

## Decorative Motives or Religious Symbols? Attempts to Interpret the Decorations on Dacian Pottery (Part 2)

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During the systematical archaeological research done in Olt Defile in the Persani Mountains, a lot of interesting artifacts from different historical ages were found, some of them unpublished others mentioned in monographs or special papers (Costea 1997, 39-76; 1998, 59-76; 1999, 105-119; 2000, 3-6; Costea, Bauman 2001, 1-6; Costea, Bălos 2001, 217-241; Costea, Bălos, Scurtu 2003, 11-22; Costea, Crișan 2006, p.51-75; Costea, Crisan 2006a, 93-112; Costea 2006, 76-81; Costea et alii 2006, *passim*; Costea 2007). In this paper, we take again one of the published objects (Costea 2007a, 76-81) and we put in scientific circulation a new archaeological piece.

1. **“Jar-vessel”**<sup>1</sup>. This was found during the systematical archaeological excavations from the summer of 2004 at the Tipia Ormenișului, Ormenis commune, Brasov County<sup>2</sup>, in *Section I* from the upper plateau, in the first Dacian level, under the sanctuary infrastructure pillars base of white limestone. A burnt dwelling was partially researched, with rich inventory remains there, the most numerous being the kitchen vessels made by hand. The vessel was made from coarse paste using as degreasing little white stones, sand, breaking shivers and mica spangles; outside it has a dark-brown color, inside the color is red-brown, and the middle is dark-grey. Outside it could be seen an angobe lightly polished, with partial exfoliations and small breaks caused by the secondary burning, burning which was the cause of the ending of that inhabitation phase (PL.I).

According to the dimensions, the vessel might be one for keeping food. Unfortunately, only the upper part can be remade and from this, it can be said that the vessel profile was an arched and slender one. The remaining part is

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<sup>1</sup> The collection of the County Museum of History, Brasov, inv.nr. II 6863.

<sup>2</sup> We regret but it is necessary to explain once again the character of the land. Before the archeological monographs about the Tipia Ormenișului archaeological site has been published, we were informed verbally, at the Augustin and Ormenis City Hall without checking documents. The conclusion we reached then was a wrong one, the studying of the topographical documents showing that the land was forever the property of the Ormenis commune, its mentioning as a property of Augustin during the communist time being connected by the economical interests from those times (forests and pastures). Nowadays, Tipia Ormenișului is a possession of the Ormenis City Hall, since the third decade of the XX<sup>th</sup> Century.

tronconical. The rim is thickened inside oblique beveled to outside and the border being rounded.

The dimensions are  $D_m=32\text{cm}$ ,  $D_{\text{max}}=41\text{cm}$ ,  $H=22,50\text{cm}$  (the total height could have reached 65-70cm).

The vessel decoration is composed of two categories of elements: *a*- traditional motives, very often met on Dacian pottery and *b*- symbol motives. From the first category are eight buttons: four are big ( $D=42-48\text{mm}$ ) each having six long alveolus, from which one in center: other four buttons are placed at few mm up then the first buttons horizontal line, between these, being round but smaller ( $D=22-23\text{mm}$ , practical half of the first mentioned buttons); each of them have four alveolus still long, put in cross shape. Both categories of buttons are symmetrical pairs placed above the maxim diameter of the vessel.

The fact that these kinds of buttons are very often present on Dacian pottery older then the first century B.C. spares us from giving analogies suggesting also a possible dating of the vessel.

The other part of the decoration, is distinguished, maybe even unique until now. The decoration is real a symbolist one. When the vessel was discovered, because of the absence of one of those three fragments on which the decoration was laid out, it was hard to see the entirely image so we wrongly said that "among the kept signs one is certainly the fire" (Costea *et alii* 2006, 132, Pl. XCVI/7). The finding of others fragments (2005 campaign) and the assembling to those existed already gives us the possibility to see an image, which could be interpretive (Pl.I/a-b).

It is a vulva, which could be also seen in the drawing of the recent monographs of Tipia Ormenișului where we said, because the lack of a part from the whole: „Being conscious that it is about a ideogram which deciphering and interpretation are not simple at all, for now we only presume that it is about a symbolist about hearth-sacred fire, the passing of time or about the fertility and fecundity through an expression which is not at all feminine but androgen. The existence of a symbolist of vulva or uterus is possible. It is almost certain that the vessel had also (or only?) a cultural utility” (Costea *et alii* 2006, 226-227, with the note 258). Now it is very clear that it is a real and in a certain way naturalistic image of the vulva. Above the hair, by only few mm is an upright vertical flying bird with the neck and the head longer then the body. Without trying to identify the species, we only say that this is not key to the drawing but is very important for its semantic.

To the left of the image, at a distance of 18mm, in a vertical position, is a phallus, marked by three incised lines, from which the two from left are kept entirely and the third, towards the vulva is kept only on few mm in the upper

part and on its half of the length, the rest being where the vessel is broke. The end of the prepuce is marked by another incision, easily arched, which unites the other three, long of 50mm. The middle incision represents the seminal channel.

Between these two elements, are five lines, which should be horizontal, but they having some small imperfections because of the degreasing resistance. These are the most hard to read part, despite taking into consideration the number symbolism, their total could be helpful to explain and to put together the most important elements (phallus and vulva) from the composition.

The composition has all together an 85mm length on the vessel horizontal line and a 75mm height. It is certain that it is only on this part of the vessel because on the other parts of the vessel it does not exist, as the buttons, which are all kept.

***The composition was made before the clay was burnt.***

This is very important for the right interpretation of an absolutely original drawing and above all it has to be excluding any kind of pornographic idea; together or as distinguished parts the composition cannot be put in pejorative.

