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## New technology to understand the secrets of Saharan beliefs through the tattoos of the very first tattooed people

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**Summary :** Several naturally mummified human bodies have been exhumed near Gebelein (40 km south of Thebes). Six of them (EA 32751-32756) were obtained for the British Museum in 1899 by Sir E. A. Wallis Budge, who claimed to have witnessed their excavation (Budge, 1920). Apparently, all the bodies had been buried in the foetal position, at a shallow depth in the sand, in accordance with predynastic traditions and surrounded by objects echoing Saharan rock art. The first approach which permits understanding these traditions shows that, until now, researchers have focused on highlighting a possible community of forms between Saharan rock art and Egyptian art, or a common mythological content that would have been conveyed by these two art forms (D'Huy & Le Quellec, 2009: 85). This quest for origins seems to ignore the violence and brutal changes associated with the process of state formation in Egypt, as well as the break with certain traditions that may have resulted. Recently, thanks to new technologies, scientists have discovered trauma<sup>1</sup> and tattoos<sup>2</sup> on two of Gebelein's bodies (horned beasts on the man's arm, four 'S' symbols on the woman's upper shoulder and an 'L' on her arm). The date of death of these two individuals has been estimated at between 3,351 and 3,017 BC. It should be noted that it was not until the Ramses' period<sup>3</sup> that tattoos were found on a mummified body (Blakemore, 2023). We believe that profound societal and religious changes were at the root of this abrupt rupture, which lasted for almost two thousand years.

**Keywords:** The first tattooists, the civilization of the Great Goddess, the Snake Goddess, the collapse of the Bronze Age, a two-thousand-year break in tattooing practice.

## Une nouvelle technologie pour comprendre les secrets des croyances sahariennes à travers les tatouages des tous premiers tatoués

**Résumé:** Plusieurs corps humains naturellement momifiés ont été exhumés près de Gebelein (40 km au sud de Thèbes). Six d'entre eux (EA 32751-32756) ont été obtenus pour le musée britannique (British Museum) en 1899 par Sir E. A. Wallis Budge, qui a affirmé avoir assisté à leur fouille (Budge, 1920). Apparemment, tous les corps avaient été enterrés en position fœtale, à une faible profondeur dans le sable, conformément aux traditions prédynastiques et entourés d'objets faisant écho à l'art rupestre saharien. La première approche pour comprendre ces traditions montre que, jusqu'à présent, les chercheurs se sont plutôt attachés à mettre en évidence une éventuelle communauté de formes entre l'art rupestre saharien et l'art égyptien, ou un contenu mythologique commun qui aurait été véhiculé par ces deux formes d'art (D'Huy & Le Quellec, 2009 : 85). Cette quête des origines semble ignorer la violence et les changements brutaux liés au processus de formation de l'État en Égypte, ainsi que la rupture avec certaines traditions qui a pu en résulter. Récemment, grâce à de nouvelles technologies, les scientifiques ont découvert des traumatismes et des tatouages sur deux corps de Gebelein (les bêtes à cornes sur le bras de l'homme, quatre symboles "S" sur le haut de l'épaule de la femme et un "L" sur

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<sup>1</sup> On examining the woman's body, the scientists discovered that she had suffered a head injury; as for the man, he had been stabbed in the back with a knife that had pierced his shoulder blade from top to bottom : <https://www.britishmuseum.org/blog/virtual-autopsy-discover-how-ancient-egyptian-gebelein-man-died>

<sup>2</sup> . As part of an on-going program of reanalysis and conservation, the skin of each Predynastic natural mummy was examined using infrared imaging under both flash and ambient light conditions with a hand-held Panasonic Lumix DMC ZS19 camera, converted to 720 nm infrared by Kolari Vision. Tattoos were detected on the observable areas of the bodies of two individuals (FRIEDMAN & All, 2018: 116-125).

<sup>3</sup> The Ramses' period was a period in ancient Egypt, a subdivision of the New Kingdom characterised by the abundance of kings bearing the name of Ramses. It spanned the 19th and 20th dynasties (1296-1069 BC).

son bras). La date de la mort de ces deux individus a été estimée entre 3 351 et 3 017 BC. A noter qu'il faut attendre l'époque ramesside pour retrouver des tatouages sur un corps momifié (Blakemore, 2023). Nous pensons que de profonds changements sociétaux et religieux sont à l'origine de cette rupture brutale, qui a duré près de deux mille ans.

