

COSMIC ART INSPIRATION WITH THE OLD ROMANIANS

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Abstract. Situated at the crossroads of political interests and battles, in a zone ravaged by numerous natural disasters, the Romanian settlements held out against time with much difficulty. This is the region ranging between Carpathian mountains, Danube and Black Sea. Only a few remnants of the sanctuary at Sarmizegetusa Regia, the capital of Dacia prior to the Roman Empire, have been preserved, as well as several churches dating from the Middle Ages.

The fortress, a quadrilateral made up of massive stone blocks (*murus dacicus*), was raised on five terraces, over a surface of approximately 30,000 sq meters. Sarmizegetusa also included a sacred zone. From among the most important Dacian circular sanctuaries it is worth mentioning the Circular Calendar. It reflects the profoundness of the Dacians astronomical knowledge, the people from among whom several centuries later emerged the famous monk Dionysius Exiguus, author (in 525 AD) of the calendar used by the whole world today.

The churches have apses oriented to sunrise on the day of each church's patron. The frescos on the exterior walls still preserve the portraits of the Greek philosophers, while those on the inside display the Orthodox calendar distributed on each day of the year. It is worth mentioning that, according to the popular traditions, even modest peasant houses display cosmic motifs, either over the windows or on the wooden doors, all minutely curved. Even the orientation of the houses, as well as that of the tombs, is made taking also into account the sunrise. Cosmic motifs abound everywhere, on the folk costumes, painted Easter eggs, carpets, table cloths, in all folklore, as well as in heraldic.

The present paper tries to systematize the attempts made throughout the years for the identification of the influence of cosmos on the whole Romanian landscape, from the secular to the sacred, from the rich to the poor people.

Key words: cosmogony, cosmic art, geomantic sites, cosmogonic topographies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Romania is located in an area known as the turntable of Europe, at the junction of East and West, at the crossroads of various political interests. Yet this civilization managed to survive both politically and culturally and is regarded therefore as "a mystery and a historical miracle". Crossed by the Carpathian Mountains, bordering on the Danube and the Black Sea, the territory of present Romania, known in antiquity as Dacia or *Geția*, is a place considered as belonging to the geographical area of

the Old European Paleolithic civilisation.

This area is full of amazing archeological proofs from very old times, testifying of an art inspired from the cosmos. The first of such discoveries, dating back from over 80,000 years X, was found in a cave named the Altars Stone X. Here, cavemen placed four bear skulls with the occipital bones facing inwards, in the shape of an imperfect cross. This sign is positioned alongside the N-S direction, although the cave does not have any contact with the outside or with sunlight. This raises questions related to orientation within a closed space.

In the necropolis of Cernica Monastery , dating back about 2000 years before the setting up of Mycenea, 500 skeletons were oriented according to the solstitial angle specific to the local latitude, that is, fan like at approx 67° . On the Romanian territory numerous tumuli, also called kurgans, were discovered. These are tombs of Tracian princes, facing the direction of 125° SE on 22nd December at sunrise, as well as precessional dolmene , alignments of menhire that converge towards the significant Moon positions , circular cromlechurs, as well as templecalendar sanctuaries , similar to the ones at Newgrange (Ireland) and Averbury (England).

The orientation of these monuments, preserved until today, was considered an initiation into the celestial rhythms requiring a long effort of observation and recording. The sacred altar or the apse of the Paleo-Christian temples was intended to place man in a cosmic orientation that would facilitate receiving the divine message. This led to a persistent orientation in the solstitial direction.

The writings of Strabon, Jordanes and Porphyrios attest the astronomical concerns of the priests of our Geto-Dacian ancestors. These Greek authors claim that the Geto-Dacians calculated time according to the Moons passage. In addition, their scientific knowledge also included other areas, such as philosophy and mathematics. There are two main periods when significant astronomical information reached the territory inhabited by the Geto-Dacians. The first is during Zamolxis life (6th century BC), the second during Deceneus (1st century BC).

Zalmoxis was an ancient king and the supreme god of the Get-Dacian pantheon. He preached faith in immortality through initiation. According to Strabon, he learned a number of astronomical notions from Pythagoras as well as from the Egyptians, a claim also supported by Porphyrios. According to Jordanes, the Dacian priest Deceneus trained the Geto-Dacians in almost all fields of phylosophy. Above all, he taught them astronomy, including the movements of the stars, the increasing and decreasing of the Moon, the solar eclipses.

Thus, speaking of Deceneus and the Geto-Dacians in *Getica* (X 69-71), Jordanes said: And when he saw that their minds were obedient to him in all things and that they had natural ability, he taught them almost the whole of philosophy, for he was a skilled master of this subject”.

