their wives in a festival called buro.” (2p.69)

4.27 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?:

They have many names, the first given at the end of the birth period. On the fortieth day the baby is presented to oldest man of the lineage and he gives the

child its ginna. Or lineage, name. Five days later the baby receives a name from paternal grandfather and sometimes the grandmother. (2p.40) Names carry a lot of information: male or female, birth order, children begotten without nemeses between them, and twins. (2p.40)

4.28 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?):

Tendency toward marriage within a village structure is strong. (2p.67)

Blacksmiths can only marry a woman from the same blacksmith group. (2p.42)

4.29 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (eg. Parents, close kin)? "Girls are betrothed at a young age by their families and not infrequently before they are even born." (1p.12) Some wives are yanu kedye or "cut wife" wooed away from another man. (2p.67)

4.30 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

None found only stated that "relations between men who are rivals for a woman's affection will be acrimonious, but standards of harmony are vitally important in Dogon social life." (2p.70)

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male deaths due to warfare: None found

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: Mostly outgroup fighting; with the French (1p.10), against emperors of Ghana, Mali, and Sonrai and the chiefs and kings of the Mossi, Sao and Fulani who raided them for slaves (2p.11)

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: They were victims of slave traders. (4p.1) The village site was chosen to better protect themselves from slave raiding (2p.11) "A French army was sent into the region for the purpose of establishing colonies." (5p.1) "Having lived under threat for so long, the Dogon have a strong orientation toward harmony and communion among members of clan and village. Conflicts are largely avoided and difference of opinion are seldom raised." (2p.14)

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): Neighboring people dub the Dogon as sewa which means everything is fine, very good. (2p.15) People from other villages and traders from beyond the area come together to buy and sell at market. (2p.56)

4.18 Cannibalism?: None found

5. Socio-political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

Village population size ranges an average of 160 inhabitants, housed in an average of 44 buildings which are grouped around the ginna of their lineage. "Clusters of 5 to 6 of these villages center around water holes or wells, and each cluster is referred to as a "canton" or a "district". (5p.1) Size of villages varied between 500 to 1,000 inhabitants. (2p.21)

5.2 Mobility pattern (seasonality): None found

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

The oldest man in the village is the Hogon, the village priest. (2p.31) The Hogon has religious and judicial responsibilities. Council of elders help make decisions concerning public affairs. He is aided in office by a sacrificial totem priest (yebene).

“There is also a supreme Hogon for the entire region who resides at Arou (Aru) and is elected by the Arou tribe.” (5p.1) “Aru’s oldest man, the Hogon, is the most important priest in the region.” (2p.105)

5.4 Post marital residence:

the husband builds his own house and gets permission for the wife to join him. (2p.69)

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

They live in compact villages occasionally built up the sides of the escarpment. “Often the buildings are so close to one another that the floors of some houses begin where the roofs of adjacent ones end.” (2p.21)

5.6 Social interaction divisions?(age and sex):

After circumcision the boys form an age set called tumo and have a special house. Girls are also grouped but less cohesive. (1p.12) “Dogon age groups still regulate most public labor today.” (2p.22) At buro the men of each age set gather at a meeting place of their ward, especially uniting the youngest kadage (age group) who are the young men who have recently married. (2p.86)

5.7 Special friendship/joking relationships:

Blacksmiths and leatherworkers tease each other.(2p.43) Joking between certain relatives, gara, occurs commonly. (2p.41)

5.8 Village and house organization:

“Flat-topped personal huts contrast sharply with the pointed straw roof of the granaries.” (2p.46) House: square with sides measuring eight cubits (same as agricultural plots) flanked by four rectangles of equal length, four posts supported the ceiling, rectangle in front was the vestibule, rectangle in back of kitchen, on sides were store rooms. (6p.91) Sculptured granary doors and locks protect the family’s harvest. (1p.31) Each clan and lineage has a central house, old structure, usually simple decorated with small holes, lived in by the head of the clan, considered to have been built by the clan’s founder. (2p.29)

5.9 Specialized village structures (men’s houses):

“Overlooking the tei is the major toguna, the men’s house, one of the four or five in each village.” (2p.29) A dancing square, tei, a small flat area where public dances and festivals take place. A yapunu ginu is in the center of the ward, a hut for menstruating women. (2p.29) “A heap of stones in the middle marks the ritual center, a sacred place where no one should ever sit.” (2p.29)

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?:

Some sleep on the flat rooftops at night when it is too hot to sleep indoors. (2p.62)

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

If the village is large it is divided into two wards, each has clans which are divided into lineages “kinship lines that can be traced directly and in which all living and dead members are known by name.” Basic units are extended families. Clans and lineages are traced patrilineally, thus they all belong to one’s father’s lineage and clan.