**Mots-clés:** Les premiers tatoués, la civilisation de la Grande Déesse, la Déesse Serpent, l'effondrement de l'âge de bronze, rupture bimillénaire dans la pratique du tatouage.

### *Introduction; method and hypothesis*

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. Our method of comparison by parallels was born. It makes it possible to 'read' archaeological artifacts in their overall context by following the evolution of their concepts in space-time. In this article, we put forward the hypothesis that the **'S' and 'L' found on the woman's body represent the snake: a symbol of divine power** that would later be found not only in dynastic Egypt, but also much further north.

In our opinion, this could be a cultural code whose iconography reflects ancestral beliefs, in which the feminine was associated with the snake and the masculine with the horned beast. According to the theory of Marija Gimbutas (Gimbutas, 1974, 1978, 2005) these beliefs, common to a very large area (referred to here as the 'common cultural horizon'), have persisted over a long period. We hope that new technologies (digitization of archives, infrared imaging, scanners, etc.) and the parallels that can be drawn between the Nagada culture<sup>4</sup> and similar cultures in space-time will help us to understand the origin of the break in the practice of tattooing and the beliefs associated with it among the peoples of the Predynastic period.

We were struck by the hypothesis of two American archaeologists (Dennis J. Stanford and Bruce A. Bradley)<sup>5</sup> who sought to explain how it is possible to observe similarities between cultures that are distant in time and space. For example: the Solutrean culture (Upper Paleolithic 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 miles 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 190,000<sup>6</sup> and 30,000 years ago, in several waves of migration. It is assumed that these sapiens had beliefs that made them more confident than other hominids. Armed with these beliefs and the cultures and new technologies they developed; they dominated other populations (notably the Neanderthals)<sup>7</sup>. Their 'Venus's figurines' can be found wherever they went, migrating across Europe, Asia, Siberia and America.

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<sup>4</sup> . The archaeological culture to which these two tattooed mummies belong. N.B. The Nagada culture (c. 3900-3150 BC) is the most important prehistoric culture in Egypt. It developed over a period of around 750 years in Upper Egypt. At this point, the population evolved from a herding and hunting society, with a few domesticated crops, to a hierarchical society of cereal growers, grouped together in cities and dominated by chiefs, then by rulers who waged war against each other until one of them became pharaoh and united the whole of Egypt under his rule. It was during this final period that Egyptian writing first appeared.

<sup>5</sup> . 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.

<sup>6</sup> . The latest information:: [http://www.sciencesetavenir.fr/archeo-paleo/homo-sapiens-est-sorti-d-afrique-il-y-a-pres-de-190-000-ans\\_120243](http://www.sciencesetavenir.fr/archeo-paleo/homo-sapiens-est-sorti-d-afrique-il-y-a-pres-de-190-000-ans_120243)

<sup>7</sup> . 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 Sapiens 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.

## *The content*

The application of tattoos to the human body has a history in many ancient cultures. Until now, the earliest examples were mainly geometric tattoos of the individual known as Ötzi - the Iceman (Deter Wolf & al., 2016), dating from the late 4th millennium BC. (3370-3100 BC.), whose skin was preserved by ice. He had 61 tattoos of lines and crosses all over his body. Given that they were mainly grouped on the parts of his body where he would have felt discomfort due to the degenerative diseases from which he suffered (around his lower back and joints), we can deduce that the application of these tattoos had a medical rather than a symbolic purpose.

Unlike Ötzi's tattoos, the tattoos on our two Predynastic Gebelein mummies appear to be highly symbolic in nature, since they are applied to parts of the body (arm and shoulder) exposed to the gaze of others, and their iconography comes from the rock art of the time. It is currently accepted that these are the oldest figurative tattoos known (Friedman & al, 2018).