The phallus is, in a vertical position (in lat. *in erectio*), although not in an erotic posture, symbolizes, like in any kind of religion, the regenerated power, "...a spring and channel of the kind" (Chevalier, Gheerbant 1995, 2, 36). In our case it can be considered as being a column.

The vulva "...euphemistically named the big and beautiful mother to the *Bambara* populations" (Chevalier, Gheerbant 1995, 3, 482) has a symbolism with the same characteristics and ideas for many populations: "... a spring which eats the virility and throws back life, put together the opposites changing them in one to each other from this the mystery of the attraction which marks this, in comparison with the masculine gender, diurnal and solar" (Chevalier, Gheerbant 1995, 3, 482). It has to be noticed that in the composition we are talking about she is waiting for the gammy to receive the breed which gives life. The moment is before the erotic act is fulfilling. Even if in composition there are places previously chosen, they are not out of the erotic act and represent "the repeating of the primordial hierogam, of hugging between Sky and Earth from which the being was born" (Chevalier, Gheerbant 1995, 2, 24). That the hierogam is to be it could be seen from the authors insistence to connect masculine to feminine by those five horizontal lines, a number that we do not think is just like that and to Dacians represents a "sign of union, a wedding number of harmony and balance. It (number 5, a.n.) will represent the number of hierogams, the companionship of the celestial principium (3) with that earthly of mother (2)" (Chevalier, Gheerbant 1995, 1,

310). The result is going to be “the man, a new expression of the Big Triad” (Chevalier, Gheerbant 1995, 1, 310).

An identical role and purpose meaning to protect the union “Sky-Earth” from our image could be seen from the position of the bird above the whole scene, above the vulva. And the fact that it is in a vertical upward flight suggests also the symbol of the connection from Sky and Earth in Genesis.” In the Greek language the word could be synonymous with a message from the sky” (Chevalier, Gheerbant 1995, 3, 22). To a lot o civilizations, the bird, generally speaking, was the messenger of Gods or a way of communication, lead also by Gods, between the earthly world and that from underground. If an analysis of each bird species was done it could be seen that the main birds have love attributes sometimes being love itself (the dove).

In our composition, the most probably identification is that with the falcon, if we are looking at the body of the bird that is flying. It seems to have many roles, which we may say are that of a substitute or sun messenger: at first it could be noticed that it knows very well a scene to which it was a witness, governed it and enjoyed it and from the second *it flies vertically to the sky to announced the news, the left-right direction being diaboliques*. The presence of falcon under the shape of an arrow and its position of flying could be interpretive as a corollary of the composition topic, essential and evidently being the augural atmosphere of the scene.

For more of the contemporary people, the folk believes see in eagle an immortal being, like the Romanians: ”Because it has an eternal life, because it fights with the power of death, the eagle can be a symbol, of soul, of the eternity of this; we often find it in this hypostasis, on the funerary monuments from Dacia and even in the ancient thraco-getians art (...) from this came, in the Romanian folk, the function as messenger-bird or a guide; it is often use in fairytales and ballades. Some of the ballades (very few) present the eagle as a bad bird “(Coman 1996, p. 194-195, with the bibliography).

As a conclusion we may say that the following aspects of the problem are very important, some of them consequent to the decoration, others reminded here only in connection with the topic we are talking about: 1-the composition, incised in a soft paste of the vessel, before burning, is the first “decoration” with a clear symbolist at least partially explained by now on Dacian vessels, in our case on a vessel made by hand. Because of its stratigraphical position in which it was found, the vessel could be dated together with other objects found inside the dwelling, to before Burebista’s time and before the building of the Sanctuary with base columns aligned from a local chalk. 2-in the same room another vessel was found, a fragmentary one, of a small dimensions, made also by hand, on which was stamped, also before

burning, a solar symbol (a wheel with nine spokes); 3-the discovery in the first level of Dacian inhabitation from Tipia Ormenișului of a two amulet-sharpeners made from grit stone (Costea *et alii* 2006, 242 and the Pl. CLXI/3-4) in a phallus shape could not be disconnected by the symbolism and more by the practice of some initiated acts characteristic to the sub-adjacent representing, materials or imagistic<sup>3</sup>. 4-the composition can not be associated to so-called pornographic scenes but it has to be considered as a true moment of cult, very valued by its uniqueness (until now) and by its symbolic charge. It goes beyond the signification and importance of isolated artifacts discovered which had also some images of the masculine-feminine duet explaining mainly the birth of the human being, as can be seen also from our drawing. The signification and the message of this are more profound, meaning the genesis of the whole world, a cosmological one, the human being is just a way to express the entire philosophy of the topic.

**2. The cup in miniature<sup>4</sup>.** This was found in a Dacian complex (dwelling) inside the Dacian fortress of Piatra Detunată (Durduia), Racosul de Jos, during the 2008 systematical archaeological research campaign. It was found in Section II, m 7, at 42cm depth, on June 24. The archaeological complex is inside the defense system as against which is "hidden". The vessel was found at a depth where the first Dacian inhabitation level is, a level burnt during an event which took place before 106 A.D., maybe the First Daco-Roman War. The fact that the vessel was at the eastern part of the dwelling, next to the wall, suggests that it was on the same shelf with other objects, against which it could have had a place where it might be seen.

It has to be known that the Dacian fortress from Piatra Detunată is placed at least 1 km north-west from the Sacred Mountain on the Tipia Ormenișului

The vessel was made from a semi-fine paste, having in its composition sand and small pieces of mica. It has tronconical outline with a big base at the mouth. The base is flat, the rim rounded but not outlined. It has a single applied handle and the place where it was fixed is very well smoothed. It is all red because of the secondary burning. (Pl.II).

