

## The Therianthropic Carving of Earth Mother at Usgalimal – 27

The carvings at Usgalimal continue to amaze and challenge scholars and admirers as to their real significance, and the possible beliefs, documented therein by the prehistoric communities who inhabited the area.



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Fig. 1 Therianthropic Earth Mother

The therianthropic<sup>1</sup> image (fig.1), has been viewed as Earth Mother, for its humanoid figure and the prominent vulva. However, the top of the torso is not human.

Different photographic images indicate that it could either be a composite of an animal head (where there should normally be a neck) and several snakes or a large bird above it.

In the image, it appears to be topped by a large bird – an eagle or a vulture, with its wings overlapping the stretched arms of the humanoid carving.

On closer inspection (fig.2), the large feathery wing of the bird overlaps the left hand of the human-like figure. The feathers are not as distinct over the right hand. The neck of the bird rises from behind the head of a beast.



Fig.2 Enlarged view of the upper torso of the carving

Earth Mother, also called Gaia or Mother Nature, was believed to be a personification of motherhood for the life-giving Earth – as creator of all life. An animistic concept, developed during the Agricultural Revolution, when plants and animals were being domesticated, and a belief that all animals, plants and humans are interconnected. Australian aborigines also believed in the interconnectedness and unity of spiritual, human and natural worlds. Totemism<sup>2</sup>, common in primitive societies and still practiced in certain regions of the world; the clans had kinship or a mystical relationship with a spirit-being, such as an animal or plant.

In ancient Egyptian religion, *Ra*, one of the deity in the pantheon of gods, has the head of a falcon and *Sebek*, that of a crocodile. There are many such examples in Greek, Roman and Hindu Mythologies.

With the destruction of forests (the lungs of the earth); global warming, due to heat-trapping and polluting gases, resulting in the rise of sea level; drought and wildfires in many parts of the world, this balance and interconnectedness with nature is being threatened.

1. Therianthropy refers to human - animal hybrids. See also, Wikipedia for more on the subject.
2. Abolarin, I. O., *Totemism And Christian Religious Practices In Nigeria*, SSRG International Journal of Humanities and Social Science (SSRG-IJHSS) – Vol. 6 Issue 4 – July/Aug 2019,