The fact that there was a break in this almost two-thousand-year-old practice intrigues us and is the subject of our reflections. Indeed, it was not until the Ramses' period that tattoos were found on a mummified body (Blakemore, 2023)<sup>8</sup>. We believe that profound societal and religious changes were at the root of this **abrupt rupture**. We're going to delve into the archaeological archives to understand this break with the past.

The first approach shows that "until now, researchers have tried to highlight a possible community of forms between Saharan rock art and Egyptian art, or a common mythological content that would have been conveyed by these two art forms" (D'Huy, J. & Le Quellec, 2009: 85). This quest for origins seems to ignore the violence and brutal changes associated with the process of state formation in Egypt during the installation of the first dynasties, as well as the break with certain traditions that may have resulted. Let's take a look at each of the tattoo motifs on our mummies.

### *1) The image of horned animals:*

According to some archaeologists, the horned animals found on Gebelein Man are frequent features of ancient Egyptian iconography, but identifying the intended species remains a challenge (Friedman & al, 2018). Based on the shape of its elaborate horns and long tail, the lower tattoo represents an ox (most likely a wild bull) and the upper tattoo suggests it is a Barbary sheep (*idem*).

Incidentally, this tattooed man has shattered a legend according to which only women were tattooed for reasons of fertility or even eroticism (*idem*).

According to studies by Julien d'Huy and Jean-Loïc Le Quellec, in the eyes of the Egyptians, each image was a living being endowed with its own magical power and effectiveness (D'Huy, J. & Le Quellec, 2009: 93).

Given that the wild bull was one of the three heraldic figures of Predynastic Egypt, along with the falcon and the lion (Graff, 2015), we can deduce that this tattooed man was part of an emerging elite in the culture of Nagada II - III.

**Given his violent death<sup>9</sup>**, and the **sudden break with certain traditions** such as the disappearance of tattoos for two thousand years, the change in the posture of the body of the deceased (the foetal position was replaced by the position on the back in dynastic Egypt), and the shape and content of tombs (a radical change in funerary furnishings, to which we will

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<sup>8</sup> . Archaeologists have discovered more than thirty different visible representations, such as lotus flowers and the eye of Horus, on the skin of a female mummy discovered in the Valley of the Kings, who is thought to have lived during the Ramses' period from 1292 to 1189 BC. Given her tattoos, researchers believe she was a priestess or sorceress with a special connection to the ancient celestial goddess Hathor.

<sup>9</sup> By scanning the man's body, the scientists discovered that he had been stabbed in the back with a knife with a crossed his shoulder blade from top to bottom: <https://www.britishmuseum.org/blog/virtual-autopsy-discover-how-ancient-egyptian-gebelein-man-died>

return later), **we can legitimately assume that this elite was eliminated or, rather, migrated** (since we note the return of the practice of tattooing thereafter).

### 2) *The image of the stick (« L »)*

Like the previous motif, the 'stick' is a fairly common element in Saharan rock art. It is often used as a magical object to control wild animals, particularly in hunting scenes. From the period commonly known as the "Round Heads" (8000±900 BC), dated by Jean-Loïc Le Quellec (Le Quellec, 2013), to the "Iheren" style (around 3000 BC), these sticks are held by women. Later, the 'sticks' were replaced by bows and lassos: see Figures 1-3 by Lankester (Lankester, 2016). The gender of the people holding these objects no longer has any obvious female characteristics.

### 3) *The image of the « S »*

Unlike the previous motifs, this one is completely new. Without being able to rely on the archives, we're taking the liberty of applying our method of parallels to understand its symbolism.

In our opinion, the 'S' on the tattooed woman's shoulder refer to the snake in their graphic form. This point of view is confirmed by the Egyptian hieroglyphs (N°13193, 13197 and 13193)<sup>10</sup>

Let's take a look at the cultural horizon of this symbol across space and time:

- It is found in abundance at Göbekli Tepe in sculptural and graphic versions (Schmit, 2015; ШМИТ, 2011) and in the rock art of the Sahara Desert (Mostefai, 2013);



The evolution of the concept of divine power represented by the snake in chronological order: **Images 1 and 2**, sculpture and engraving from Göbekli Tepe (c. 6000 BC): a stone head with a snake on its skull and a woman giving birth with a snake's head (Photos courtesy of Vincent J. Musi). **Image 3**, The Libyan Messak engraving (c. 4000 BC, photo courtesy of Van Albada, 1996:10)