Thus by teaching them ethics he restrained their barbarous customs; by in-

structuring them in the science of nature, he made them live naturally under laws of their own, which they possess in written form to this day and call *bi-lageineis* (laws). He taught them logic and made them skilled in reasoning beyond all other races; he showed them practical knowledge and so persuaded them to abound in good works. By explaining theoretical knowledge he urged them to contemplate the progress of the twelve constellations of the zodiac and the courses of the planets passing through them, and the whole of astronomy. He told them how the disc of the moon waxes or wanes, and showed them how much the fiery globe of the sun exceeds in size our earthly planet. He explained with which names or designations in the arching heavens the three hundred forty-six stars hurtle from their rising to their setting.

What kind of pleasure was it, I ask you, for these brave men, when for a bit they had leisure from warfare, to be instructed in the teachings of philosophy!

You might have seen one scanning the position of the heavens and another investigating the nature of plants and bushes. Here stood one who studied the waxing and waning of the moon, while still another investigated solar eclipses and became calmer after having learned the explanation of how those bodies which rush to go toward the east are seized by the rotation of the heavens and brought back to the west.

These and various other matters Decaeneus taught the "Goths in his wisdom and gained marvelous repute among them, so that he ruled not only the common men but their kings.

2. THE GETO-DACIAN SETTLEMENTS AS AN EVIDENCE OF ASTRONOMICAL KNOWLEDGE

The Geto-Dacian settlements, as well as the ancient megalithic art are considered geomantic sites and cosmogonic topographies. The Dacians knew the ratio between the diameters of the Sun and of the Earth. They also had detailed knowledge about the stars motions on the celestial vault, the motions of the planets in the solar system, the orbit of the Moon around the Earth, as well as about how the Moon affects our planet. It is worth mentioning that archeology discovered only part of the temples, of the civil and religious architecture, which developed in harmony with the environment, based on the knowledge of astronomy, mathematics and habitat medicine. As an evidence, we can mention the round or rectangular sanctuaries discovered in Romania, in the Orastie Mountains, at Grădiştea de Munte, Sarmizegetusa, Costeşti, Blidaru, Piatra Roşie, Feţele Albe, Tilişca, Pecica, Barboşi, Bâta Doamnei. These discoveries, together with many other material finds, demonstrate the cultural unity of the Geto-Dacian world .

According to Mircea Eliade, given that the symbol, myth and image are the very substance of spiritual life , the symbolism of these sanctuaries can be seen as

a celestial, urano-solar symbolism. Indeed, the sacred Geto-Dacian hermeneutics is very similar to the Celtic and Druidic ones.

2.1. SARMIZEGETUSA REGIA, THE MOST IMPORTANT FORTRESS WITH EVIDENCE OF ASTRONOMICAL KNOWLEDGE

Sarmizegetusa Regia is a Geto-Dacian settlement in the Orăștie Mountains. It is surrounded by walls built with the *murus dacicus* technique. It reveals an impressive design hydrological, static, constructive, defensive, of communications, astronomical etc based on a complex anthropic system. This required a huge effort in carrying and manipulating and processing blocks of stone that sometimes weighed up to four tones. They were brought from over 50 km distance, over valleys and steep mountain slopes. According to recent investigations, the ensemble consists of a fortress and an extramural sacred site, displayed over three open terraces of the 27 anthropic terraces identified at the bottom of Godeanu Mountain.

Here, four rectangular sanctuaries, two circular sanctuaries and a solar disk have been identified. These are all the result of the archetypal teachings on time philosophy. From both a sacerdotal and lay point of view, they are spelled out in astronomical and calendar terms.

The sacred area at Sarmizegetusa hosted several religious sanctuaries. The great sanctuary served as a temple-calendar (*cale in dar* a way given as gift). It is structured around three concentric circles and a horseshoe-shaped internal apse. The first circle was made of 104 andesite blocks, the second of 180 andesite posts and the third of 82 thick timber posts. Researchers and historians diverge only with regard to the usage of the sanctuaries, whereas from a mathematical point of view, the absolute originality of the Dacian calendar and its surprising preciseness has been fully demonstrated.



Fig. 1 – Images of the group of sanctuaries a photo of Sarmizegetusa Regia.

The sanctuaries horseshoe, similar to an incomplete ellipse resting a small arch at two thirds of its length, consists of 34 posts and two thresholds facing each other.

The small axis of the ellipse (its width) is equal to the diameter of the solar disk. The small round sanctuary, also located at the Sarmizegetusa Regia, represents a solar calendar, consisting of 114 pieces (13 stones and 101 pillars) . The great round circle of the sanctuary faces sunrise at the winter solstice, i.e. is oriented at 123 deg. South-East on 22nd December, along the great axis of the apse.

In the Great Sanctuary, the sacred Pythagoreic triangle appears to form the right angle of the North-South and East-West axes (the radius of the third circle, placed inside, is 9 and the radius of the first circle, placed outside, is 12), as well as the horseshoe ellipse. The horseshoe shape, also called the Sun's horseshoe contains the ratios $8/5$ of the distance between the foci of the ellipse and the long semi-axis, $10/6$ between the long and the small axis of the ellipse, as well as $5/3$ between the long and the small semi-axis, in accordance with the ideal proportions of the human body . Thus, the configuration of Sarmizegetusa's sanctuary relative to the North leads to a configuration similar to archeometres .

