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The impact of our beliefs on the evolution of humanity

(The secrets of the very first tattooed people)

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Summary

In 1900, six naturally mummified human bodies were exhumed by an English Egyptologist near Gebelein (40 km south of Thebes). They had been buried in the foetal position, at a shallow depth in the sand. Two of the bodies (a man and a woman) are now in the British Museum. The dates of their deaths have been estimated between 3 351 and 3 017 BC. Recently, using new technology, scientists discovered a tattoo of horned beasts on the man's arm, four 'S' symbols on the woman's upper shoulder and an 'L' on her abdomen¹. In our view, this could be a cultural code whose iconography reflects age-old beliefs, in which the feminine was associated with the snake and the masculine with the horned beast. According to Marija Gimbutas' theory, these beliefs, common to a very large area (known as a 'common cultural horizon'), persisted over a long period of time.

Method

In FLE (teaching French as a foreign language), it is common to draw parallels with the mother tongue. We applied our linguistic methods to archaeological analysis, and our method of comparison by parallels was born. The innovative aspect of this method is the 'reading' of archaeological artefacts in their global context by following the evolution of their concepts through space-time.

Introduction

I was struck by the hypothesis of two American archaeologists (Stanford and Bradley)² who try to explain: how is it possible to observe similarities between cultures that are distant in time and space? For example: the Solutrean culture (Upper Palaeolithic in Europe) has similarities with the culture found at an archaeological site in the state of New Mexico (near the town of Clovis) in the United States. Hundreds of thousands of kilometres and more than 10,000 years separate these two cultures! Our hypothesis of a "common cultural horizon" may go some way to explaining this phenomenon. We know that sapiens left Africa between 190,000³. and 30,000 years ago in several waves of migration. We suppose that these sapiens had beliefs that made them more courageous than other hominids. Armed with these beliefs, and the cultures and new technologies derived from them, they dominated other populations (notably Neanderthals)⁴. Their "Venus figurines" can be found everywhere they went, migrating through Europe, Asia, Siberia and America.

¹ . [Natural mummies from Predynastic Egypt reveal the world's earliest figural tattoos - ScienceDirect](#) (FRIEDMAN & All: 2018, 116-125).

² . Bruce Bradley and Dennis Joe Stanford (STANFORD & BRADLEY: 2013) are well known for defending the hypothesis of a Solutrean contribution to the Palaeo-Indian settlement of North America. Both argue that the stone tool technology of the Solutrean culture, known in France and Spain towards the end of the Upper Palaeolithic, may have influenced the development of the Clovis culture in America. The lithic tools of these two cultures share many similarities. However, the Solutrean and Clovis cultures are separated by several thousand years.

³ . The latest information: http://www.sciencesetavenir.fr/archeo-paleo/homo-sapiens-est-sorti-d-afrique-il-y-a-pres-de-190-000-ans_120243

⁴ . In his latest book, "Le Dernier Néandertalien" (SLIMAK: 2023) (published on 3 May by Odile Jacob), Ludovic Slimak (archaeologist, researcher at the CNRS and author of several hundred scientific studies) puts forward the idea that the excessive creativity of the Neanderthals worked against them. So, in my opinion, the uniformity of the Sapience culture may have helped them to spread in an extraordinary way, because their cultural code enabled them to recognize each other and therefore not to eliminate each other.

As for these prehistoric 'Venuses', it should be noted that a famous archaeologist, Marija Gimbutas (GIMBUTAS:1991) carried out archaeological digs (over several decades), accumulating traces of funerary rituals in which these representations (statuettes and female figures painted on ceramics) were too frequent to be overlooked. It was at this point that Marija Gimbutas came up with a new hypothesis. What if these female figures represented a Great Goddess?

Through these funerary objects, Marija Gimbutas was able to observe the rituals associated with the worship of a divinity, which she estimates to have been constant for more than 25,000 years (including the period of our mummies in question). This gave rise to her theory of a pre-Indo-European civilization known as the 'civilization of the Great Goddess'. This theory took shape in his trilogy (GIMBUTAS: 1974, 1978, 2005). Today, we extend this cultural horizon from South-Eastern Europe to Egypt (and even beyond) in the belief that there is a clear anthropological link.

It is clear that in the Neolithic period, animal husbandry and agriculture changed these Sapiens, transforming them from hunter-gatherers into the first farmers. These changes led to an evolution in beliefs and a social stratification that can be explained by the change in man's attitude towards Mother Earth (the source of all life) presented by the 'Venus'. Hunter-gatherers took what the earth and nature gave them, remaining totally dependent on their generosity. In the Neolithic period, the land, which had lost its sacred character, became a source of covetousness for mankind: it was the strongest who won the right to cultivate its best plots. Beliefs then changed, as did funeral rituals.

The dating of our tattooed people tells us that they died just during this pivotal period of changing beliefs. No figurines of 'Venus' can be found any more, but her code is still visible in the position of the bodies (which return to the womb of the great goddess to be reincarnated), the symbolism of the objects that accompany her and the motifs of the tattoos, which suggest that the influence of ancient beliefs was still very much present at this time.

In our opinion, the "S" and the "L" refer to the snake by their graphic form. The cultural horizon of this symbol, which represents divine power, is therefore very broad:

- It is found in abundance at Göbekli Tepe in sculptural and graphic versions (SCHMIDT: 2015 ; ШИМИТ : 2011);
- This symbol is essential to the headdresses of Egypt's pharaohs (GUILLOU & PEVRE: 2014);
- It crossed thousands of years and kilometers to appear among the Minoans (see the statuettes from Knossos; EVANS: 1906). Where, moreover, we find the symbol of the bull's head: a symbol that appears on the arm of our tattooed man.