- This symbol very often adorns and is even an essential element of the headdresses of the Egyptian pharaohs and their gods (Guillou & Pevré, 2014); it is usually in an "L" shape, but sometimes in a "U":

<sup>10</sup> . Les numéros indiqués font partie de "Unicode standard" <https://symbll.cc/ru/unicode/blocks/egyptian-hieroglyphs/>



**Image 4**, The goddess Hathor welcomes SETI I (1294 to 1279 BC; Paris, Musée du Louvre; [https://www. photo.rmn.fr](https://www.photo.rmn.fr)); **Image 5**, 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.

- It travelled thousands of years and miles to appear among the Minoans (see the statuettes from Knossos; Evans, 1906).



**Images 6 and 7**, Statuettes from Knossos (photos mythagora.com) dated around 1600 BC.

These last two images associated with the snake can help us to understand the evolution of this concept, which is apparently migrating northwards through time and space.



**Image 8**, Minoan pendant "Mistress of the Animals" found on one of the Greek islands (British Museum, 1700-1500 BC, [photo.rmn.fr/achats R6NORD24767](https://www.photo.rmn.fr/achats/R6NORD24767)). N.B. It includes 4 snakes and two birds. **Image 9**, Tombstone, 400-600 CE (Photo:

Gotlands Museum (CC BY 4.0), open woman holding two snakes, crowned with a crown of horns). **Image 10**, Scythian<sup>11</sup> goddess wearing a crown of horns and surrounded by snakes, 300 BC (Photo: Kerch Museum, public domain, 300 BC (Photo: Kerch Museum, public domain)).

This series of **feminine** images echoes the prehistoric 'Venuses'. As far as these prehistoric 'Venuses' are concerned, it is worth noting 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 not to be noticed. It was then that Marija Gimbutas put forward a new hypothesis. What if these female figures represented a Great Goddess?

If we compare pre-dynastic Saharan funerary traditions, we find many similarities in the funerary rituals of the same period noted by Mrs Gimbutas over a vast territory (cultural horizon) stretching from the Middle East to Eastern Europe.

To illustrate this, let's compare the funerary practices of the RUBANEA Culture (Гимбутас, 2006) and those of the Nagada Culture (Graff, 2008: 169-182).

Here, we note that the RUBANEA is the oldest Neolithic culture in Europe. It dates from 5500-4700 BC and spread to northern France and Belgium (the Entre-Geer-et-Meuse region), western Germany, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Moldavia, Romania and Ukraine. It is characterized by a high degree of uniformity in its material culture. The rituals of cremation are to be found here, but burial was much more common. Burials are almost all individual and shallow. The bodies lie in the foetal position, most often on their left side, with their hands in front of their faces, their heads facing east and their eyes facing south (Гимбутас, 2006: 87-89).

As for the Nagada culture, its 750-year history is clearly stratified. This is why archaeologists divide it into three periods. During the first period (Nagada I), the burials were almost all individual and uniform. At the end of Nagada II and throughout the Nagada III period, the hierarchy - a sign of social inequality - was so obvious that different spaces appeared in the necropolises: on the one hand, large, richly furnished tombs for the elite and, on the other, much more modest burials (sometimes even communal). However, there is one constant: all the bodies are folded on their left side, with their hands in front of their faces (Graff, 2008: 170), which is a common feature of the RUBANEA Culture. On the other hand, the head of the Saharan deceased is oriented towards the south and his eyes towards the west (*idem*). We believe that the eyes facing west (towards the setting sun) prefigure future beliefs, in which this orientation will represent the world of the dead west of the Nile and the world of the living east of it (the Nile will be the boundary between these two worlds).

Let's take a look at the funerary objects that accompany the deceased in both cultures. There's another similarity: funerary vases. Even if the construction and shapes of these funerary vessels differ in the two cultures, their presence in tombs is an indisputable constant. In the Nagada culture, even the poorest tombs contained one or two of these vessels (Graff, 2008: 173). These similarities allow us to extend the common cultural horizon beyond the fixed borders of the Levant to Nubia (Graff, 2008: 180) and to propose the following series of images to our reader:

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<sup>11</sup> . In 1704, Leibniz placed the region of origin of the Scythians in the Pontic steppe, making them the ancestors of the Slavs (Demoule, 2015: 27). Today, genetic analyses confirm this in part.