The great round sanctuary is an image of the universe. The number and the distribution of the horseshoe posts, as well as the position of the internal and external circles, reflect the cosmic situations of the Sun, of the Moon and of the five planets known at that time (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury), the planets pentagon showing a periodicity of five years . The succession of the posts is interrupted by thresholds placed on the inner circle and on the incomplete ellipse of the horseshoe, in a straight line along the East-West axis, forming a corridor that lets in the solar light. The mix of lights and shadows created an instrument for observation and work. Light penetrated across the horseshoe's basis, on the very morning of the spring and autumn equinoxes. Likewise, the thresholds of the North-South axis, distributed around the same inner circle, form another corridor that lets in the afternoon light, from the South, longitudinally through the middle of the horseshoe to its top, at the time of the equinoxes and solstices.

The graphic images and symbols of the Geto-Dacians represent the grammar and syntax of a metalanguage that conveys a system of archetypal thinking. The symbolism of the megalithic groups (the circle, the half-moon, the concentric serpentine-like circle arches, the zigzags with 13-17 or 29-30 turning points) stimulated research concerning their relation to the calculations and the lunar and solar positions, and fuelled interest in the temporal cycles and the phases of the Moon .

Many comparative analyses between Sarmizegetusa and Stonehenge have been carried out. It emerged that the alignment of the two sanctuaries is similar. The central hearth is crossed by an axis that divides the external circle into two halves, which are equal with regard to the positions of the posts (two times 34 positions). The horseshoe apses display the same number of positions, namely 21. There is an identical group distribution of the positions of the stones supporting the posts, suggesting that they were built by the same Neolithic population and were intended for both



Fig. 2 – Birdeyes view of the group of sanctuaries at Sarmizegetusa (Romania) and Stonehenge (England).

ritual ceremonies and time measurements. Compared to Stonehenge (where the year was calculated at 366 days), Sarmizegetusa (where it was calculated at 365,242197 days) exhibits a higher degree of accuracy.

Thus, there are obvious similarities between Stonehenge and the Great Sanctuary at Sarmizegetusa, such as the precise North-South and East-West orientation. In addition, they are aligned in a way that allows the sunbeams to cross the sanctuary from one end to the other only during one day of the year, on the 22nd of December, when the Sun's declination is maximal and the astronomical winter starts. In all the areas where the Sun and the Moon were worshipped, that day was marked by fire ceremonies meant to prevent the Sun from freezing or disappearing.

2.2. THE TEMPLE OF FATES (TEMPLUL URSITELOR) AT ȘINCA VECHÉ, ONE OF THE OLDEST ROMANIAN FEUDAL MONUMENTS

Templul Ursitelor! The Temple of the Fates at Șinca Veche, situated on the Pleșu Hill, at the outskirts of Brașov, is a cave-monastery sacred space. It is considered to be unique in the world, as it consists of two pre-Christian churches carved in grit stone, with two communicating altars, dating back from 7500-600 BC. Initially, the temple consisted of nine rooms, part of which have fallen down. It was accessed through a series of chambers that led to a space endowed with a conic chimney-tower carved in grit stone, approx. 10 m high. Its shape reminds of the yin-yang spiral and symbolistics.

The altar was divided by a large arcade and was endowed with a niche. In later religious buildings, the nave and the narthex were separated through a passage endowed with a magical eye, a carved slot. Through this slot, on certain astronomical dates, the so-called light without shadow came in, reaching the altar table, now destroyed by the treasure hunters. In one of the niches there is an overlapping of two symbols: the Star of David, with the pre-Christian symbol of the two fishes/vesica

