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Edited by

Dario Seglie

Marcel Otte

Luiz Oosterbeek

Laurence Remacle

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Contacts :
Secretary of U.I.S.P.P. – International Union for Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences
Instituto Politécnico de Tomar, Av. Dr. Cândido Madureira 13, 2300 TOMAR
Email: uispp@ipt.pt
www.uispp.ipt.pt

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DEATH AND TRANSFIGURATION OF A SIGN – THE CRUCIFORM ON THE NEOLITHIC STELES OF WESTERN FRANCE

Serge CASSEN

CNRS (Unité Mixte de Recherche 6566), Laboratoire de Préhistoire et Protohistoire de l'Ouest de la France,
Université de Nantes, BP 81227, 44312 Nantes cedex 3 (France), Email: serge.cassen@univ-nantes.fr

Abstract: *Too close to the Christian representation, too universal in its geometry, too solicited by the ideology of our century, the cruciform figure seems condemned to be reduced to a fatal polysemy as an archaeological sign, preventing any interpretation, or condemned to be reduced to the object par excellence of the Neolithic period – the farmer's or lumberjack's axe -, when a prehistoric date is proposed for it.*

Based on a comprehension model of the passage to agriculture in Western France, new recording techniques will permit a better study of the steles engraved in Morbihan (Brittany); the compositions containing the cruciform will be specified and ordered; the structural regularities underlined; the evolution of opinions recalled. From an archaeology of the images, our interpretation will state that this is a representation of Man.

Keywords: *passage-grave, stele, carvings, cruciform*

Résumé: *Trop proche de la représentation chrétienne, trop universel dans sa géométrie, trop sollicité par l'idéologie de notre siècle, le motif cruciforme semble condamné à ne devoir relever que d'une polysémie fatale comme signe archéologique, empêchant toute interprétation, ou à ne renvoyer qu'à l'objet par excellence du Néolithique, la hache de l'agriculteur/bûcheron, quand on lui reconnaît une date ancienne.*

A partir d'un modèle de compréhension du passage à l'agriculture dans l'Ouest de la France, de nouvelles techniques d'enregistrement feront le point sur les stèles gravées en Morbihan (Bretagne); les compositions contenant le cruciforme seront précisées et ordonnées, les régularités structurales soulignées; l'historique des opinions rappelé. D'une archéologie des images sortira notre interprétation: voici une représentation de l'Homme.

Mots-clés: *tombe à couloir, stèle, gravures, cruciforme*

No human representation is currently inventorized in the Neolithic *corpus* of Western France. Animals (bird, cetacea, bovine and ovine, snake), weapons (stick, axe, bow), boats, are engraved. The phallus of the man is illustrated and hardly abstract, however the human body as a whole is not as easily recognizable. Can we nevertheless definitively negate the representation of the human body?

Among all these figures now identified, only one remains unclear, leaving a field open to daydream and analysis: the "cruciform", axe supposedly simplified in the form of a cross, indeed requires to be stripped of its history in order to be reconsidered (this text is a summary of a longer article in French forthcoming in *Gallia-Préhistoire*, 2007, about interpretations of all the signs in the Mané Lud passage grave.).

The insulated axe blade and fixed blade are probably, among the Armorican signs, those which were recognized very early, being given names of tools immediately identifiable by common sense, and whose instrumental statute remains uncontested. Let us leave apart the symbolic function, and limit our investigation to the analysis of forms.

Let us take the example of a passage tomb in Mané Lud, Locmariaquer (Morbihan). Three types of haftings are detectable on the steles of this megalithic grave (for the illustrations, see Cassen 2006):

- The direct hafting of a blade through a mortise in the wood, with a stick finished in the form of a crook, the pointed part of the blade exceeding the back of the handle;
- The fixing of an axe blade on a handle also in the shape of a crook stick, but this time without a visible point exceeding the former;
- The fixing of an axe blade on the proximale end of the handle, without going beyond it or going beyond the volute of a crook; the "heel", still pointed, again exceeding the handle.

A fourth type, or simplified alternative, is recognized in all the literature concerning the subject, with an exception however (Péquart, Rouzic 1927, p. 15). It is the sign that we will indicate by the term of cruciform; generally interpreted as adze, it supposes that the blade, functioning of course by its profile for the observer, is here limited to a feature perpendicular to the handle, the pointed extremity exceeding largely and with a length equal to the former part.

Let us question this last interpretation. Could this cruciform sign be the abstraction of an axe with direct hafting? No, because the drawing of this precise type of instrument accompanies the cruciform on the same stele (n° 6); here, the realistic edge must recall the axe. A simplification of the same instrument which would be juxtaposed on the same scale and in the same scene is

not justifiable, because the technique of realization, the composition and the degree of deterioration of engravings plead resolutely in favour of their contemporaneity.

Could this sign then be a representation of an adze with direct hafting? This interpretation encounters some difficulties. We do not know any ethnographic examples reporting that the stone blade should be directly embedded in the mortise dug, exceeding the massive monoxyle handle by a length identical to the “active” part; a width of mortise proportional to such lengths of instruments would require, to maintain them without them breaking, a consequent thickness of wood with such imposition, thickness elsewhere unknown on the archaeological specimens.

On the other hand, a stone blade compressed transversely in an adapter (sheath) of wood, or tine of stag suitable to deaden the shocks, itself introduced into a massive handle (indirect hafting), can give to the observer a vague line which could be similar to the cruciform since this adapter is able to largely exceed the handle; but one sees how much this part, in which the major constraints express on the tool, must be reinforced by a strong wood core, which is never restored by the engraving.