Dimensions: Db=25mm; Dm=50mm (exactly the double that of the base); H= 31mm, the thickness of the wall=0,50mm; the thickness of the handle=9-10mm, capacity=18/20millilitres.

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<sup>3</sup> The drawing published before, with a Romanian text in a slightly modify shape, in *Cumidava*, 29, Brasov, 2007, 76-81, under the title *Un „motiv decorativ” neîntâlnit până în prezent pe ceramic dacică/A decorative motif unknown until now on the dacian pottery*, signed by Florea Costea.

<sup>4</sup> The collection of the County Museum of History, Brasov, inv.nr. II 7189.

Decoration (Pl. II; Pl. III): the handle: six oblique notches up right-down left, made on the maximum curve. The bottom: cross, incised with the same tools used to make the notches from the handle. On the vessel wall, outside, starting with the handle to the right of the watcher, when the cup is in a normal position (with the mouth up) are the following decorative motives: *a*-two vertical incisions (Pl. II/f), from under the rim to the base; *b*-up side down cervix (with the head down) (Pl. II/c-d); *c*-a little fir tree with the top to the sky, with six branches on each side (Pl. a-b); *d*-three incisions like the others two, between the little fir tree and the handle (Pl. II/a). Where the handle is fixed on the cup, like on the other parts of the vessel, if we look carefully we may see small incisions, which are not parts of the decoration and it is because of some mistakes made by the potter. Between the cervix and the small fir tree is no sign for separating or having a certain signification. There are no traces of calcinated organically substances both inside and outside and if they were they could disappeared after the secondary burning. The vessel was for a certain purpose so the handle was not necessary, taking into consideration the dimensions of it. Although it was found together with some daily using objects, the vessel is certain a ritual one, the case being not singular (Sîrbu 1996, fig. 12/10). Its character is outline by some specific elements like: the miniature dimensions, the decoration and its spreading on the vessel: 1- the little fir tree, with its well marked body, has the top to the sky when the vessel is a natural and functional position (its high is of 20mm and the maximum opening of the crown-down-is 18mm. 2-the cervix in a natural position only if the vessel is turn with the opening down. The potter tried to draw the all the legs of the animal, from which that from front-left is lifted to the nee level of its pair. The head, to the right, like the completely animal body, is represent by a horizontal incision deeper and flatter then those from the other parts of the body and a fine one under it representing the eye. Under the mandible, three fine vertical lines representing the beard. The crown is realized by two middle columns (central) to which the branches left, branches that are equal to the age, and in this case, there are three on each part. If they are taking separately these could be seen also as a conifer with the top down. Under the body, marked by two stronger incisions and by the "rib" it could be seen two small and fine lines, vertical (four are very clear) which could not be anything else but the fur.

The general impression is that the author (the artist) tried to represent the entire body of the animal in a schematically way creating an image without a body proportion harmony, much to short in comparison with the anatomical components the result being a high which is more then the length (the total high of the image is 30mm and the length only 20mm).

As we have already said, a simple look on the vessel gives us the permission to say that this is not a vessel used in the house daily, because of its characteristics mentioned above. The decoration is made totally by incision, a very rare technique for the representing of the animals on Dacian pottery, until now are known only three pieces, all out of the Carpathian Arch (Sîrbu 1996, 69). Taking into consideration the statistics and the analyze of our colleague Valeriu Sîrbu we think that this vessel is the first from its category from inner Carpathian Arch.

The oneness of the decoration until now and the fact that the vessel was found inside of a dwelling are enough arguments to support that the vessel is not a product made in work-craft. To this, the decoration motives are not stamped like the cervix from Racatau, where was a work-craft unfound yet (Căpitanu 1986-1987, 79 and the Fig.2/24).

The decoration has also some distinguished elements that have to be analyzed. For any part we are looking at, the drawing has a logic but we do not have the key, the certain thing being that we are in front of an other "narrated" subject. It is clear that it is not about simple decoration motives, but symbols for "sleeping partner-utilization". Each of the representing, vegetal or animally or neutral must be considerate as part of an coherent language, a unit one and explicit for the community which created from artistically and religious point of view. If they are analyzed distinct the signs (excepting the cervix very often meet on the daily or cult Dacian pottery) they might undermining or at least reduced the importance of the "text". Together their language, even if it is hidden for us, introduce us, even partial, in the world of a caudated sentences of "...some of religious, magical and mythological believes and practices" (Sîrbu 1993, 67). However, like the painted pottery, "...in the absence of some coherent scenes, with an epical contain which could put together the zoomorphic images in a possible script, the attempt to identify certain significations are placed in the speculation sphere" (Florea 1998, 207). That is why, us, like the researcher from Cluj, "we are going to resume ourselves at the general remarks and very prudent analogies," insisting on general (=universal) symbolism of the signs we are talking about.

*The little fir.* It is a decoration very often meet on the pottery and other artifacts generally known that is why is unusefull to be mentioned here (Costea 1999, 110 and next). This the sign with one of the richest symbolism, Mircea Eliade talking about at least seven considered as essential. The general conclusion is that we are in front of a "Alive cosmos, in a continuous regeneration". The tree is generally a "symbol of life in a perpetual evolution, arising to the sky...; it has the characteristics of a center, which make that the World Tree to be synonymous with The World Axis. The trees which keep

their leaves (the conifers, the laurel) are symbols of the eternal life” (Eliade 1964, 125). On some Dacian artifacts the little fir tree is upside-down, with the roots to the sky. It is very common for many people from The Extreme Orient to America and it is in connection to the believe on the important role of the sun and light in birthing and growing of all is alive. “The beings taking their vigor from up and their trying to make it to penetrate down... The life comes from the sky and goes down in the earth” (Eliade 1964, 127).

