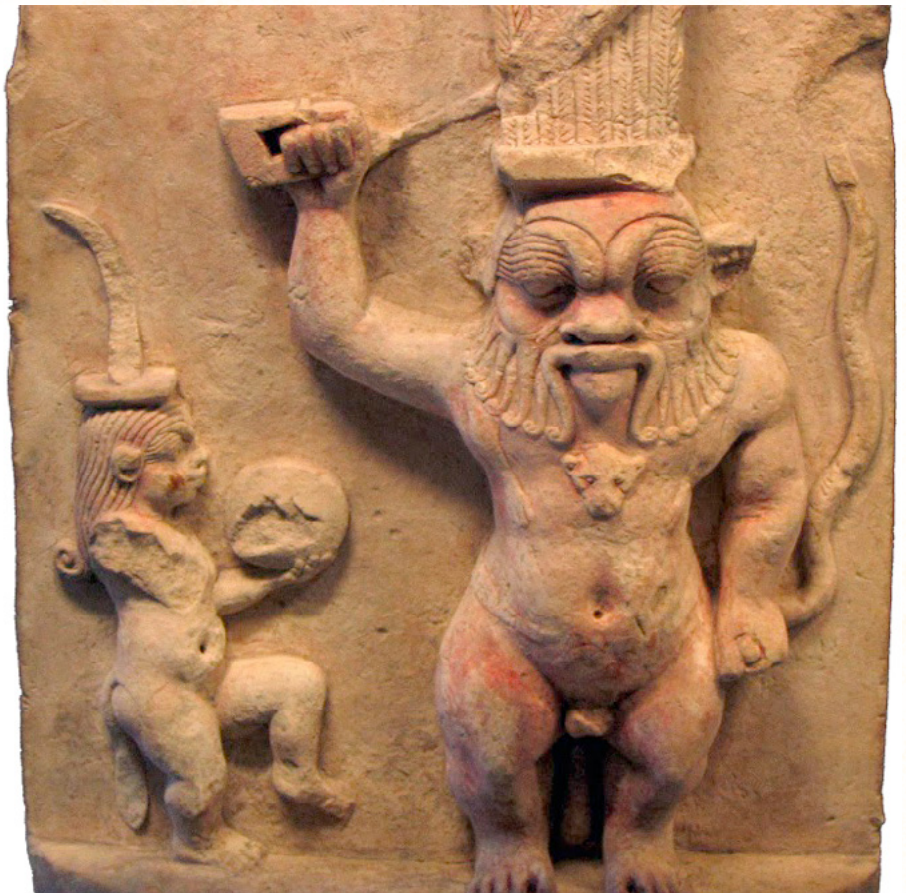




· MOKÈLÉ - MBÈMBÉ ·

A typical specimen of the rich family of aquatic dinosaurs is the Mokélé-mbèmbé ('He who stops the rivers', in the Lingala language). It is an elusive animal that has rarely been sighted and whose descriptions have only been passed down orally, so there are many differences between them. According to some accounts, it is a spirit rather than an animal; according to others, it is a large herbivore that resembles a giraffe but is larger and has a single very large tooth (which is sometimes a horn). Other accounts speak of a creature 'half elephant and half dragon' that feeds on large quantities of hippopotamus. Finally, it is reported to attack any boat that approaches it, killing all the crew members, although it does not feed on their bodies, being a herbivore.



In any case, its existence has been documented throughout the Congo Basin, which is inhabited by many different ethnic groups, so this creature cannot be attributed to any particular culture.



Mokélé-mbèmbé is a **PYGMY** creature

Current population: 500.000



One of the ethnic groups inhabiting the area where the Mokélé-mbèmbé hides is the Pygmies, a legendary African people known throughout the world for their small stature and way of life based on hunting and gathering. The Pygmies, along with the San, are considered the oldest inhabitants of Africa, and by extension, the entire world, having appeared on the continent some 70,000 years

ago. Although today they live scattered in various remote areas of the rainforest, they are all descended from a common group that began to split up 20,000 years ago as a result of the fragmentation of the forest masses caused by the last ice age. Today they are spread throughout the forests of Gabon, Cameroon, Congo, Central African Republic, DR Congo, and also Haiti, where they were brought as slaves.

The Pygmies engage in artisanal hunting, shooting antelope, monkeys, pigs, and birds with nets, bows, and spears, and gather all kinds of wild fruits and vegetables. They also trade with neighboring peoples of other ethnic groups, from whom they often adopt the language (as there are few traces of the ancient Pygmy language). They move constantly through the forest, constructing light dwellings of branches and leaves. All daily actions are accompanied by sophisticated vocal music.

The Pygmies believe in a supreme god, Komba, although they also worship the spirit of the forest, Jengi, which is a form of manifestation of the deity that would be more accessible for communication with humans.

The isolation of the Pygmies is due to their way of life, but also to their bad historical experiences in their relations with other peoples. Both the Bantu people and later European settlers mistreated the Pygmies, even to the point of enslaving them or displaying them in Western zoos. Even today, under the guise of one of the very frequent wars in this part of Africa, they are slaughtered and exploited and even downright enslaved by their neighbors.