
PAGODA RED



BOGOLAN COWRIE SHELL MUD CLOTH TEXTILE

\$248

20th Century • Mali • Cotton • Collection #CAA1502A

W: 78.0" D: 49.0" H: 0.25"

Commonly known as Bogolan or Bògòlanfini, this cotton textile was hand spun, handwoven, then dyed through a technique that has been passed down in the Bamana region of Mali for centuries. In traditional Malian culture, Bogolan, or mudcloth, is worn by hunters for ritual protection and used as a status symbol. Bogolans are also worn during a woman's initiation into adulthood as well as after childbirth, as the cloth is believed to have the power to absorb dangerous forces.

To make this stunning design, the cloth is dipped into specially prepared dyes made with leaves from the n'gallama tree, giving the cloth its distinctive yellow base. Continued...



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This process is repeated until the cloth reaches the desired color, possibly taking several weeks from start to finish. Once the cloth dries, the patterns are drawn on to the fabric and the negative space is covered with fermented mud, once again repeated until reaching the desired depth of tone. This Bogolan was made with a repeating design of cowrie shells bordered by horizontal and vertical zig zag patterns in alternating white pigments. Originally used as currency, cowrie shells became a symbol of wealth, power, fertility, and protection for many African cultures. Today this textile lives on as a decorative throw blanket or unique tapestry.