Only a deep abstraction on the weapon-tool would present the possibility of such a drawing where handle and blade would be projected in plan by two cross features. But once again: why would the adze with indirect hafting be extremely simplified whereas the true axe, on the same stone support, not be?

In addition, the West European archaeology does not know blades of adze planned for a direct hafting where, similar to certain specimens of axes, a nonpolished ring would be reserved, letting its staking appear for a better adherence in the mortise of the monoxyle barrel.

We do not know either instrument, axes or adzes, which would produce such a symmetry shared around the handle, a symmetry of instrument which would not be a guarantee of balances, because too much weight of the stone blade would carry the centre of gravity towards the back.

An exceptional case could however be superimposed partly on the drawing of Mané Lud. The “axe-sceptres” of tombs 4 and 43 in Varna (Bulgaria) would be appropriate, indeed, as a model of comparison, with their narrow and lengthened polished blade, and the parallel edges (1989 catalogue, pp. 119, 147); the eccentric perforation however is far to give a similar drawing to the “latin” cruciform if it was necessary to represent the weapon. In addition, these instruments – nonfunctional, should it be added, including the distal excess of the right handle making the knock entirely unsuited – are unknown in the corpus of tens of thousands of polished objects of Western France.

The cruciform signs of Mané Lud are not representations of axes or adzes, and this questioning of the established pattern must be applied to the entire Armorican corpus. Consequently, any question on their subject must be differently asked.

First, it should be admitted that the term “cruciform” is well adapted to the evocation of the figure. *However, what are the specificities of the form of a cross?*

The cross, in the immediate perception and the nominalism of this beginning of the XXIst century, returns to the Christian religion, and particularly, for the form of Mané Lud, to the cross known as “Latin” in the Rome church. This cross was the support of the crucifixion of Jesus; it takes the shape of the human body, legs joined, the arms outspread; it is the projection of a guiding line.

The sign of Mané Lud is in the shape of a cross, but the cross is “adapted” to the human body, an object which symbolizes the Passion, which finally identifies a religion and either exclusively the memory of a dead hero.

This cross however requires a specific development as it is a *galvaudé* sign; a development made essential by the fact of its extraordinary diffusion on the planet, accompanying Christianity and its evangelist process still long-lived on all the continents. The success of this planetary symbolic system is such that every “cruciform” badly fixed in the archaeological field is often assigned to a recent date by association of thought, even for the engraved Armorican corpus. We will however mention some contexts which should moderate this unilateral relation.

CRUCIFORM SIGN AND TOPIC IN PROTOHISTORIC EUROPE AND, LATER, ELSEWHERE

Without deviation from of our usual universe of reference, and to begin with a stable and little disputed field – pottery -, one will note that the exactly cruciform figure is present:

- In the decorative registers of Haut-Rhin Linearbandkeramik and recent LBK of the Paris basin (fig. 5.1) (Passy, Les Graviers 6 – Carré 1986; Balloy, Les Réauidins – Mordant 1991, etc.),
- A probable echo of a similar pattern inventoried in Holland (Sittard – Modderman 1985) as well as in Germany where the ceramic series of Plaidt is characterized by several signs in cross, specially the “Latin” form (Berhens 1973),
- while the too singular cruciform pattern with ramified ends could be compared with the similar drawing observed in Catalan Cardial (Cova Sarsa – Martí Oliver 1990) where, this time, without doubt, it is Man that