Gilbert Durand thinks that this reversing of the tree is a “symbol of the ascende verticality...of the cyclic reciprocity scheme (Durand 1963, *apud* Chevalier, Gheerbrand 1995, 1, 127). From a sexual point of view, the tree is ambivalent, the symbol of the first androgen. For Greeks (see the Attis-Cybele myth) a relative of fir tree, the pine has a pure masculine trace (phallus) keeping the division into sign, of Mother (Cybele the Gods Mother, herself a first source of fecundity). The symbol was taking by the Romans too, who, on March 22 (the beginning of the calendraistic spring) took a tree on Palatin to celebrate the *Coming Tree* (Chevalier, Gheerbrand 1995, 1, 130)

The presence of the fir on Dacian pottery, could even seem obsessive, leading to a natural question: Why the fir and not another tree or plant?

We do not have any idea for giving a certain answer for the historical nowadays of the object, we are talking about, but we are going to try to draw a possible understanding of its origin and presence on the Daco-Getians artifacts. We are going to suggest a connection from a far space but contemporary, between some of a Goddess Thrace-Phrygian and the imagistic equivalent of this, Attis, sometimes replaced by the fir tree. The fact that Attis is, at the beginning, the Phrygian God (so Thracian god) of vegetation and husband of Cybele it seems to us very important in the relation with other symbols on Dacian pottery, all connected to the belief in the birth-life-death-resurrection phenomenology. The versatility of Attis as a Thrace-Phrygian inheritance in Dacian symbolist (the fir tree) is illustrated at least in part by the sheltering of the Great Mother of Gods (Phrygian too as a personification of the creating world) under diverse vegetal signs (Costea 1999, 108). More the status of Attis to Cybele, who becomes the master of water and war, the leader of the Universe, may support the idea that both goddesses had an important place in the Thracians believes and as an inheritance in the Dacians beliefs with a perpetual reminder of the cyclical regeneration of nature, to the periodical renewing of the World”(Eliade 1992, 40). In fact, the consistence and the longevity of the inheritance (beginning with Neolithic, from the beginnings of agriculture, like others peoples (Eliade 1992, 40-45) are natural for a people who had as main preoccupations agriculture and husbandry even if the ancient sources did not say anything about the existence of these goddesses in the Dacian world, considered



maybe understandable. It is very hard to accept that a people like the Dacians did not have protecting- gods for agriculture, if we consider that the Macedonian soldiers used the lance to put down the cornfield and that Decebal named a ministry for these showing the importance of agriculture in his time.

In conclusion "the fir tree" of the Dacians could not be a simple spiritual inheritance with a real ethnical-historical inheritance, local and micro-astatically. (Daicoviciu 1972, 204 and following; Crisan 1986, 345 and following; Costea, Bălos 2001, 217 and following, Costea, Bălos 2003, 23-31) but a continuity still associated, of the primary goddesses attributes. The symbolic symbiosis Atiis-Cybele it could be seen on the other Dacians artifacts, like on the coins of Larissa type where the Gods Mother is holding in her hand a little branch of fir tree and on a delaine cup where the same God is dancing with a fir tree branch in her hand (Florescu 1968, 17). "The little fir tree" is according to conclusions of M. Eliade, " the life spring which is in this vegetal" (Eliade 1952, 176). Representing only Attis in a very explicit way, "the little fir tree" symbolizes the cyclic repeating of alive world in generally speaking but also the keeping of the faith (belief) of human beings in immortality, in this case of Daco-Getians about which sub-Carpathian branch we find out from Herodotus "in which way they say that they are immortal" (*Histories*, 93, 94). The presence of the motif both in the region where lives the confers and at the plain where the forest is missing, is a prove of a the generalization of the believe for the whole Dacian people. Anywhere in Dacia, like in the whole are where the Thracians live, Attis is one of the "Goddesses who dies and is resurrected" together and in the same way as Osiris and Adonis to other religions (Eliade, Culianu 1996, 233).

*The stag.* Very rare in the imagistic of the Caraptho-Danubian area and absent on Dacian painted pottery (Florea 1995, 79-82; Florea 1998, *passim*; Costea 1999, 105-119) but very often meet in the representation about the mythologies and religions of other people, the stag has been a lot analyzed in the literature so are a lot of interpretations. Here we are going to mentioned only a part of these, a part that we considered as being enough to underline its symbolism, identically or very closed to many people, including the Thracian-Dacian-Gets.

Ending his discussion on the iconography and attributes of Cernunnos at Celts, Mircea Eliade said: "Still, the religious symbolism of stag is very complex. On one hand in the area which laid, in the prehistorically times, from China to Western Europe, the stag, because of the periodical renew of its horns is a symbol of the perpetual creation and a *renovatio* symbol" (Eliade 1952, 216). For the Celts and Germans "it was one of the most important symbol of fecundity and also a funerary animal and the guideless of deaths; it was the

favorite venison of kings and heroes: its killing, its hunting were put together with the tragically death of heroes" (Eliade 1986, 145).

"The stag was also like the life tree because of its horns with branches which are renewing periodically. Is the symbol of fecundity, of the grow rhythm, of the reborn (Chevalier, Gheerband 1995, 1, 290).