5.12 Trade:

At market, goods are exchanged between neighboring Dogon villages and neighboring groups. (5p.1) “Livestock, meat, grains, onions, various agricultural products, tobacco, cotton, pottery and so forth are traded for milk, butter, dried fish, kola

nuts, salt, sugar and other European merchandise.” (5p.1) Onions were the first real cash crop for the Dogons. (2p.26)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?:

Blacksmiths and leatherworkers and their kin make up two classes. They marry within their group and must stick with their trade. “Their workshops serve as a ritual center.” (2p.42) These groups live apart and do not take part of common religious cults. (5p.1) Chronological age holds considerable weight, showing in social interactions as well as where one lives in the village. (2p.30)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR):

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

The binu keju (shamen) makes sacrifices on behalf of the whole village. (2p.39) They have healers who treat illness. (2p.69) Healer-diviners treat illness supernaturally based or result of sorcery. (5p.1) Hogon is the village priest who perform sacrifices, lead ceremonies, name babies, purify those who have transgressed against the taboos, etc. (2p.34)

6.2 Stimulants:

The women brew beer and earn income from it. (2p.48) Old friends (clan members) buy beer at market, pass it around and enjoy it. (2p.62) Beer is also used in rituals. (2p.84)

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

Circumcision is performed on males age 9-12, also female excision at age 7-8, only then do they think gender is defined, until then they are something in between. (4p.1) “The dual soul is a danger; a man should be male, and a woman female. Circumcision and excision are once again the remedy.” (6p.23) “After birth takes place, the women wait for the placenta to emerge before doing anything with the baby. The placenta is buried inside the hut in a small, well-sealed vessel; the actual place is kept hidden from all men. Immediately afterward, the baby is washed and the father enters, accompanied by neighbors and relatives paying their respects, often bringing some food for the mother, preferably meat.” (2p.75)

6.4 Other rituals:

Hogon once elected has a 6 month initiated period. No washing, shaving, no one can touch him. (4p.1) Sigi ritual: for procreating life

6.5 Myths (Creation):

Spiritual cosmos consists of three gods: Ama-sky god, Lewe-earth god, and Nomo-a water god. (2p.104) “Dogon believe in a supreme creative force, Ama, who inhabits the skies.” (1p.13)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

They make masks, some used in rituals, (1p.34-46) (2p.86), carve figures in granary door (2p.46). pottery(2p.56), toguna posts for council chamber (1p.75) “Dogon art encompasses a wide variety of forms which often represent beings and events which are part of Dogon mythology.” (1p.24) Sculptures have different themes; human figures with risen hands, women and children, animals, etc. (4p.1) During buro young men make their way drumming, fluting and chanting. (2p.86)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

“Masks belong to the realm of death. One of the reasons that masks are taboo for women is precisely this taint of death. (2p.141) Masks express male superiority, women must not come into close contact with the masks. (2p.166)

6.8 Missionary effect:

Missionaries set up a mission station and also a church and mosque. (1p.11)
“Many people practice traditional religion as well as the Muslim faith or Christianity” (2p.86) Neighboring Fulani have transmitted Islamic faith. About ten percent are Christians. (5p.1) After defeat by the French the plains and plateau could safely be opened for cultivation. This resulted in dispersal of population over formerly dangerous fields, expanding into new territory. (2p.14)

6.9 RCR revival:

“Some tenets of Islam have been accepted, others rejected; in many cases, the new elements are blended with those of traditional religion. (5p.1)

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

Two rituals for death: the funeral with the burial (nyu yana), and the dama, the mask festival performed some years later. (2p.141) Dama must eventually be held for all deceased or they will be trapped between this world and the next, and won't be able to gain proper status as ancestors. (2p.149) After the dama, “The souls of the just reach paradise, Ardyenne, or the house of god (Amma ginu), where they live an existence analogous to that which they lived on earth.” (5p.1)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?: none found

6.12 Is there teknonymy?: None

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc):

“In the Dogon worldview the animals, the wild ones, bridge the gap between bush and village, between nonhuman and human.” (2p.128) Most Dogon are Animist. Nommo central in beliefs, the ancestral spirit. Objections made of Nommo have human like torso with fish type head. Dogon religion is primarily through the worship of the ancestors. (3p.1) There is Islamic faith and Christianity. (5p.1)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: None found

7.2 Piercings:

Dogon women with pierced lower lip was common but seldom seen today. (2p.55)

7.3 Haircut: None specifically mentioned

7.4 Scarification:

Circumcision of boys and excision of female genitalia. (4p.1)

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

Jewelry is given as a gift for brides mother. (2p.67) At market women wear scarves and pagnes (wraparound skirts) of bright colors and fabric. Men wear their most colorful long flowing gowns. (2p.55)

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

Masks, headpieces and fiber skirts are worn. (2p.166-167) They dance on stilts. (2p.152)

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

Males- Dogon baggy breeches, younger men sport elegant straw hats. (2p.55)
Females- bright colored scarves around their heads. (2p.56)

7.8 Missionary effect:

When colonial government arrived in Dogon country, western manufactured goods came also. (1p.11)

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

New elements are blended with those of the traditional religion. (5p.1)

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

Distinguishes birth order also male and female (2p.40)

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

None found. Widows relied on her late husband's family to house and feed her.(2p.48)

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

All people from the same gina are either father/mother, brother/sister or child. There is no single term for brother, they distinguish "younger brother" and "older brother". Same with for brother or sister of a parent, they are "big father" or "small father". Same for mothers sisters, etc. (2p.41)

9 Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Awa dance ceremonies are to lead souls to their final resting place in the family altars. (3p.1) The cult of Lebe is primarily concerned with the agricultural cycle. (3p.1) The cult of Binu is a totemic practice associated with ancestor worship, spirit communication and agricultural sacrifices. They make themselves know to their descendants in the form of an animal which becomes the clans totem.

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