

# THE EAGLE-THE BIRD OF DEATH, REGENERATION-RESURRECTION AND MES- SENGER OF GODS ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ETHNOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

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In the present day symbolistics, mostly in cinematography, the eagles fly is used to suggest the presence of death, underlining one of the attributes of car-casses eagle. This bird, in fact the king of birds, along the times had also other symbols that of messenger of gods, to carry out gods' order: ex. the eagle which daily devoured the undying liver of Prometeu (Eliade 1981, p. 269).

In the civilization beginnings, in the middle of the VII millennium, in Anatolia, at Çatal Hüyük, in over 40 sanctuaries are known as being the most complex, ancient and old, with significations about death, regeneration and res-urrection, in which the Eagle and its associations appear (the pregnant mother attended by the eagle, from below).

The Death and Regeneration make the title of a chapter of Maria Gimbutas in the work *Gods Language* (Gimbutas, 1989, p. 185; 1991, 238, 7-26.1). Be-tween the first symbols of Death which the author analyses, is the Eagle (Gimbutas, 1989, p. 187).

The most ancient Neolithic representation is one from the eastern wall of the Altar of Eagle, level VII, altar 8 or Sanctuary 8. There are naratively repre-sented, with the respective symbols, on the eastern and northern wall of the sanc-tuary, many eagles, figures, one or two, which take human beings shapes without head (fig. 1).

All the human beings figures are presented without head, sitting down, with raising arms in sign of invocation. The eagles have on the back some circles in which there are incisions from 2 to 5. One of them looks like a pitchfork with three cogs, almost all the eagles have bird legs, but some have also human being legs (Eliade 1981). We may also notice an access way to the northern wall in that sanctuary.

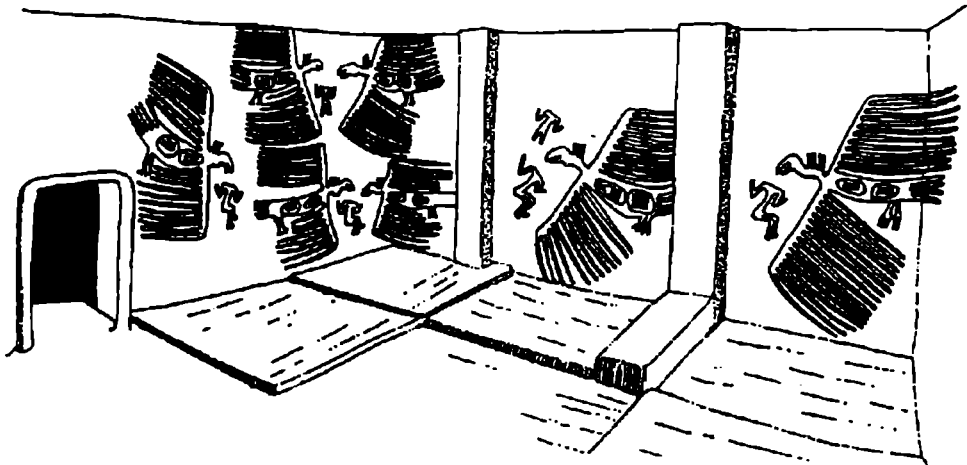


Fig. 1. Çatal Hüyük, level VII, Sanctuary 8 (apud Mellart 1965; M. Gimbutas 1991, 7-26.1).

Similar scenes with eagles repeat themselves in many sanctuaries. In the sanctuary 21 (fig. 2), on one of the central walls (seems the northern one), appears on a buskull column, with a decoration in zigzag on the snout. In the front of the buskull appears a decoration of cca. 7 triangles from which some are black and some are white. Above this triangle a prominent hole appears which we consider as being the magic eye.

