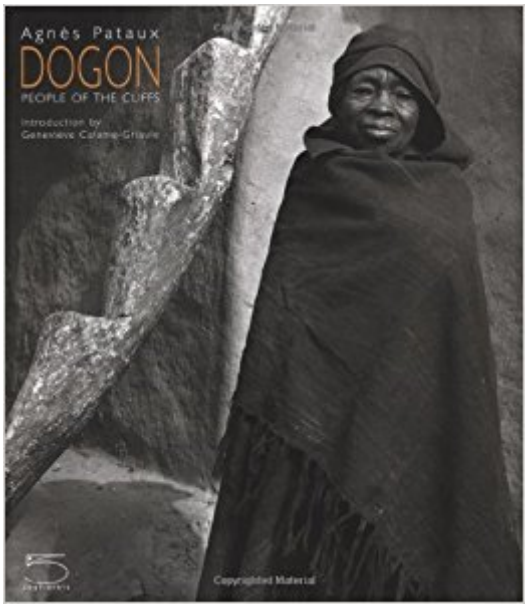
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Dogon: People Of The Cliffs (Imago Mundi Series)



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Synopsis

Dogon: People of the Cliffs is the second book by Agnes Pataux published by 5 Continents. Her photos reflect a culture still intact, while their intimate and direct power emphasizes the quality of her friendly, sympathetic view. The first African experience of Agnes Pataux and her family took place in Senegal. A few years later, she accompanied her father, an enthusiast of African art and civilization, to Mali and successively felt the wish to explore more remote territories. Her encounter with the Dogon people captivated her instantly and led her to return to the cliff of Bandiagara in order to experience life with a family from Yendouma Ato as well as with more families in several nearby villages. She later visited the Dogon people every six months, following the "rhythm of the seasons", to enjoy experiences that proved disconcerting yet exciting, fascinating and, with time, more and more agreeable. Invoking their animistic belief, the Dogon people counter Islam’s proselytism with a culture grounded on a learned cosmogony that is both coherent and complex. As she came into contact with it, the photographer from Europe was exposed to a way of living closely connected to its natural environment. "From one trip to the next -- she writes -- the Dogon people became accustomed to my presence and trusted me more and more, accepting me as a photographer among themselves. It was no longer my curiosity that got ahead of them as they increasingly asked me to share their customs and their rituals. More and more frequently, through my photographs, I was invited to capture their sounds, collections of proverbs, and the essence of this culture." She first approaches her subject through the magnitude of the sites, rare trees, the denseness of stone and earth. Later, she concentrates on the caves carved out as dwellings on the sides of the rocks by their inhabitants revealing the rough beauty of these places, terraces where food is left to dry, ladders, similar to sculptures, laid against the cliffs. The Dogon people inhabit much more than just a stern and splendid environment. As their guest, she records gestures and attitudes, observes objects and customs, scrutinizes bodies, faces, and probes expressions as they openly convey their noble simplicity. Appreciative of the warm welcome she received, Agnes Pataux reciprocated with deep respect and empathy enabling us to enjoy unimpeded access to the world she was able to discover. Beyond the documentary tradition she upholds in her work, the photographer hopes she will have contributed toward "recording the portrait of this remarkable society" which she fears will be unable to withstand the joint impact of Islam and tourism for much longer.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Agnes Pataux was born in a small French village in the Pyrenees. She has traveled to Mali and has photographed the Dogons. Her previous book with 5 Continents, Ireland: On the Edge of Europe, has won the "Nature et Decouverts" prize at the Biarritz photography festival. Genevieve Calame-Griaule is research director at the CNRS. Since 1946 she has visited the Dogon country with her father Marcel Griaule. She is an ethnolinguist and she has studied the relationship between language, culture and society. She has published several works on African oral literature.

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