These attributes or others considered principal-secondary, are in the other people believes from other continents. Without suggesting any kind of connection or contamination between Thracian-Dacian-Gets and the north-American Indians, which is impossible from historical point of view, we say about a "far analogy" in space in time magical-ritual practice for the last, which could be illustration of the motives from our vessel. The dancing and cosmogonies of the Indians from North America express exactly this connection between the stag and the Life Tree (Chevalier, Gheerbrand 1995, 1, 209) „The strong connection between the pine and cervix (the stag dancing around the pine who rise in a square) may be only he image of forest; still, it is not impossible that a more profound level, it is a symbol which suggests that the stag is not in connection with the sun rise and dawns but also with the life beginnings which start together with the Creation of the world...In many Amerindians cosmogonies the moose or the stag, by its lowings.wakes up the created life; in Indian art, the tree (pine) it is often represented rising form the branches horns of the stag, like at the European tradition about the Saint Hubert vision" (Burr 1962, 55).

*Ab originem*, the presence of the cervix in Tracian-Dacian-Gets iconography, rich during the "golden age" but poorer during the "classic" age are not a result of direct influences from Scythians, Greeks, Romans or Celts. They are very sure the autochthony and the perenity of the motif (=the symbol). Both are supported by the researches and the correct interpretations of these after our historiography got out under the soviet sciences influences, beginning with the papers of Dumitru Berciu (Berciu 1969). First, we are taking into consideration the cervix from the plate dated in *Hallstatt*, made from burn clay belonging to the Basarabi culture, the cervix being six (Vulpe 1986, Abb.1/16-17). The motif is older and very common in the Thracian world, both European and from Minor Asia, at the Phrygians established on the Trojans lands in the first half of the 12th Century B.C. (Berciu 1969, 170 etc.). By creating a self animally style, but with strong influences from the late Iranian art, the Thracians send it forward together with its Persian influence to Central Europe and Western Europe (to Celts for example). In Dacia, it was very spread during the "Golden Age" of the Geto-Dacian Civilization (4th-3rd Century B.C.). Like at Celts (Cernunnos) or at other populations, the decorative motif or the God who had this figure are connected to the Elite art,

leader, the stag being present almost all the time on the princier art artifacts. (Berciu, 1969, *passim*; Sîrbu, Florea 1997, fig. 7/2; 11-12; 16/2-3; 2/26; Sîrbu, Florea 2000, fig. 4; 6; 12/2-3; 23/2b; Bouzek 2005, 79-104 and fig. 81-84; 86 etc). At the "classic" Dacian art, the animals-deer and stags- are represented linear, remember the perspective technique from Orient, and the inner space is represented flat and fulfill with points to represent the animals fur. This kind of stylization reminds of the way of representing the animals' motif on the silver artifacts (Florescu 1968, 25).

Keeping unchanged the religious character of the symbol, the motif of the stag are on other pieces dated up until the Roman conquest, the most important example being this vessel that we are talking about. About the stag represented on it, from a stylistically point of view it may be saying once again that its has a very old Thracian tradition, this stag looking like that one on the bronze statuette (Pl. IV) discovered in Bulgaria, next to Sevlijevo (cf. Bouzek 2005, pl. 8), dated in 7th-Century B.C., practical contemporary with the cervix from the Basarabi culture. However, we have to take into consideration that the vessel from Racos-Piatra Detunată was discovered inside of a Dacian fortress, belongs to a military man and dated for sure around the roman conquest. So this is a prove of spreading of this motif in a different social areas, meaning the army.

So, we consider the cervix, from the little cup found at Racoș-Piatra Detunată, as a religious symbol having a "national" Thracian-Dacian tradition, taking some elements from other populations traditions which they have contacts, first the Iranian world (Berciu 1969, 170 and next). Its symbolism, with a mythical-religious contain, which could not be very different from that of other populations whom social development was alike, for essential being the words: born, grow, death, resurrection, light. The association of this motif with a tree with forever leaves, in our case the fir, could be interpretive also like an underline of the essential of the religious idea of the composition: resurrection, a cyclical renewing of all that is alive, "guaranteed" by the stag, for this reason drew together with the little fir.

In our description, we said that the animal steps on the ground only when the vessel is upside down, when the little fir sticks its roots on the sky. This is the real position of the vessel. This is the real and wanted position of the vessel because it is hard to admit that for the religious cult the position of the stag was reversed. In this position the others signs (vertical incisions or those from the handle) keep their symbol. This is the hypostasis in which "the little fir" is on numerous Dacian vessels with a laic or religious character (Plate V) known from a long time and that is why we do not talk about them here (just in the fortress on Piatra Detunată the number of vessels discovered inside

dwelling is over 20, Plate VI) a jar-vessel with this tree is up side down from the same dwelling with the cup. The specification rise a sign of question above the laic character of the complex, especially if the earthen-vessel was plunged in the floor and surrounded at a few cm distance by a chime of clay which has 2-4 cm thick.

Once again we may talk about the symbol of the “upside down tree”, but not that when “the tree life could become a death tree” (Chevalier, Gheerbrant 1995, 1, 131), but the believe that the human being take life from the sky and they try to make it penetrate down (...). Life comes from the sky and penetrates the earth” (Chevalier, Gheerband 1995, 1, 131). Its association on the vessel with the “light messenger, symbol of the sun which arise and goes to the horizon” as „a mediatory between the sky and earth” (Chevalier, Gheerband 1995, 1, 291-292) excludes the dead signification. Therefore, the duet stag-little fir tree could not be for Daco-Getians an other symbol then to other populations and to this; we could talk about the symbol of hunting.

