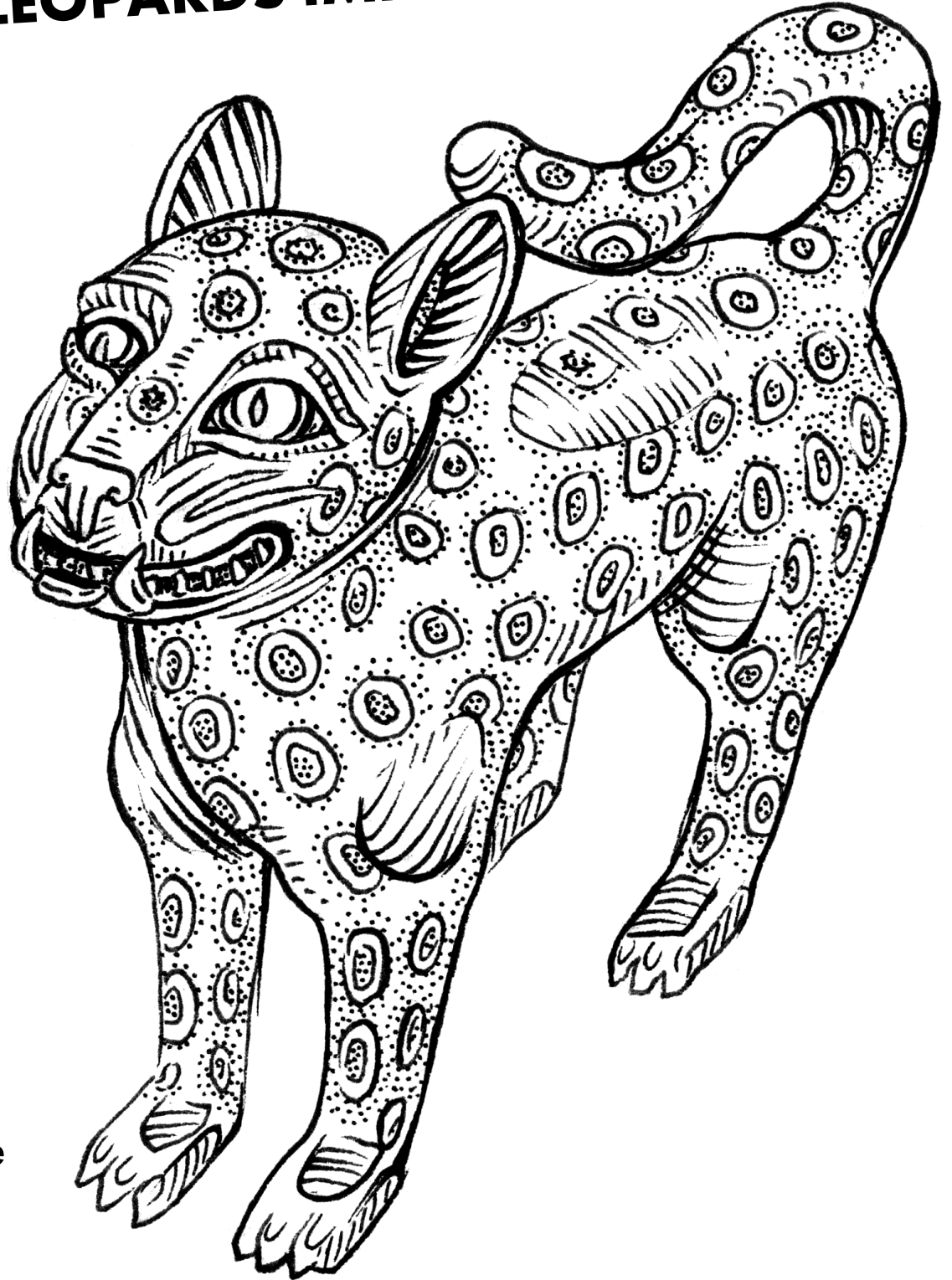


WHY ARE LEOPARDS IMPORTANT SYMBOLS?



Leopard Statue
Edo Artist
Benin/Nigeria
20th century

The most renowned examples of Benin art are the extraordinary cast sculptures of brass. Brass has a long tradition in West Africa, being used from Mali to the coast of Guinea and from Liberia to the Lower Congo, and more than 1,000 years ago it began to be used extensively to produce "court art." Among bronze animal depictions in Benin art the leopard appears most frequently. As "king of the forest" his reputation is as great as that of the Oba, or king.

