


# An Archetypal Symbol of Water in the Amazon

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
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## Abstract

Archetypal symbols traced on the thousand-year-old art of the moundbuilders of the Marajoara people support the assumption that some sort of ritual honoring of a great goddess took place at the mouth of the Amazon River prior to European colonization. An intriguing figurine, 30 centimeters high, seems to have played a central role in these rituals. The fish-like body of the goddess, covered in red, black, and white spirals, suggests the regenerating process of the waters. A double portal around the vulva is a gateway to undiscovered regions, perhaps associated to life after death, as corroborated by other symbols. Breast-shaped vases found at the same archeological site are covered in images of shoots, leaves, and scrolls in mandala-like symbols. These vases suggest that the cult of the goddess might have included the drinking of her milk, which was made of hallucinogenic plants. The cult of this “Lady of the Waters” may have helped to lessen the psychological hardships of tropical life in the ebb and flow of the tides and the recurrent season of floods, which brought aquatic animals with it. Frogs, snakes, fish, turtles, scorpions, and water birds represented in the ancient pottery were possibly part of the goddess domain. Today the same archetypal manifestation that influenced the prehistorical adaptation is present in the modern Christian devotion to Our Lady of Nazareth. Exploring the native and the Christian cults can help us understand what is missing in today's psychology and guide us to take right action toward water preservation around the world. The symbolic approach of this indigenous art can

provide rich soil in which to nourish a sustainable connection with water, flora, and fauna.

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