In Romanian folklore from nowadays it could be notice that the stag has an authority above the other animals together with deer, which is a symbol of “authority and power”. These two animals represent an image of nature, in its primordial hypostasis “The stag is a symbol of eternal life, of the rebirth of nature, of fecundity and wealth (...). Reviving all the time, expressing the eternal cycles of nature, the stag “has to pass” from a existence level to an other, from the fulfilling to death, from the „black” to „white” world. In Romanian folklore, the stag is a funerary animal that takes and leads the souls of the wanderings. The stag and the deer, as they are seen in the Romanian folklore, have a lot of archaically symbols, and we are going down on this way to cosmological myths, to images of the first beings, of the animals which rule over the secrets and energies of the world, of fecund animals, which give life and power, guiding the different levels of the world (...). They live and control the hard accessible spaces, as an expression of the everyday world or as an expression of the other world (Coman 1996, 133-141).

#### *Other symbols from the vessel*

As we said on the vessel are not principal or secondary motives: depending on their place in the entire composition, the signs should be seen and read in a cursive way. All were made by incision.

*The cross.* One of these signs is the cross form the bottom of the little cup, which could not be seen only if the vessel is upside down. If we see the base perimeter as a circle, we may say that is about a wheel. In this case is possible to talk about a symbol of the creating god (the circle) which existence is guaranteed and temporally ordinate by the cross that divides all in four segments which succeed – the seasons. The symbol of the cross gives to the

little cups a religious functionality, mainly if those were discovered in specific complexes, like those from dava from Gradistea (Sirbu 1996, 48-51 and fig. 12/10; 51/3) or even inside dwellings.

*The vertical incisions.* Are grouped in two or three, first in front of the stag, between this and the handle, and the others between the “little fir tree” and the handle. We remind that their number was established to put their message in the historian idea. Therefore, because the space is enough, their number could be anyone else, and they could be replaced by other signs. Very important is the number of the incisions from the group and the total of them. This is the reason why we see these incisions as numbers, as symbols of each numbers from the “group” and not as simple signs of decoration.

*Two.* This number during prehistory and classical antiquity meant woman, the symbol of Mother. It is the number of all ambivalences and halving, and symbolizes the dualism on which every progress depends. It is the number of Earth.

*Three.* This is a fundamental number, symbolizing and synthesizing the triple unit of being alive. Is the number of the Sky. To many populations the number three is masculine, the virility symbol.

We do not know if for the community that had that vessel, the total number of incisions had any kind of signification. If the answer is affirmative, we have to remind that the number *five* is a sign of a marital unit, but also the sign of harmony and balance. It is the sum of the sky symbol (3) and the earth symbol (2). In other words, this is a sign of creation and perfection of a living world. It is the symbol of human beings, and of the universe. They are the entire sensitive world, order and perfection.

*Six.* This is the number of oblique incisions on the little cup handle. It is another symbol of creation, a mediator between principle and manifestation (...). It is the virtual completion. For Greeks, the number 6 was the number of Venera-Afrodita, the god of corporal love (Lubac 1968, 199, cf. Chevalier, Gheerband 1995, 3, 313).

By the specifications done during the pieces description could be seen that is about objects, which do not have analogies in pre-roman Dacia. If, we take into consideration only the decoration each piece could be considerate as unique. Very special are the places where they appear in: first, on a hill, which has been a very important center of religion and power from Dacia since Burebista time (Costea et alii 2006, *passim*; Vulpe 1998, 7; Vulpe 2007, 78-82); second in a fortress with a permanent garnison. Their dating is quite certain, between them being almost eighteen decades: the beginning of Burebista reign and roman conquest. None is from a cult place, both were

found inside dwellings: a civil one, that from Tipia Ormenisului and military from Piatra Detunata, with other words they are coming from different mediums and to different social situations. Both vessels were decorated in the fresh paste, before burning: on the first were incised “cut” motives inspired from the human anatomy while on the other one are vegetal and animally symbols and so-called neutral symbols, which are connected to other two.

To both examples the symbolic aspect has as main subject both the world from earth, percept and partial understood by the human being as a running which perpetuates life, and cosmogonical, the little fir and the stag being go-between Sky-Earth, while the human being, like for other peoples, thought about him self being a symbol synthesis of the macro cosmos. ”The drawing” from the first vessel could send us to the “primordial hierogam of the embracing between Sky and Earth which gave birth to the beings” (Chevalier, Gheerbrant 1995, 2, 24), with other words to the creation of human beings and by extension of cosmos.

None of the symbols has ill-fated messages; on contrary, separated or together all transmits good messages for fertility, fecundity, the running of time prefect ordered by God, birth-life-death-resurrection of the completely alive world, with other words the immortality, the main belief of the daco-getians.

It is also true that the “decorative motives” could be interpretive taking into consideration other aspects from human beings life, the symbols being prayers for Gods to have children, richness in agriculture and husbandry, good luck in hunting etc. To fulfill these requests were done all kind of ceremonials which we do not know, but, during these, were used these vessels.

We end this paper work making the specification that our insistence on the „decorative motives” from those two vessels, and also the interpretation we purpose on, have the explanation in their oneness. We do not think that our conclusions are unique and unchangeable, our aim being, first of all, to present these two vessels to archaeologists and historians who investigate the fascinated world of Daco-Getians, meaning their spirituality.

**Drows:** Mihaela Cioc

**Photos:** Florea Costea, Paul Pavel

### The list of illustration:

- Plate I: The jar-vessel with symbols, Tipia Ormenișului: a-photo; b- drawing.  
Plate II: The little cup, Piatra Detunată-photo.  
Plate III: The same vessel, unfolded drawing.  
Plate IV: The stag from Sevljevo (according to Jan Bouzek).  
Plate V: A decoration with little fir from the dacian vessels: 1- Tipia Ormenișului; 2,3 Racoș-Piatra Detunată.  
Plate VI: A decoration with little fir from the dacian vessels: 1-3 Sprâncenata (according to C Preda), 4-5 Căpâlna (according to I. Glodariu, V. Moga) 6-7 Ocnița ( according to D. Berciu, without a scale); 8. Moigrad (according to M. Macrea, M. Rusu, I. Mitrofan, without a scale).