**Image 11**, One of the Tărtăria tablets with a scene of the domestication of a horned beast depicting a humanoid form with two long arms (Museum of Transylvanian History, Cluj-Napoca, before 5000 BC, public domain); **Image 12**, Fragment of the ivory handle of a knife (Egypt, Naqada II, 3,300-3,200 BC, Louvre, <https://www.photo.rmn.fr/>); **Image 13**, Seal from the Indus Valley (2000-1800 BC, Mohenjo-Daro, photo courtesy of J.M. Kenoyer/Harappa.com); **Image 14**, Minoan pendant "Mistress of the Animals" (accompanied by 4 snakes and two birds) found on the Greek island -Aegina (British Museum, 1700-1500 BC, [photo.rmn.fr/achats R6NORD24767](https://www.photo.rmn.fr/achats/R6NORD24767)).

While images 1 to 10 show that the snake symbol is more specifically feminine (although horns do appear and become confused with snakes in later periods), **this series focuses on man**, who presents himself as 'master of the animals' (except image 14). We can therefore see that the concept of 'master of the animals' in the 'masculine' appears in the Neolithic, reflecting the process of domestication of wild animals and the establishment of a new societal order, even if certain territories (mainly located on islands) still resist (see also image N°14).

In fact, at the dawn of the Neolithic (Mesolithic) period, Palaeolithic beliefs linked to the cult of the Great Goddess, still visible at Göbekli Tepe (images 1 and 2) and in Libya (image 3), began to change following the transformation of hunter-gatherers into the first 'farmers' with the emergence of livestock rearing and agriculture in the 'Fertile Crescent'. Indeed, at the time, Mesopotamia, with its pleasant climate and abundant natural water resources, was the ideal place for the birth of agriculture.

A little later, Neolithization also took place in the Sahara, only in the regions around the Nile. In fact, consecutive arid phases forced the Saharan peoples to regroup around the Nile, as the large fauna of the Sahara began to disappear and hunting was no longer sufficient for their survival. As early as Nagada I, the consumption of meat from hunting had fallen from 10% in the Badarian period (the culture preceding Nagada) to just 1% around 3800 BC (Lankester, 2016: 88). However, hunting retained a symbolic character, remaining practiced by the emerging elite and forming part of their rituals associated with initiation and the justification of a privileged status (*idem*).

New activities (animal husbandry and agriculture) replaced hunting in Nagada from the outset. This led to social stratification, creating a hierarchical pyramid in which the most productive farmers were the best placed. This social stratification was no longer compatible with the beliefs associated with the Great Goddess. It should be noted that the funerary inventory specific to these beliefs shows that the worshipers of the Great Goddess lived in rather egalitarian societies (Gimbutas, 2005).

Whereas in the Paleolithic, hunter-gatherers took what the land and nature gave them, remaining totally dependent on their generosity, in the Neolithic, the land lost its sacred character and became a source of covetousness for humans: it was the strongest who won the right to cultivate its best plots. Beliefs changed, as did funeral rituals.

There was a change in the posture of the deceased: the foetal position was replaced by the supine position in dynastic Egypt. The ancient beliefs of hunter-gatherers linked to the veneration of the Great Goddess were therefore replaced by beliefs linked to new activities



(livestock rearing and agriculture), but clay statuettes (echoing prehistoric "Venuses") were still found in tombs until the beginning of Nagada III (Graff, 2008: 174).

We believe that **the foetal position** is linked to **the belief in reincarnation** in the 'womb' of the Great Goddess Mother Earth, while the **supine position** is probably linked to the new **beliefs in resurrection**.

To return to **our tattooed mummies**, we assume that they were among the **last worshipers of the Great Goddess**, condemned to die or migrate in the face of the new societal order emerging in dynastic Egypt.