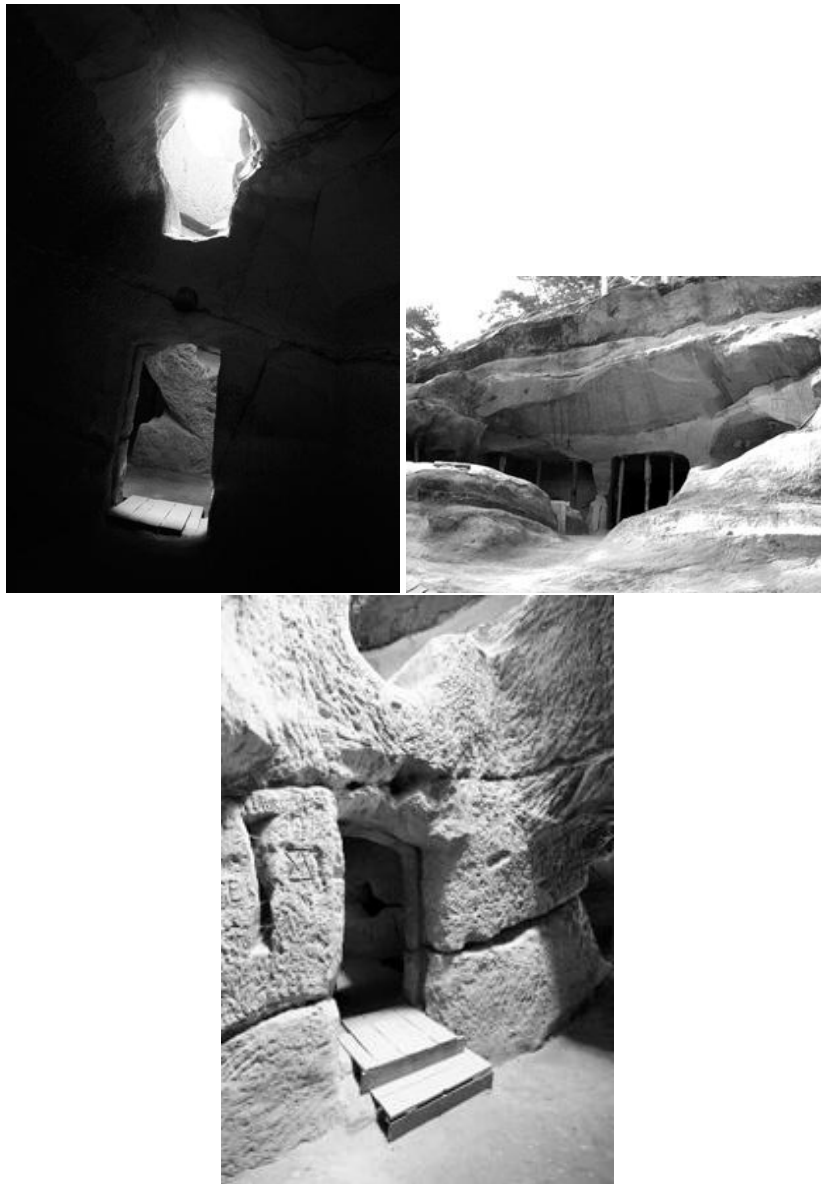


Fig. 3 – The chimney-tower of the temple and an outside view, the Temple of Fates at Șinca Veche (Romania).

pesces/yin-yang, as well as several letters that are part of a tetragramaton. At the same place there is also a niche in the floor, as well as a representation carved in stone of a man with an unusual face. Outside there is a Byzantine cross dug in stone.

The entire architecture of the temple, the two worship chambers together with the two altars were slightly distorted in space by curving, like a sculptural whirlpool dug in stone, that reminds of a spiral and of temporal passage. The tower-like chimney, together with the slot and the small altar have a Sphynx-like shape. The light comes in through its eye, through an opening located above the entrance. The tower starts from the bottom and raises to four corners ending with a pyramid top, towards the opening to the sky. The walls have inclinations similar to those of the pyramids. The spiralled channels found on the walls, as well as the testimonies of the native people, who as late as 1940 still found quartz crystals wedged in these channels, suggest that this temple was an important place of cosmic observation, as well as an altar. Research showed that the grit stone in which the temple was dug is made up of fine-grained sand that contains small quartz crystals of a high purity.

The temple court, also called the monoliths court, initially was a great altar in the amphitheatre, surrounded by stone pieces cut very precisely, aligned along the cardinal directions. A small pyramid was placed at the center, as well as a spring believed to have miraculous properties. Nearby, a Geto-Dacian settlement was discovered, dating back from the first century BCh, as well as a Roman settlement and a tumulus/gorgan, probably of Pelasgic origin.

The legend of the temple at Şinca Veche hints to the dynasty of the Basarabs and to the prince Ugrinus, identified as Negru Vodă, the first ruler from the County of Făgăraş who crossed the Carpathians. In 1281, this dynasty owned the village of Şinca Veche, where there was a place of worship and a sacred place of strong spiritual power.

2.3. COSMIC SYMBOLS ON CERAMICS

There is a hypothesis according to which the Geto-Dacians extended the hexanumeric system also to units of volume measurement. That is supported also by the structure of some geometric patterns found on the Geto-Dacian ceramics. The art of the Paleolithic, Neolithic and Eneolithic cultures developed on the Romanian territory, such as Cucuteni, Boian, Criş, Hamangia, Gumelniţa, Vinca-Turdaş, is represented by the signs and drawings on ceramics and statuettes, which remind of the symbolism of the temporal cycle. On a vase discovered in the Geto-Dacian settlement of Bucharest-Tei we can see the image of the solar circle; the same representation of the Sun can be found on some of the painted ceramics discovered at Sarmizegetusa. Fragments of a miniature solar chariot made of iron and bronze were found at Pietra Roşie (Red Stone).

The division of time into four, six, eight or twelve units, as well as the presence of these serpent-like symbols with 14-17 bends, can be found in Romania on the ceramics of those cultures. The presence of these lunar associations on the Romanian



Fig. 4 – Images of the conic, chimney-like tower and of the magic eye of the Temple of Fates at Șinca Veche, during the restoration Works.

megalithical monuments is not surprising at all. The deity to which they were dedicated was a Moon goddess, the supervisor and mistress of the vital energies that came from the lunar cycles. The hill as a form of environment, the hillock, as well as the tumulus represented also the womb of the Mother Deity. The circular top represents the umbilical cord, the omphalos, that concentrated the power of giving birth. Sometimes the Mother-Goddess was accompanied by the Old God, the wise old man, who represents time, the passage, but who is also a deity of the vegetation.