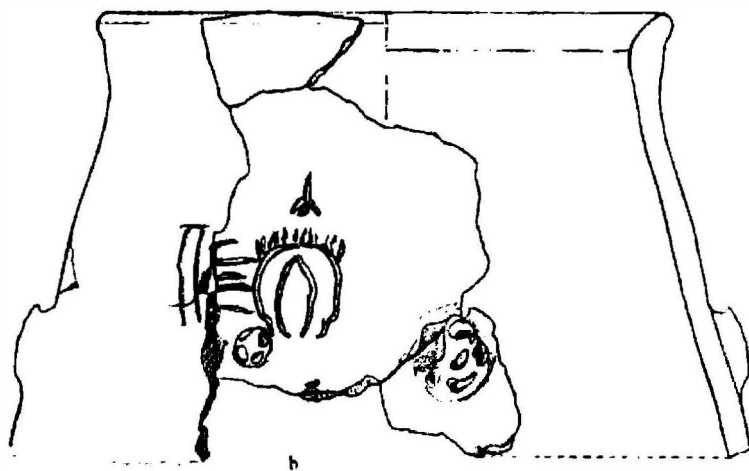
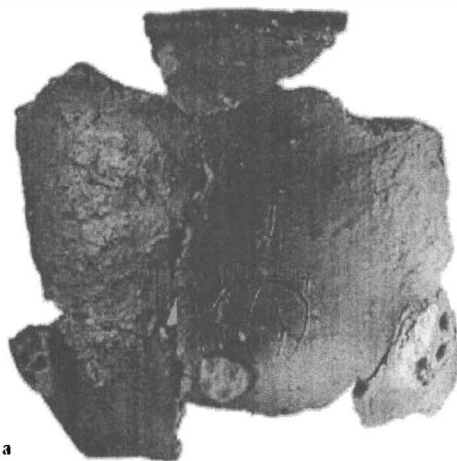
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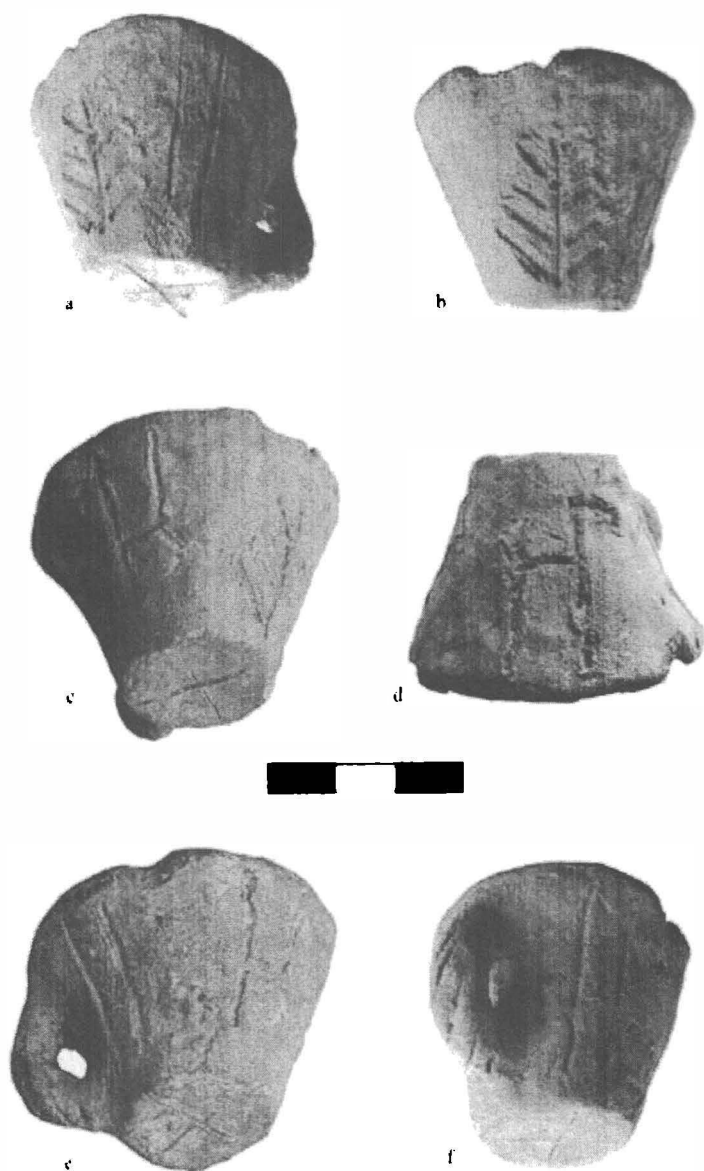
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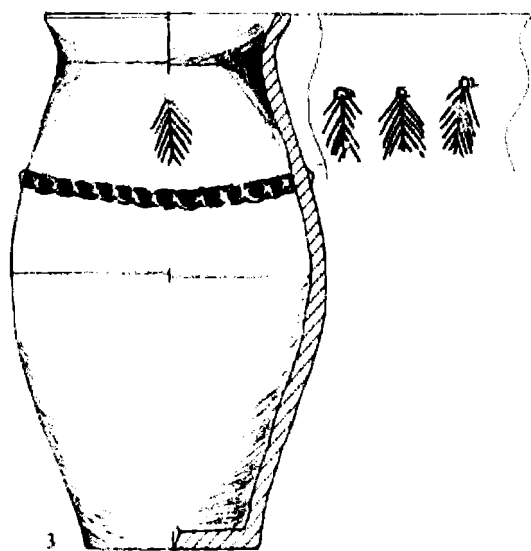
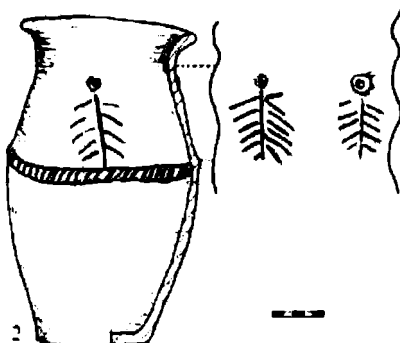
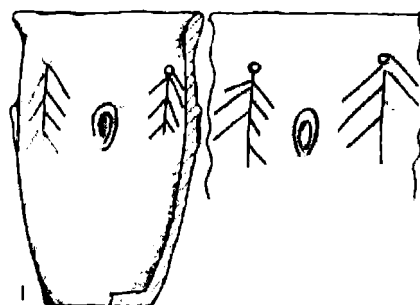
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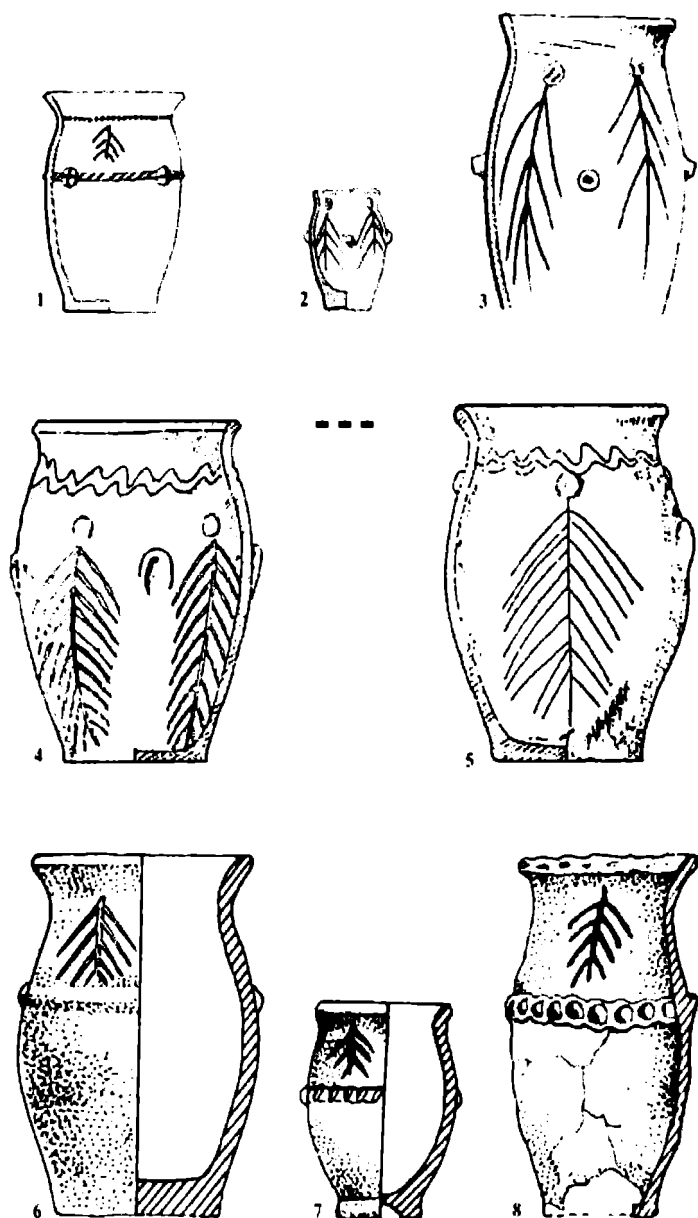
Planşa I