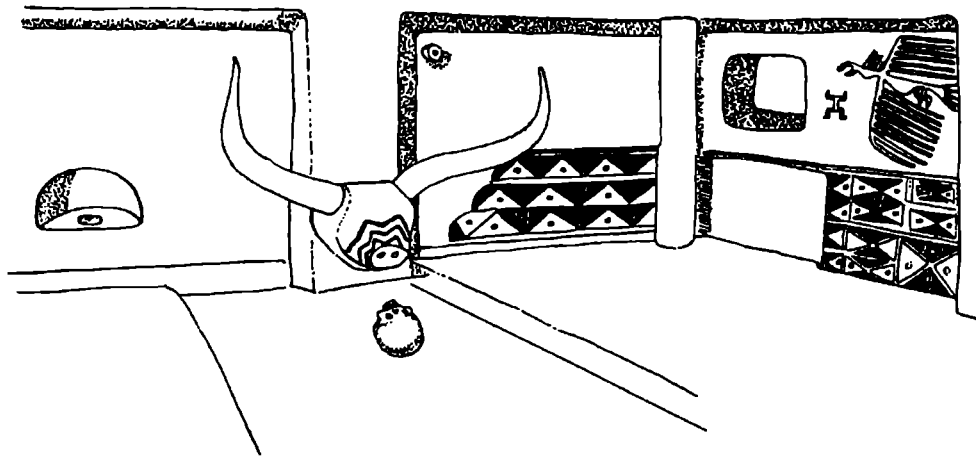


Fig. 2. Çatal Hüyük Sanctuary 21 (apud Mellart 1965)  
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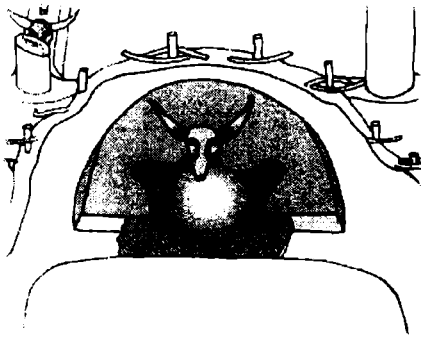


Fig. 3 Parța, Sanctuary 2, Est, door

Pieces like these, as the decoration from excising triangles and sometimes crusted in white, often appear on little cult altars of the Starčevo – Criș culture from the Banat and from other parts (Lazarovici 1969, fig. 8; 1971, fig. 4; 1979, pl. 10B). In the left of the buskull, in the wall is a semicircle niche, with a hole. Very probably there was set a certain piece. This reminds us about the sanctuary from Parța, the niche above the entrance from sunrise where an idol-bust was set in which was introduced a bus skull.

We believe that the deposition of the skull in this sanctuary, but also in others as from Çatal Hüyük (Mellaart, 1963; 1964; 1965) tights on human sacrifices and habits about the cult of skull (concerning this issue also the stone heads, (see Lazarovici – Maxim 1995, p. 179-182, pl. II, 380-381).

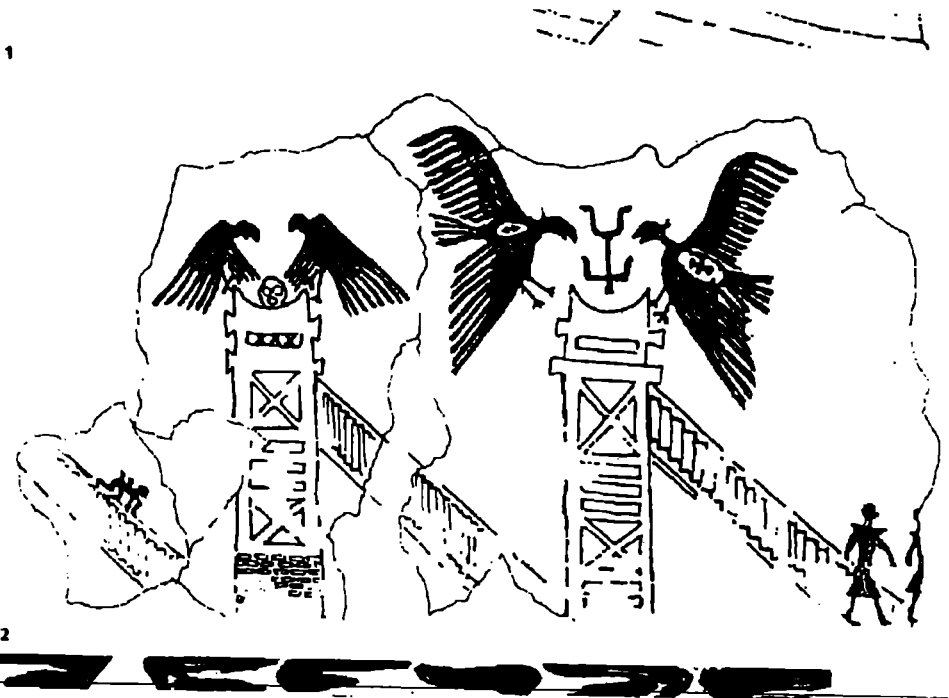


Fig. 4 Çatal Hüyük Sanctuary level VII, 26.