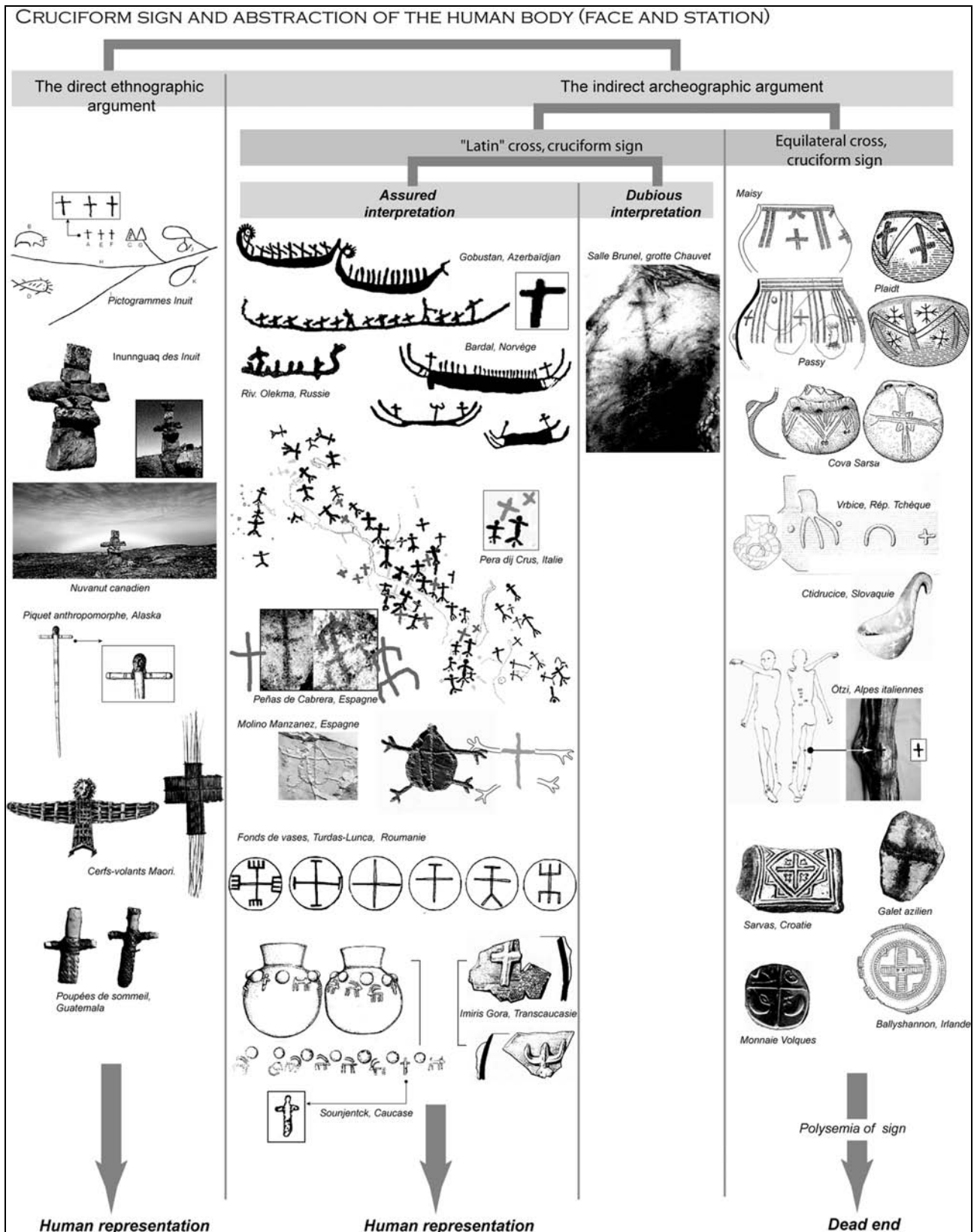


Fig. 5.1. Research about a schematic representation of the human body: cruciform signs (references in the text)

one identifies. It is not however the Latin cross present in the Mané Lud, but the Greek cross, or “reamed” according to the terminology of medieval heraldic, with

symmetrical, equilateral branches; a short comparison with engravings of Renegade Canyon in the USA however reinforces the heuristic value of the analogy

for the regional ethnographic register and confirms the nature of the being represented (Grant 1983).

- In fact, in this same formal register, the true and significant sum of the neolithic occurrences is established in the balkano-carpathian zone where a tradition of marking the bottom of the containers, very well identified in the production of the Boian-Giulesti culture of the Braila plain, is also attached to the Turdas, Vinca B, Gradescica, Karanovo IV-V and Precucuteni III cultures; in other words, a dating in the first half of Vth millenium for the greatest complexity of the combinations specific to the stages Vinca and Turdas (Sirbu, Pandrea 2003). Surprisingly, and in spite of a manifest identity with the traditional anthropomorphic sign that the catalogue of cruciform reveals on a site like Turdas-Lunca in Romania, no frank interpretation in this direction was established until now.
- Let us complete this rapid inquiry into central and eastern Europe by indicating this same incised pattern, painted or modelled, within the decorative set of themes of the ceramic containers of the Herpaly (Raczky 1987), Cucuteni (Mantu 1998), Baalberg (Zápótocky 1991) and Vucedol (Sandars 1985) cultures along the two millenia length of history, again without clear interpretation within literature (see Haarmann 2005 for a summary table).
- Even weaker as a conclusive image, the quadripartition of the structure of the decoration on the bowls and the circulars chassean *coupes-à-socle* can nevertheless be versed to the dossier, for memory.
- Anyhow, more generally, the cruciform topic registered on pottery, without being abundant, is reproduced throughout Europe, from Portugal to Denmark, and in particular on the circular lids of TRB culture (Ebbesen 1975).
- As for the Near-Eastern Neolithic, it gives many examples of this quadripartition of the containers by the decoration, and from Samara in Iraq to Sesklo in Greece, it will be quite easy to establish distribution maps for such or such internal decorative composition on plate or bowl, “proving” its broad diffusion through Anatolia (Settgast 1986).

Of course, when one tries to carry a “decoration” on the external face of the flat bottom of certain containers, and thus hide it, when one tries to organize a “filling” of these restricted surfaces, with regularity the partition of the bottom will be tributary, among different combinations, of a cross orientation of the continuous or discontinuous layouts, which, by these geometrical arrangements generally considered as universal in their invention, do not help very much to achieve our goal, except, as we have said, for certain Neolithic sites of the Carpathian area.

- More attractive in spite of its equal distance of our zone of comprehension, the “decorative” set of themes on the ceramic groups of Shulaveri and Arukhlo in Trans-

caucasia (middle of the VIth millenium), comprising anthropomorphic plastic decorations – which clear correspondences were noted by several authors with Eastern Anatolia (Masson *et al.* 1982, cf site of Imiris Gova, horizon IV, fig. 39; Chataignier 1995) – allows this time to collect excellent testimonies of the alternative passage from human form with the isolated and raised arms, immediately recognized, to the representation carried out by the means of the lone cruciform pattern.

- The north-Caucasian culture of Maïkop (starting from second half of IVth millenium) prolongs elsewhere these anthropomorphic representations, also treated in relief on the “Latin” cruciform mode (fig. 5.1); human representations are surrounded by horned animals (ovine, mountain wild goat type) and perhaps dogs (Korenebsky 2001). In these two contexts, the indirect archeographic argument is admissible and valid.
- Unexpected but revealing the vast distribution of the cruciform pattern, that the decorative register of the contemporary productions of West-European pottery would not document as well, Ötzi, the man re-appeared from the alpine ices after more than 5000 years hiding, also presented small crossed segments, tattooed on the skin (bored and coloured in the wound), and curiously at the articulation points of its members: a cross at the left ankle, at the same place as a severe osteoarthritis, another in the interior of the right knee in possible connection with another affection that he suffered (Dorfer *et al.* 1998; Moser *et al.* 1999), the principal branch of the two figures being directed according to the longitudinal axis of the body (fig. 5.1).