We can therefore draw up a series of images in which the feminine was associated with the snake and the masculine with the horned beast.



The evolution of the concept of divine power represented by the snake in chronological order: 1) Engraving from Göbekli Tepe (around 6000 BC): a woman giving birth with a snake's head (Photo courtesy of Vincent J. Musi).

2) Libyan engravings from Messak (Photo courtesy of VAN ALBADA: 1996, 10) around 4000 BC (MOSTEFAI: 2013); 3-4) Statuettes from Knossos (photos mythagora.com); 5) Tombstone, 400-600 CE (Photo: Gotlands Museum (CC BY 4.0), open woman with a crown of horns, holding two snakes); 6) Goddess of the Scythians, 300 BC (Photo: Kerch Museum, public domain).

This series shows that the symbol of the snake is more specific to the feminine, even if we note the appearance of horns that blend in with the snake in later periods. Let's look at another series in which man presents himself as "master of the animals":



7) One of the Tărtăria tablets with a scene of domestication of a horned beast depicting a humanoid form with two long arms. In our opinion, this is a master (or mistress) of animals who received the knowledge of the Great Goddess (Museum of Transylvanian History, Cluj-Napoca, before 5,000 BC (LAZAROVICI & MERLINI: 2005).), public domain); 8) Fragment of the ivory handle of a knife (Egypt, Naqada II, 3,300-3,200 BC, Louvre, <https://www.photo.rmn.fr/>); 9) Seal from the Indus Valley (2000-1800 BC, Mohenjo-Daro, Photo courtesy of Copyright J.M. Kenoyer/Harappa.com); 10) Minoan pendant "Mistress of the Animals" found on the island of Aegina (British Museum, 1700-1500 BC, [photo.rmn.fr/mypurchases R6NORD24767](https://www.photo.rmn.fr/mypurchases/R6NORD24767)). N.B. She is accompanied by 4 snakes and two birds.

We can see that the concept of a masculine 'master of animals' appeared in the Neolithic period, reflecting the process of domestication of wild animals and the establishment of patriarchy, even if certain territories (mainly located on islands) still resisted (see photo N° 10).

Later, in dynastic Egypt, these symbols (snake and horns) were used as a form of divine power, without distinction as to gender:



11) Horus crowned with bull and ram horns flanked by two serpents (14th-13th centuries BC; fresco from the funerary temple at Abydos; photo courtesy of Андреев: 2018); 12) The goddess Hathor welcomes SETI I (1294 to 1279 BC. C.; Paris, Musée du Louvre; <https://www.Photo.rmn.fr/>); 13) Emblem of the goddess Hathor (Paris, Musée du Louvre; <https://www.photo.rmn.fr/>), N.B, it is not clear whether she has a snake or horns on her head.

This analysis of cultural parallels confirms our hypothesis that the cultural horizon broke down in the Neolithic period, replacing the Goddess with the God (the feminine with the masculine). This break was a violent one. Our mummies bear the scars.

Results and future research projects

At the dawn of the Neolithic period (Mesolithic period), **Palaeolithic beliefs linked to the cult of the Mother Goddess**, still visible at Göbekli Tepe, **began to change**. This mutation spread beyond the Fertile Crescent, prompting populations wishing to preserve their ancient beliefs to migrate (photo no. 5). A new social order (patriarchy) was established. Under this order, land lost its sacred character and became an object of covetousness, provoking wars and violence. Some of the population continued to resist, taking refuge on islands (photo no. 10). **Others (like our mummies) fell victim to this change in civilization**. When the Bronze Age

collapsed, there were no longer any followers of the ancient beliefs on the shores of the Mediterranean: funeral rites (position of the deceased, accompanying objects, presence of ochre⁵) changed. We assume that the worshippers of the Great Goddess survived in spite of everything, moving towards the north-east (see photo 5), but this hypothesis will be the subject of future studies. In this next article we also will study the myths recounting to the killing of the serpent or dragon in various folk legends which, we believe, illustrate the shift from feminine to masculine monotheism. Here's an overview in pictures:




Images illustrating the evolution of the concept of the Great Mother Goddess during the last 3,500 years over a vast territory from south to north and from west to east: 14) Figurine⁶, head with bird's profile from the Late Helladic III period (1400-1200 BC, Paris, Musée du Louvre; <https://www.photo.rmn.fr>) 15) Tombstone, 400-600 CE (Photo: Gotlands Museum (CC BY 4.0), open woman with a crown of horns, holding two snakes); 16) Slavonic embroidery practiced to this day (photo from the public domain) the snake is at the bottom, schematically represented in zigzag form, birds in hands - is another ancestral symbol that echoes the Egyptian "woman-bird" figurine.⁷

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⁵ . . In our opinion, the colour ochre symbolized blood and represented the "atmosphere of the womb" of Mother Earth for a "good reincarnation of the deceased".

⁶ . It reminds us of another "figurine" from Predynastic Egypt (3 500 - 3 400 BC) of the culture of Nagada II, currently at the Brooklyn Museum.

⁷ . There is a surprising similarity between the first "open women" of the Sahara (VAN ALBADA, 1996 : 8-10), the Egyptian hieroglyph  (to beget, to give birth: see the cartilage of Ramses « Re gave birth to him») and Russian letter « ж » : in the archaic Slavic alphabet: 1) Животъ - belly, 2) жизнь во всем своем многообразии жизненных форм - life manifested in every existing creature.

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