Fig. 5 – The hearth of the monoliths at the Temple of Fates, Șinca Veche.

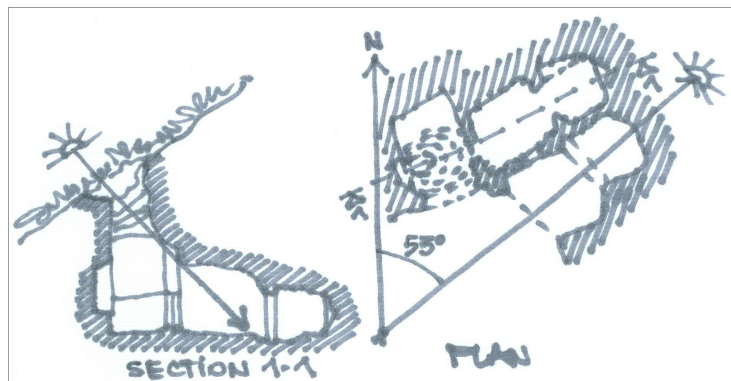


Fig. 6 – Sketches with the image of the cosmic orientation.

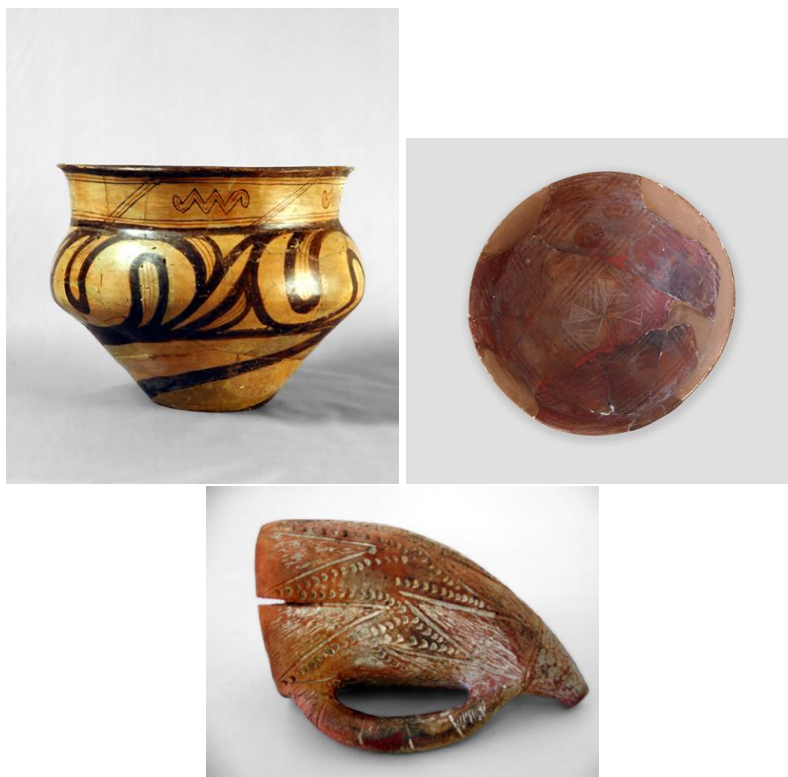


Fig. 7 – Neolithic ceramics serving a ceremonial function, the Boian, Vădastra, Gumelnița, Cucuteni cultures (5000-3500 BC).

3. EVENTS RELATED TO ASTRONOMICAL DATA

The ceremonial burning of fires is connected not only with time recording. Most of the occasions when these spectacular ceremonies took place were in fact centred around the solstices (Sanzienne (St Johns night), the winter holidays), equinoxes (Annunciation, All Saints Day a popular celebration that coincided with the spring equinox until the calendar reform of 1924 Shrovetide, Palm Sunday, Black Thursday, Easter equinox celebrations recurring on variable dates depending on the celebration of Easter), the changing of the seasons (Sngiorz, Smedru).

The bonfires built at solstices, equinoxes and at the main changing of seasons show that our forefathers made astronomical observations in order to schedule their main celebrations in accordance with the celestial bodies. The solstitial bonfire can be seen as the mans attempt to help the Suns ascension in the sky. The fire was usually lit up when the Suns light began to increase .

On the Romanian territory, the Sun worship and the observation of the lights



Fig. 8 – Images of Neolithic statuettes with symbolic patterns, the Hamangia, Vinca, Cucuteni, Gumelnița cultures (cca 5500-3500 BC).

changes are remembered by elements of the oral and immaterial cultural heritage, as well as by traditions and customs. Thus, the rolling down the high hills of fire wheels (a custom also practised at Șinca Veche), as well as the sacred dance of Călușari, were dedicated to the spring equinox, when the archaic cultures celebrated the New Year, and at Snziene, when the summer solstice was celebrated. Solar images were also made in the popular dances considered as sacred, such as the hora. People holding hands form a wheel that has a mission of initiation in the alternation and dynamics of motion.