While passing now to the group of the cruciform representations engraved on walls, outcrops or slabs of tombs in Western Europe, the field of comparison appears not only more widened, but also most legitimate; if the latin form is what we seek, unfortunately it is not the best dated.

- As an original ground of comparisons with Brittany, Galicia includes many outcrops where the cruciform, “Latin” or not, seems posterior to the “Atlantic style”, their chronology extending from early Bronze Age to the early Iron Age (Santos-Estévez, Seoane-Veiga 2005, p. 42).
- More to the South, too rare signs inventoried in Portugal, engraved in a megalithic tomb dated from the IVth millenium in Vilaboa (Shee-Twohig 1981), could not either ensure a significant correspondence in the last few years;
- they are now better competed in this part of the Iberian peninsula by several sites, much less ambiguous, recently discovered on the course of the Guadiana river separating the two countries (Molino Manzaneez, Spain, fig. 5.1 – Cerrato Leyton, Novilo Gonzalez 2000; Collado Giraldo, 2004), known as contemporaries of the preceding Portuguese monument for some of their anthropomorphic figures.

- At the other end of the peninsula, the question of the dating is even more difficult to treat in the case of many “anthropomorphics” of the Catalan area where outcrops, slabs of megaliths and walls of shelters or caves exchange and repeat the pattern, often confused with the true Christian cross, but sometimes detached without ambiguity of this last religious symbol (Petra Scripta de Fontcoberta, Peyra Escrita, Cauna de Perellos, etc.; Abelanet 1990). Whatever the dating, which can indeed appear late enough for certain engravings (a historical date is sometimes radically generalized inside the Catalan corpus – Gallant 2005), the essential fact having to retain the attention is this formal regional adjacency between the “realistic” anthropomorphic and the cruciform sign, which allows us to pass from one to another without any difficulty.
- The same passage of the human form, recognizable by its constituting graphic units (head, hands, members, sex, etc), to the radical cross-shaped face, is of course certified in the Alpine valleys of northern Italy where the examples of engravings on outcrops and erratic slabs are not rare, illustrating the juxtaposition of the two formulas on the same support, or in the same site (fig. 5.1), as in Pera dij Crus (Valchiusella), San Giono (Valle Susa) – (Seglie *et al.* 1991).
- The man with the arms extended horizontally (end of IVth, beginnings of IIIrd millenium) can elsewhere attract and fix the posterior representations, and the Christian medieval cross can be assimilated to the anthropomorphic as in Foppe di Nadro (Sansoni, Mareta 2002).
- Such a process of simplification and abstraction is in any case extremely well illustrated through the Cypriot pendeloques figurines belonging to the Erimi culture (IVth millenium), where the small carved figures (fig. 5.2), female or male, joined legs and arms stretched on the sides, hands and faces drawn, pass imperceptibly towards the rough shape “in cross” (without a necessity to conceive an evolutionary process with chronological value) where any sexual anatomical character disappeared (Karageorghis 1976; Crewe *et al.* 2002).
- More conclusive for our subject and our project, are the individuals embarked on the ancient ships engraved on the edges of the Caspian Sea by hunters-gatherers of Gobustan in Azerbaïdjan (Djafarzade 1973; Anati *et al.* 2001).
- Furthermore, all along the large Siberian rivers and their affluents (cf the comparative table of the assembled boats established by Kotchmar 1995, p. 45), these silhouettes, resolutely anthropomorphic or reduced to simple vertical figures – on a fashion which we could easily recognize in various areas of the world, or producing these drawings in cross with various modules, which we know this time much rarer but so expressive to signify “Man” (fig. 5.1).
- Of course, the representations of boats of the Scandinavian Bronze Age join together different

occurrences which meaning – Man – is so convincing (Fet 1941), and beside the usual simple vertical bars which announce the embarked people, anthropomorphic armed and helmeted, others jumping (“acrobats”), or still raising the arms to the sky (“adorant”) are placed beside the figurations in the form of a cross (fig. 5.1, 5.2).

THE CHRISTIAN SIGN

This first stage reached and these archaeological data gathered in a accumulative way to constitute a first corpus of comparison, let us take retreat again and see how a short historiography of the sign can inform us about this decision to reject or adapt the anthropomorphic interpretation by implicit or explicit reference to the Christian symbol, an extremely old alternative which still affects today the interpretation of the prehistoric engravings studied in the western part of France.

The prehistorian G. De Mortillet was the first to attempt to restore the evolution of the cross before Christianity (1866). However, today, his summary is not sufficient to consolidate our debate. Choosing cross patterns incised on the bottom of Etruscan vases, or a cruciform among many geometrical signs within the tombs of Villanova (Italy), or finally a Gallic coin carrying a cross in a circle, his inventory too restricted in time and only illustrated by equilateral crosses, as for the choices badly posed to found the internal coherence of his article, just make some colour to an opinion but do not allow to form the closed structure and temporarily unattackable of a “demonstration” which would authorize the dispute of the feeling dominating at this time, and always long-lived currently: the late dating of this cross pattern.

On the contrary, many missionaries officiating during the three last centuries tried to explain by christian influences many representations of the cross located among the “Indian” pictograms in North America (Vazeilles 1995).

- For the Sioux, the “greek” crosses represent the Four Winds, misadventures of the Great Spirit;
- For different tribes, the four points of the horizon will be indicated by a latin cross, representing a dragonfly, one of the messengers of the Thunder-Bird;
- For Ojibwas, a reversed Latin cross represents the actions of the civilizing hero Manabozo, while series of small crosses will indicate the dwellings ojibwas, wigwams,
- whereas for Shoshoneans they would represent stars;
- Finally, tribal sign for Cheyennes, these drawn crosses mean the number of prisoners, warlike exploits, etc... in the Sioux winter-coups.