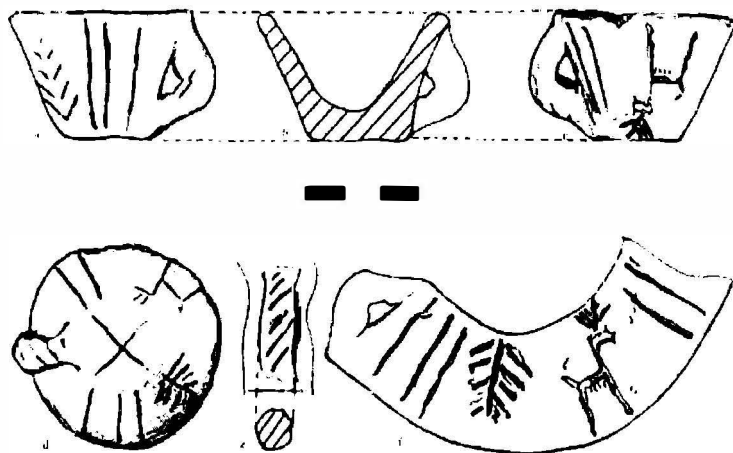
Plasa II



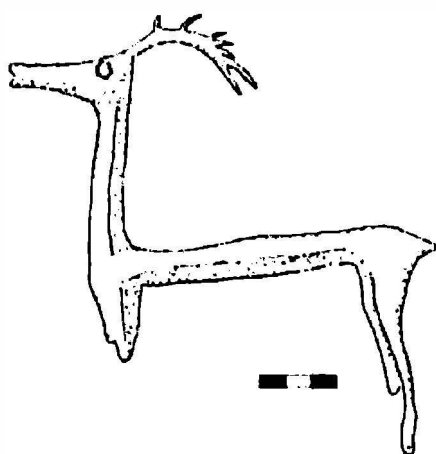
Planșa V



Plasa VI



Planşa III



Planşa IV