4. THE CALENDAR. TRADITIONS ON THE ROMANIAN TERRITORY.

The knowledge of the Geto-Dacians also included cosmic orientation related to the North Star, the Big Bear, the Lesser Bear, the Morning Star etc, all in analogy with the traditions related to the Sun worship, that is present in the Dacian solar calendar at Sarmizegetusa. The Romans destroyed all of the Dacian astronomical observatories and the calendar sanctuaries, which made impossible the recovery of



Fig. 9 – The Thinker and Woman sitting the Mother Deity and the Old God meditating on life and death (prehistoric art, Hamangia culture, approx. 5000 BC).

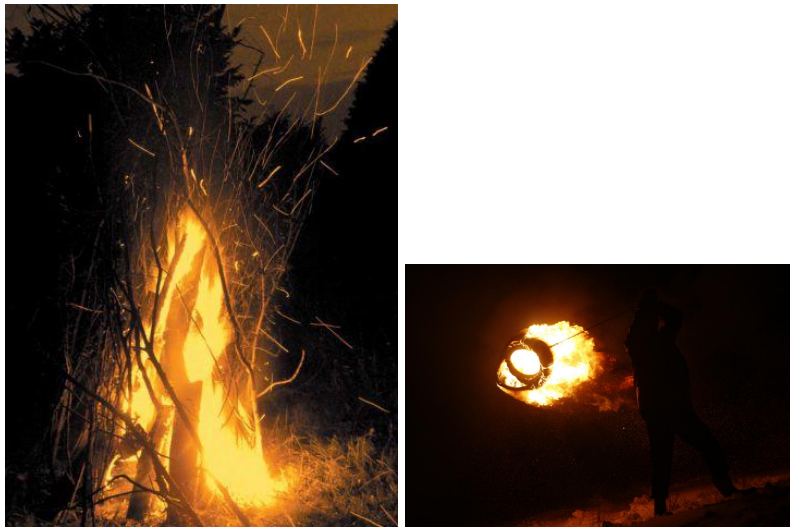


Fig. 10 – The night of the Fire Wheels at Shrovetide at Marginimea Sibiului and the sacred dance Călușarii.

the highly accurate astronomical calculations of the Dacians. These are believed to outstrip those of Sosigenes of Alexandria, which were used by Julius Caesar for the design of the Julian calendar. We may say that through their violent actions, the Romans, who exterminated the Dacian astronomer priests, interrupted the progress

of chronometry for thirteen - fourteen centuries because, had the Dacian system been adopted instead, the subsequent systems and corrections that needed to be brought to the calendar would have become unnecessary.

The advanced knowledge of astronomy led to a reform project of the calendar, devised and carried out in Dacia by Burebista, several years before Julius Caesar carried out his own in Rome. A popular legend mentioning the eleventh year (...) when the Sun shakes off its rust, suggested the hypothesis according to which the Geto-Dacians priests discovered the spots of the Sun (observed for the first time with a telescope by Galileo Galilei in 1612), as well as the solar cycle of 11 years, discovered in 1843 by Samuel Heinrich Schwabe).

The eleventh year is related the solar cycle, but is subject to interpretation: it may stand for the lapse of time between the years when the Sun exhibits more rust (the highest concentration of solar spots) or between the years when the Sun displays the lowest concentration (the year of the calm Sun).

This hypothesis is supported by a large number of Romanian tales, legends and toponyms referring to the giants and huge men that used to live on the territory of present Romania. They remind of the very tall angels or messengers of God mentioned in the book of Enoch. According to this book, there were two hundred of them, having eighteen leaders. Their general leader was called Samiza, a word with the same root as the toponym Sarmizegetusa.



Fig. 11 – Archeological evidence of the astrolabs at the Sarmizegetusa Sanctuary and at the rupestrian proto-Christian church at Corbii de Piatră.

The point of cosmic observation at Cetățeni , the sky and terrestrial maps regis-

tered at Corbii de Piatră , as well as the numerous proto-Christian rupestrian worship sites discovered on the Romanian territory (The Monastic Complex Basarabi Murfatlar, The Cave of the Saint Apostle Andrew in Dobrogea, the Temple of Fates at Șinca Veche, the Rupestrian Site at Aluniș-Nucu, etc) are associated with the lunar and solar calendars, as well with astronomical cardinal orientations. The Geto-Dacian mathematical, astronomical and cartographic knowledge also led in time to the building of astrolabs.

5. DIONYSIUS EXIGUUS, THE CREATOR OF THE MODERN CALENDAR

Dionysius Exiguus (470–544 AD) was a monk from Scythia Minor. He was born in Tomis today Constantza an important harbour on the Black Sea. He is known as the creator of the modern calendar that today is used worldwide, which sets the Anno Domini as the origin. This is believed to be Jesus Christ's year of birth (hence the denominations BC and AD). The Christian era of Dionysius Exiguus was introduced in 525 AD (Liber de Paschate) and is used to count the years in the Gregorian and Julian calendars.