It is crucial to highlight that only the context (oral, social, technical, etc.) can possibly differentiate these crosses.

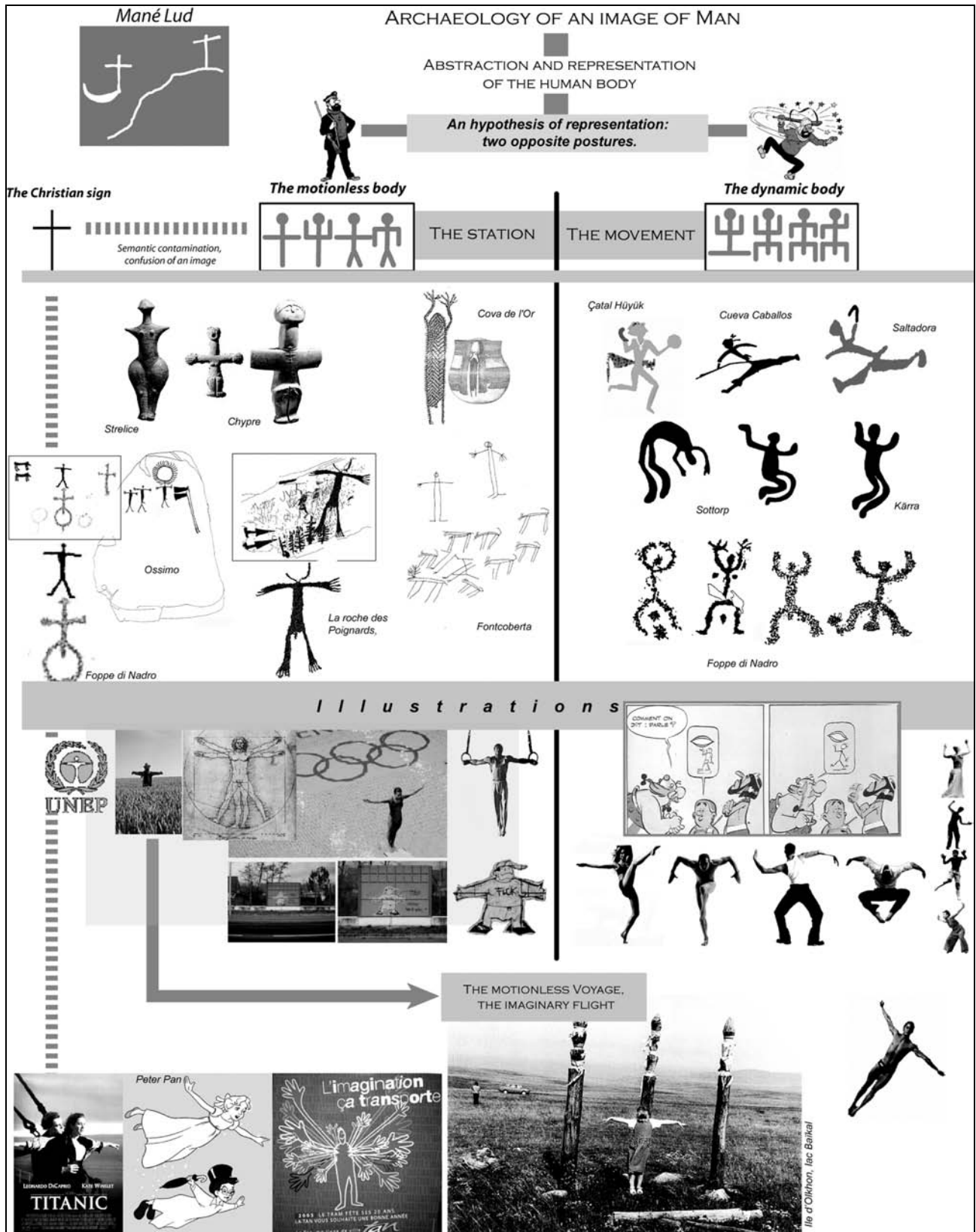


Fig. 5.2. Archaeology of an image of Man according to a principle of fundamental opposition (references in Cassen 2007)

However, in many cases, a graphic analysis alone makes possible their differentiation: an Inuit cross for saying

“the bird” is nothing close to anthropomorphic to an attentive observer of the scene, the graphic composition

or the shape of the sign. Furthermore, the polysemia of the sign (argument usually put forward to cut short any synthetic analysis on the subject) lasts only the time to circumvent the dark screen sometimes involuntarily built by our colleague ethnologists, when they move away from these radical questions of figuration, hiding us by omission the simplicity of the images distinguished by these populations.

An illustration drawn from the societies of Nunavut (Northern Canada) will be able to serve as direct ethnographic argument elsewhere (fig. 5.1). In these territories with hostile climate, the Inuit and their ascending people have built, during three or four millenia, a beautiful variety of structures in slab stones like many messages addressed to the traveller. These *inuksuit* indicate a point, direct the caribous towards a place of hunting, underline a contest between close groups, post a spiritual or supernatural element. An *inuksuk* (in the singular) is a “man by procuracy”, in all the meanings of the word, bringing comfort to the solitary traveller, vital information in the event of confusion, a hiding place for the meat, where everybody can rest... and a place of spiritual meditation to worship. The grounds and the stones available influence construction, facilitating it or complicating it. The *inuksuk* generally consists of stone punts and thin laid out the ones over the others, but it can also be arranged with only one standing up or to be formed by a small round stone monticule. It frequently happens that these “sculptures” are not exclusively made of stones and that bones of cetacea or floated wood fragments are found mixed with the final composition. The highest exceed 2 m. And among these distinguished structures, the *innunnguaq*, which has a form resembling a human, but that “does not act in the place of Man” (Hallendy 2001), indicates the presence of an inuit camp. Here the desired form is that of a man, a cross-shaped human being (fig. 5.1).

