

Chameleon

Latin name	<i>Chamaeleo chamaeleon</i>	Polarity	Ambiguous
Family	<i>Chamaeleontidae</i>	Element	Air, the Four Elements
		Planet	Sun
Etymology	Middle English from Latin from Greek <i>khamaileron</i> , <i>khamai</i> (on the ground) + <i>leon</i> (lion)	Deities	Lissa, Unkulunkulu

Varieties

Chameleons are arboreal climbing lizards. The Common Chameleon (*Chamaeleo chamaeleon*) is the only species of the *Chamaeleontidae* found in Europe, in the south of Spain and some of the Mediterranean islands. It is also found in North Africa, Arabia, Syria, and Asia Minor. Other species live in Africa, Madagascar, India, and Sri Lanka. The Common Chameleon lays eggs, but some of the other species give birth to live young.

Folklore

Some African peoples regard the chameleon as a magical animal and a rain-bringer. It can use its eyes independently of each other, so it is said to be able to see into the future and the past. Its spherical eyeballs are hidden behind fused eyelids with a small central opening.

Mythology

The chameleon was the sacred animal of the Dahomey mother goddess, Lissa, who was the mother of the Sun god Maou and the Moon god Gou.

The Bantu god Unkulunkulu sent a chameleon to tell humans they were immortal, but the chameleon lingered, so he sent a lizard to tell them they were mortal. The lizard arrived first, so humanity became mortal.

Symbolism

The chameleon represents the element of Air; it was believed to be nourished by the wind. It also symbolises the Four Elements. Its changing colour is a symbol of inconstancy and mobile fortunes.

In Christianity, the chameleon symbolises the devil taking different disguises to deceive humanity.