Christianity sets Easter as an extremely important moment in chronology.

In the first decades of the 6th century, Saint Chyryl of Alexandria calculated the Easter dates for the years 153–247 of the Dyocletians era (436/7–531 AD). When this time elapsed, it became necessary to continue his calculations, by introducing the leap years also for the period between 532–626.

Diocletians era (245–313), that became official in the 6th century, was mostly used by the Egyptian pagan priests of Isis. This did not bother the Christian patriarchs Teofil and Chyryl of Alexandria, who had a different concern, that is, to determine as accurately as possible the day when Christ's Resurrection took place. Moreover, in order to avoid the baleful denomination Diocletian, associated with the name of one of the greatest persecutors of Christianity, they also called it the time of the martyrs in acknowledgement of those who sacrificed themselves for Jesus Christ, in the name of his Church. Yet another error slipped in: the period began on 29th August 284 AD, while the first martyrs lived about two decades earlier.

Attempts of getting closer to the Alexandrin Paschal celebration were also made by the Egyptian monk Anian, who managed to have the Great Paschalia imposed everywhere. It represented a cycle of 532 years; at the end of the cycle, its elements were repeated in the same order. However, only the Small Paschalia was used. It was a cycle of only 95 years, which consisted in turn of five cycles, of 19 years each.

These were the elements used at the time of Dionysius. He brilliantly overturned the old customs by introducing a new chronological reference frame: the

Saviours year of birth. The accuracy in estimating this date appears amazing even today, when the margin of error cannot be lower than four to seven years.

The need for sacredness is a universal human characteristic and the worship site, more precisely its altar, was the contact place between the Divine and the Terrestrial Universe. As early as the Paleolithic, the altar had an abstract shape, oriented in relation to the cosmos. Later, in the Paleo-Christian and Christian time, the apse of the altar was added, as an vaulted architectural space, both horizontally and vertically. As for the altar apse, it had a solar equinoxial or solstitial orientation (with a concave reference point in prehistory or with a convex one in the Christian era) and it was sunrise oriented, according to the celebration date of the patron of that cult site.

6. COSMOGONY, THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES, POPULAR ARCHITECTURE AND ART

The frescoes on the external walls of the Orthodox churches and monasteries preserve the painted portraits of Greek philosophers such as Platon, Plutarch, Tucidide, Solon, Filon, Aristotel, Ermis, Deosien, Apollon, Afroditini, Achidin, etc., as well as those of David, Solomon, Homer, Baltazar and Melchior or of Hypocrates.

The image of the wise men of antiquity were associated with the image of the root, of Joshua tree (the genealogy of Jesus) , and their prophecies are represented in the external frescoes of the monasteries in Moldova (Vroneţ, Suceviţa, Moldoviţa, Baia, etc.) from the 14th century or at the Monasteries Cetatuia in Jassy or Plesesti in Valcea etc. This representation illustrated the lay testimonies about the mystery of the Embodiement, and was due to the interpretation by medieval scholastics of the writings on the Christian key to ancient thinking. Similarly, the masterpieces of the Romanian monastic art, such as the monasteries Humor, Probota, Tismana, display paintings in the church porch or narthex containing the calendar cycle of the Saint of the day and scenes from the history of Christianity and of the Ecumenic Councils.

The Romanian traditional ornamentation still preserves sacred solar symbols in both popular architecture and national costumes. The cosmogonic outlook was based on the trinity: the Sky, as the divine creative element (the Holy Sky), the Sun (the fire) as the material factor, and the Moon, as the spiritual factor/the Earth/the Water, both considered generative elements .

In the Romanian traditional architecture, the symbolic-mythical rituals were pervasive. They began with the very choice of a house site, which was symbolically redeemed from the forces that dominated and possessed it. This was followed by a symbolic cleaning, the sacralization and the consequent consecration of a place through the hammering in of a stake, pillar, or later even of a wooden cross. These traditions were embodiments of the mediation between the Earth and the sky. Thus, the sacralization of the site of a future building became in turn an Axis Mundi at the

center of the Universe. The hammering in of the stake (sometimes also called staking in) symbolizes the anthropocentrist idea of Man integrated in a pure Cosmos.

The meaning of the axis mundi stake hinted at the relation between various cosmic levels and a focus of universal energy irradiation . The ornamentation of the house stakes displays a succession of polyhedrons alternating connection bracelets or rope-like carved stakes, with a slightly curved shaft, often bearing also geometrical stylization that symbolized the solar celestial body rendered through rosettes and vortexes (the windmill).

The solar symbols are illustrated in the architecture of the Romanian traditional houses as cosmic elements on the porch pillars, beams, doors etc. They remind of the Sun under many symbolic representations (on receptacles and worship baskets used at Easter, on dowery cases, painted eggs, embroideries and carpets, popular costumes, etc.). On the house fronts and even on some household annexes the solar symbols are represented through chromatic delimitations, such as circles, concentric circles with points at the center, circles with inscribed crosses, rhombuses or rosettes.