But let us return to the representations of Mané Lud and the open discussion in Europe by G. de Mortillet: if this cruciform pattern poses a local but also total archaeological problem, as an object-sign with a badly solved statute, in a confused original situation, and by the fact that it remains today (even on internet media) the center of ideological conflicts within Western Christendom after being already disputed during the birth of Christianity, requirement is asked to summarize some involved forces:

- The “historical” cross is at the same time the *crucifié* himself and his image, his “relic” and his “representation”, the divine body and its image (Marin 1993, p. 226). To this “sign” is due a double worship, as for Christ himself and as with his perfect image. This fusion, augmentative of a power, leads at once to a confusion:
- For crosses in the medieval churches (in the plan of latin cross) are painted for three reasons according to J. de Voragine (1255): 1-for fear of the demons; 2-As

marks of triumph, because the crosses are the standards of Jesus Christ. and the metaphor of his triumph; 3-to represent the apostles.

- Beyond this multiplication of meanings, the cross is this first common emblem under which all the Christian occident was grouped when the first crusade was preached; Later, as of the middle of the XIVth century, the French and English combatants recognize themselves thanks to crosses of different colors, an example imitated soon by other nations.
- After so many past centuries and while the time of the societies is today accelerated as never it was in the past, the cross remains in its use or its refutation a perpetual object of identity, of litigation, claim, dispute or confiscation of the symbol. And the most astonishing illustration resides in the polemic opposing currently the Catholic Church to the powerful *Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania*, in other words Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Without entering in the detail of this last polemic, let us retain the essential: the use of the torment of the *crux* does not appear in Rome before the Punic Wars (IIIrd and IInd centuries before our era), while Tertullian (IInd century A.D.) even links it with the history of Regulus (Ernout, Meillet 1967). In Latin, the word *crux* indicated a gibet or an bracket. It could be a simple pile, even the tiller of a tank to which one attached the victim with the hands tied up behind the wood. It was the *crux simplex*. At the end of the Ist century, the crucifixion is adopted as the official punishment for the non-Romans, punishment limited to certain transgressions. At the beginning, it was not a method of execution, but only of punishment. Moreover, only the slaves convinced of certain crimes were punished by crucifixion. During this first period, a beam of wood, known like the *furca* or the *patibulum*, was placed on the neck of the slave and tied to his arms (Tzaferis 1985). However, with regard to the crucifixion of Jesus, the profane sources do not make it possible to make a decision about the precise form of the cross, the *crux immissa*(†) or the *crux commissa* (T). Finally, the historians of Antiquity do not specify why the Romans invented or adopted this wooden shape.

According to this history, the Latin cross is well named, and if it remains extremely discrete in the paleochristian contexts, its worship is very quickly related to the imperial family (Le Goff 1985; Lucena Martin 1980); its western “origin” is probable, in opposition to the Greek cross which, indeed, limited to the orthodox world after the Schism of the Churches, is however of a more widened historical significance and of an older date in the Caucasus (Chrachidzé 1994, p. 221) or in the Middle East, and actually in a planetary distribution when one reduces it to the cruciform pattern of the incised, tattooed, painted, woven decorations, etc, prolific means by which it becomes easy matter to compare some images in order to argue in the desired direction.

In short, the Christian tradition prodigiously enriches cross symbolism, by condensing in this image the history of Salvation and Passion. If the cross symbolizes the crucified, the Christ, the savior, the verb, the second member of the Trinity, it is however more than a figure of Jesus-Christ, it is identified with his human history and even with his person (Chevallier, Gheerbrant 1969). Catholic hierarchy had no cease to celebrate festivals of the Cross, inventing the Invention of the Cross, repeating the Exaltation of the Cross, and, at the origin, each resemblance, even fortuitous, is good to take to impose the preeminence of the sign: thus Justin in his Apology (1, 55) enumerates all that carries the image of the cross: the enumeration of the *cruces dissimulatae* comprises the plough, the anchor, the three-pronged fork, the mast of the ship with antenna, swastika, etc, in a list which seems not so far away from the reasoning by analogy when it fails in our discipline by over-estimate an isolated form.

One sees by such accumulations how much it became difficult to disentangle an already complicated hank at its origin, a sign on which one of the most famous poets, Dante, could remain without voice (Divine Comedy, 1491: “On this cross Christ shined as much as I cannot find image to represent it...”). A sign which however registers in a “hermeneutics” of the *Archaeology of the images*.

THE CROSS-MAN

The image of the cross thus merges with the silhouette of the human. This homothetic relation seems so natural, going so easily between the subject and his solid shadow, that one does not seek the reason for the transfer, its variations compared to the model, and finally the scarcity of the “Latin” sign in the anthropomorphic representations all over the world. Our test is not the resolution of the enigma, but a text about archaeology of an image that will make it possible to pose the bases of a more general reflection exceeding the proper neolithic sign:

- First, developing the spaces of the beginning;
- Then, directing this space compared to my body, this body in connection with the world;
- Finally, laying out this body following the station or its movement, a fundamental opposition that the dynamics of the carvings will have to translate and which will determine our proposals to come for the plausible meaning of these associations of signals.

We must agree on two preconditions:

- On one hand, Space is not the place (real or logical) in which things are laid Out, but the means by which the position of the things becomes possible;
- On the other hand, the experiment of the space is interlaced with all the other modes of experiments and

all the other psychic data, and we cannot forget them (Merleau-Ponty 1945).