Indeed, their violent deaths (cranial trauma in the case of the woman and a stab wound in the back in the case of the man), their foetal position, the lack of funerary objects (a person who believes he is being reincarnated in a new body does not need as many objects as someone who intends to be resuscitated) and the absence of defensive lesions suggest that they were the last worshipers of the Great Goddess.

In cave art, the evolution of motifs is a source of food for thought. In the Paleolithic, cave art was invisible. Lurking **deep in uninhabited caves**, to contemplate it you often had to travel hundreds of feet underground, bringing your own source of light with you. This is in line with the concept of the "**sacred womb of Mother Earth**" that can still be seen at Nagada I:



15)

**Image 15**, Terracotta (Nagada I), photo courtesy of the National Archaeological Museum of the Netherlands (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden)

Around the Neolithic period, rock art became observable in daylight. In contrast to the previous period, the subjects become very varied. There are all kinds of animals, humans, more or less human figures with their arms raised, often large ones, weapons, chariots, dwellings, trees and so on. These figures are usually organized into scenes: pastoral, hunters and warriors are the most common themes (Anati, 2003). Curiously, the only theme that remains common to Palaeolithic and Neolithic art is that of negative hands. Can this be explained by the importance attached to hand production throughout the ages? We have no answer to this question. Whatever the case, these new beliefs clearly gave rise to a whole "afterlife industry" not only in Predynastic Egypt (from the end of Nagada II) but also in other regions of the Mediterranean.

As Gwenola Graff notes, some of the objects deposited in the tombs (related to wine and oil, as well as palettes and club heads, whose choice of material or abundance of decoration make them "unusable"), especially from the end of the reign of Nagada II, were intended to underline the symbolism of a certain social status, and were very often brought from other regions of the Mediterranean (Graff, 2008: 179-180).

Coming back to **our tattooed mummies** (which unfortunately have no funerary objects), based on our previous analysis (paragraphs N°1-3) we can legitimately assume that

**their tattoos<sup>12</sup> were markers of a certain social status** of the elite who had not found their place in dynastic Egypt. **The two-thousand-year break in the practice of tattooing suggests that this elite must have migrated, only to return later.**

Analysis of archives and images gives plausibility to our hypothesis: the tattoos found on the skin of our mummies are highly symbolic and probably refer to a divine power where the 'masculine' is associated with the magical power of horned beasts (paragraph 1) and the 'feminine' with that of the snake (paragraphs 2-3). We also note that the cultural horizon of the great goddess Mother Earth broke down during the Neolithic period, gradually replacing the 'feminine' (images N°1 to 10) with the 'masculine' (images N°11 to 13). The break was a violent one, and our mummies bear the marks of it (see notes 1 and 9).

### *Conclusions and future research*

At the dawn of the Neolithic (Mesolithic), Palaeolithic beliefs linked to the cult of the Mother Goddess, still visible in Turkey (Göbekli Tepe) and Libya (Messak), began to change. This change spread beyond the Fertile Crescent, prompting populations wishing to preserve their ancient beliefs to migrate northwards (images 6 to 10). A new social order (patriarchy) was established. Under this order, the 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 14). Others (like our mummies) fell victim to this brutal 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, objects accompanying him/her, etc.) changed. We assume that the worshipers of the Great Goddess survived in spite of everything, moving towards the north-east (see images 9 and 10), but this hypothesis will be the subject of further study. In this next article, we will also look at the myths relating the killing of the serpent or dragon in various popular legends which, in our view, illustrate the transition from feminine to masculine monotheism. Here's an overview in pictures:



14)



15)



6)

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) Figurine<sup>13</sup>, 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

<sup>12</sup>It was not until the Ramses' period (1296-1069 BC) that tattoos were found on a mummified body.

<sup>13</sup> . 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.

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.<sup>14</sup>


## Results

Our hypothesis is plausible: comparative analysis of the archives confirms that the tattoos found thanks to the new technology on the skin of our mummies clearly have a sacred character, certainly referring to beliefs linked to the civilization of the Great Goddess.

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<sup>14</sup> · There is a surprising similarity between the first "open women" of the Sahara (Van Albada, 1996 : 1-14), the Egyptian hieroglyph  (to beget, to give birth: see the cartouche 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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