Fig. 12 – Ornamentation symbols in the Romanian popular architecture and solar symbols. The Gate and a Detail of a traditional abode, Hobița, Gorj, Brancusi Memorial House.

Another solar symbol, largely used in the Romanian traditions is the horse, as

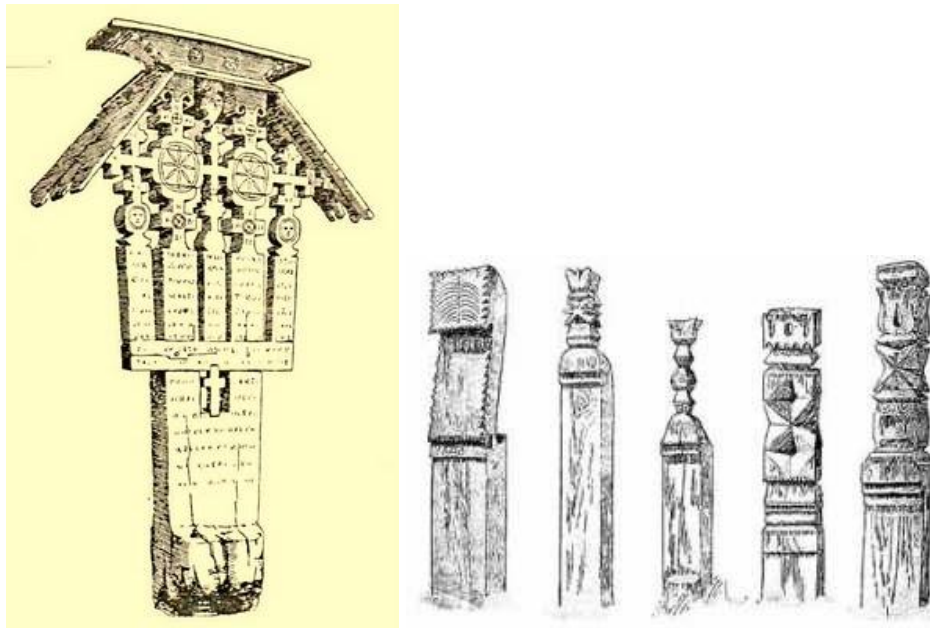


Fig. 13 – Cosmic symbols in the popular traditional ornamentation of the stakes Axis Mundi and of the crosses.



Fig. 14 – Mans shirtfront from Ardeal, adorned with ancient apothropaic symbols of the Sun, Romanian sewing with a paleoastronomical message and ornamentation of an Easter egg in Romania.

a prototype of the Uranic symbol that carries around the solar disk on the heavens vault, as well as a terrestrial element connecting with the fire, the water and the earth.

In the Romanian mythology it can have two different functions, namely an Uranic and a Chtonic one.

The Dacian-Romanian funerary stake is the most common category of mythical monuments used by the Romanians. It symbolizes the Axis of the World whose equivalent is the Tree of Life that grows at the Center of the World or in the Navel of the Earth, a Column of Infinity. Romanians consider that the Tree of Life is the fir tree that is sometimes compared to a stake that comes out of an abyss of waters and is placed near the deceased person (see also the Dacian funerary stake represented on the Trajans Column in Rome). The custom of marking the tombs of the heroes and those of important leaders with menhires, Sky Columns, is very old, dating back to the time of the Pelasgians.

In the popular tradition the stars were also called torches that light up at night in order to illuminate the holy world of the endless ones, showing the Getaess belief in immortality, taken then over by Christianity. There are indeed interesting analogies. The symbolic pattern that appears as ornamentation preserves directions and angles that are identical with those of the solstice and equinox. These pre-Christian symbols, discovered on prehistoric ceramics, serve to adorn today the stamp devices (pupe zee kissed by gods with the sense kissed by God) used to imprint the bread, the communion bread and other food prepared for funeral services.

Folk creators knew how to ensure the compositional unity of the traditional costume. They achieved exquisitely subtle chromatic combinations, with a very limited set of technical means, just by mastering the laws of contrast and harmony in a perfect classical balance. On the festive clothes, peasant women embroidered with dyed cotton the zigzags and meanders of an ancestral graphics, reminding of the harmonious structure of the village universe, that holds together spirit and talent. The rows of life trees sewn in the gardens of the dowery carpets, the stars of the sky against the clear colour of the bridal shirts, carefully preserved to be worn again for the burial, are common ways to decorate the traditional costume.

7. CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, no matter how old the evidence of the civilisation on the Romanian territories might be, they all demonstrate not only the need for the sacred but also a high degree of terrestrial and cosmic knowledge. Romanians have always identified the cosmos with the sacred. Even today, after half a century of religious prohibition, they appear to be drawn to faith again, of course on an entirely different level compared to their ancestors.

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