In this space recognized as such, there is another subject below me for which a world exists before I would be there and who marked my place there. This captive or natural spirit is my body; not the temporary body which is the instrument of my personal choices and fixes on such or such world, but the system of anonymous “functions” which wrap any particular fixing in a general project. The spaces, the perception, mark in the heart of the subject the fact of its birth, the perpetual contribution of its corporeity, “a communication with the world older than the thought” (Merleau-Ponty 1945, p. 294).

And the body of the Man, and its members, constitute the frame of reference on which all the other space differences are transposed indirectly... It is often, furthermore, the form of this projection which must contain the answer to the mythical question of the origin and which dominates consequently mythical cosmography and cosmology in their totality (Cassirer 1924, p. 117).

Simply take a place, here in Lisboa: your face is motionless face to the ocean, your arms are open to embrace the vastness, the shoreline runs parallel to the alignment joining a hand to the other, and behind you are the street and the hotel. Turning to follow the curve of the sun, on the prolongation of your left arm this sun raises above the horizon, and at the end of your right hand it will disappear under the sea; In front to you would be the heat light of the day, whilst your back would be cooled by the shade, exposed to the coldness of a winter wind. Finally your body and the weightlessness indicate a developed top, at your head and much higher than you; and a bottom devalued by the fall where the feet touch the ground and, even worse, lower than you.

Here are simple directions ordered by our deployed body, directions directed at once, the orient, which are not those used by the process of location.

And just as, a place of the social presence cut out spatially in a social unit, the dwelling spatializes the society at the same time as it socializes space, the body spatializes the world and directs it.

Consequently it imports to us, in the immediate, to fix the representation of the human upright.

The simplest anatomical elements which graphically define a body seen from the front, a human silhouette, are:

- Detached rachis and members (arms, legs), the cephalic rachis being released;
- The head, the hands, the genital organs, will possibly specify the drawing if a model requires it;
- The feet and hair can eventually complete it, but the work is achieved, and clothing or objects will not add anything more to the economy of this layout.

Let us leave the fabulous beings and their taxonomy, which join paradoxical terms, or substitute elements belonging to different creatures, or exaggerate an anatomical detail; They are anyway perceived by this same dynamic of presentation which prevails with the recognition of an anthropomorphic.

This stage reached, a remarkable alternative, because universal, it divides all the known representations:

- The first term determines a standing body (less often sitted) with the legs confused, strictly joined or isolated but in this last case without side inflection of the lower limbs;
- The second term, more common, gathers all the figurations with the legs wide apart, bent at the level of their articulatory points (basin, knee, ankle).

This distinction, posed on the basis of the locomotor member, must be repeated in reality on the scale of the arms which follow a homologous partition according to their position; one can thus find them:

- Either stretched on the sides horizontally, or inclined upwards or even downwards;
- Folded at the articulations (shoulder, elbow, wrist), hands oriented upwards or downwards, symmetrically laid out, or more rarely asymmetrical (one arm broken upwards, the other downwards) in the representations of the current “traditional” societies or from even the most ancient past.

After this step, we must agree on an additional – yet rather banal – relation: it concerns all the members animating the vertical body.

And two joined feet do not represent Movement but its opposite: the station, the station as a halt in the vital movement which carries Man; an opposition between acquisitory dispersion in an area and the place of meditation in the dwelling. Because station in its meaning as “immobility” cannot be considered without the concept of movement by which it is defined negatively (Cf. also Boujot *et al.* 1995; Vaquero Lastres 1999).

- a) The stop, the static position, the rest allow concentration, reflection and meditation – meditation *vis-a-vis* the passing of Time.
 - The station authorizes the process of visual orientation;
 - The station cancels without effort the weightlessness while resisting to it by the motionless and centered vertical body.
- b) Movement puts a term to daydream and the perception of the Other’s movement.
 - It ignores from now on the weightlessness by countering the unceasingly repeated fall of the Man going and running and dancing;
 - The body is in swing, decentred, the thought decentralized, distracted by the movement; and the

dancing human is disorientated by the means of his own will.

An opposition that the historian finds under different aspects as the gesticulating man becomes so suspect to the clerks of the Middle Ages, evoking the actor of Pagan theatre, also possessed by the demon which marks his movements in Space – the place of meeting between the biological and the social man (Le Goff 1985, p. 126).

Of course, all this has no sense if one does not attribute to the body, even perceived in a static state, an emblematic value.

Between our emotions, our desires and our physical attitudes, there is not only one contingent connection or even a relation of analogy, specifies M. Merleau-Ponty: if the disappointment of not being understood enough through this text about the archaeology of images makes me fall from the top, it is not only because this disappointment is accompanied by gestures of prostration under the terms of the laws of the “nervous” mechanics, or because I discover between the object of my desire and my desire itself the same relationship than that existing between an object placed high up and my gesture towards it; the ascendent movement as a direction in physical space and the movement of the desire towards its goal are each symbolic of the other, because they express both the same essential structure of Man a a being located in connection with an environment, a structure which gives a sense to the directions of the top and the bottom in the physical world.

The orientation of Man requires, in short, a triple agreement:

- Orientation of the animal in relation with itself;
- Spacial orientation in relation to the terrestrial cardinal points;
- Temporal orientation in relation to the celestial cardinal points.

The crossing of these two last major axes carries out the cross of total orientation (Leroi-Gourhan 1964, p. 162; Radkowski 2002, p. 151).

Here is a frangible joint of time and space. So well understood that a cruciform pattern like the ringed cross represented, for the Irishmen of the Carolingian time, an intimate and perfect synthesis of Christianity and former tradition, narrow correspondence of the old “celtic” designs and christian esoteric data (Chevallier, Gheerbrant 1969).

All things considered:

- The sign in the form of a cross recorded on the steles of Mané Lud is not a tool but the anthropomorphic representation of a static type, a “crucifié” standard of the type of the Christ-Man protecting with his weapon

or his wing the bay of Saint-Nazaire or Rio de Janeiro; a posture analogous to the plunger fixed above the water, or the sportsman with his feet joined and legs stiff while the hands on the metal rings do not modify the motionless and only apparently rested attitude, the pretence of station at the paroxysm of the contraction of the muscles of the movement, the paradox of a static movement.

- A static type that the first European writings depict during the heroic beginnings. Ilos, son of Trôs, founded a city which he called Ilios (Troy), requesting in his prayers to Zeus that a sign appeared to him: it came in the form of the “small Pallas”, fallen from the sky, posed in front of its tent. It was a figure with joined legs and the *feet not separated*, with her arms outspread for whom Ilios built a temple and constituted a worship. This is the legend of “Palladion” (Dumézil 1985, p. 39).
- Here is the divine posture, like the portrait of the movie actor seized by the famous Harcourt studio, compared by R. Barthes (1957, p. 24) to a god because he never does anything, because he is seized *at rest*. Because to walk is perhaps – mythologically – the most commonplace gesture, it is therefore the most human. Any dream, any ideal image, any social promotion, remove first the legs, or amalgamate them, melt them under the portrait, on a horse or in a car.
- A universal posture to represent the being distinguished throughout Eurasia is the Siberian chaman, who ensures this mediation with *Surnature* (Hamayon 1990). He is the only one able to provide the magic utensils like the drum that he “overlaps”, a drum covered with pictograms arranged to ensure the division of the world, and from which we benefitted in the interpretation of the neolithic Castellar ceramic decoration in Brittany (Cassen 2000d). Drums preserved in the regional museums (cf the old collection of the town of Bysk, Russia), that are represented identically, with meticulousness, among preserved rock engravings and paintings, and which presence makes possible to separate within the composition of a stone stele like Karakol in Altai (Kubarev 2002), on one hand the mobile men with bent members, and on the other hand the only man to have joined legs and arms outspread, the only carrier of the drum.

Scenes also registered on the walls of these mountains (Gorniy Altai) during the last centuries, which ethnographic relations inform us without ambiguity of the nature of the character represented, static and provided with the drum, sometimes with its beater. A drum itself engraved, restoring in miniature and like in abyss, on its circular surface, the “medicine-man” arms in cross (Kadikov 2005, p. 11), winged arms for a taking flight. Many testimonies indeed present the chamanic “flight” as connected with the flight of a bird. This is elsewhere translated by several costumes with the sleeves trimmed with penne of an eagle, a gliding flight materialized by the posture of the body: the arms wide apart during such or such phase of the session (Beffa, Delaby 1999). A

posture translated by the Maori kites in New Zealand (fig. 5.1), man-birds sometimes represented only by a cross launched towards the sky at the first apparition of the Pleiads announcing the end of the year (Best 1925, Maysmor 2001).

- An engraving, in short, that the work listed since the 1870’s in western France does not allow to define and interpret, sometimes asserting that the shape in cross ensures the Gallic age of the dolmens (Galles 1873), while the comparisons established from this time between Morbihan and a site as emblematic as Méniscoul in Piriac-sur-Mer (Loire-Atlantique) push the supporters of the prehistoric sign to integrate it in an active diffusion current from Spain to Ireland, but on the faith of very contestable registers (Breuil 1934). The age of this last slab stone charged with cruciforms, thus balances between History and Prehistory (G. Bellancourt, in 1977, argues that they could not have been carried out with a metal instrument), so much that the most recent technical analyses still do not manage to decide on the antiquity of the signs, because of a possible erosive phenomena specific of the littoral zone, that make the carvings undifferentiated (Mens 2003). And the same stone does not finish to stimulate the observer, still referring today to Ireland when a similar specimen in Clonfinlough is compared to it (Shee Twohig 2002), even if the meticulous description of the facts and the context prevents to make a decision about the period of execution. Shee Twohig however supports a historical age of the crosses engraved, given that a monastery is built at 3 km from there...

A chronic indecision, finally, with which Mané Lud cannot be satisfied, because the list of arguments ensures in this case the contemporaneity of all the components:

- By the protection assured since 6000 years within the architecture of the chamber and the passage, internal structures are relatively intact in its original cairn insulator. This eliminates the scrambled process of “post-megalithic” meteorisation;
- By the homogeneity of the technical treatment of various engravings – all realized by lithic percussion – that nothing can distinguish, by photography, stamping or touch, except for differential deteriorations due to the “pre-megalithic” meteorisation affecting certain parts of the stone (Cassen *et al.* 2005);
- By the general obliteration of engravings on the stele n° 21 (almost invisible in spite of an adequate lighting), which locally betrays an erosive phenomenon former to the recycling of the stele functioning in a second use as an orthostate within the tomb, a shading which indifferently applies to all the carvings, including the crosses;
- Finally by the perfect integration of the sign in the recognized compositions (for example: the sign drawn up at the extremity of a boat) which eliminates the contradictory assumption of a parasitic addition,

furthermore without superpositions of carvings on the slabs of the site.

CONCLUSION

The cruciform of Mané Lud, as all Armorican neolithic steles is the representation of a “character” in a static position, legs amalgamated and arms drawn aside in the posture of the total Man, certainly, but finally in the lesser “narrative” attitude; perhaps the most exceptional.

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