An eagle with human legs on the right wall is, which brought or is about to bring a human figure being without the head. That figure is in the neighborhood of a window set in the wall of the sanctuary. We do not know if by chance the Eagle with human figure was near the window, but we can now draw the attention on the bond between this and the window of soul (fig. 2).

We hold back the black triangles with black spots inside the sanctuary, symbol set on numerous cult Neolithic objects (altars, columns, idols: Lazarovici 1969, fig. 8, 1971, fig. 4; 1979, pl. X A-B).

In other sanctuary, level VII, 26 (fig. 4) seems to appear three altars. The first altar (the one from left reconstruction back fig. 5) is missing (introduced by us on Grey), but on the stairs descends an insect figure, which goes into the basis of altar 2. This could represent one of the stages, which it traverses.

At the second, on the altar is set a skull guarded by 2 eagles. The stairs descend to the third sanctuary, where two eagles bring the stylish figure and set it up side down in the altar, and from this on the stairs descend a pair of human figures (man and his couple the woman, our reconstitution fig. 4-5). Worth to memories is the signs on at the two eagles on the back: one has the arrow with two ends (the messenger of Gods?) and the other has the double axe (the power investment?).

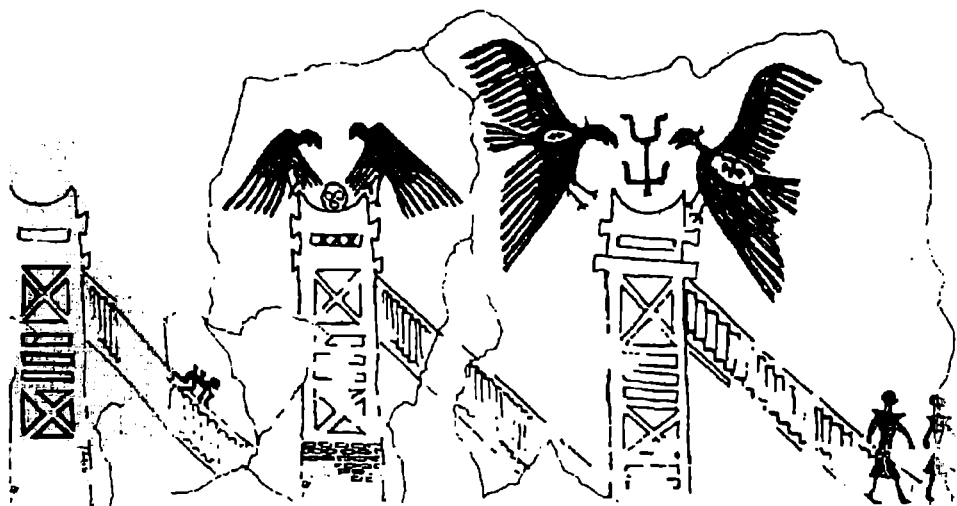


Fig. 5. Çatal Hüyük level VII, 26. Reconstruction Altars 1

The eagles from Çatal Hüyük are painted in red, symbol of life, said M. Gimbutas (Gimbutas 1989, p. 188, and fig. 285). We believe that they symbolize precisely the period of passing from Life to Death, rather symbolizing the transport of the body by the Eagle between the two worlds.

In some folk fairy tales, which traveled in the sunrise of Europe, the hero

Fat-The Beautiful searching for his lover, taken by the dragon over 7 sense and 7 countries in other worlds, gets on the back of an eagle to traverse the space between the worlds, which he committed it to transport him by threatening the eagle cubs.

**Number 7, symbolistic number appears:**

– **The 7 eagles** from Çatal Hüyük, may represent the 7 borders from the myths of Hell;

– **Seven doors of the inferior World**, in the Sumerian mythology, where Inana (the goddess of Venus star and of love) after crossing the 7 doors, is stripping of her clothes, arriving stripped in the inferior World – meaning without any power (Eliade 1981, p. 67; significant is the stripping from clothes of the woman when she is deprived from her power).

– **7 great gods** who decided the faith in the ancient Sumer (Krammer, 1962, p. 144);

– **7 judges** of the Anunaki hell in the legend of Innana – Eliade, 1981, p. 67; Ghilgameș arrives him (see Krammer 1962, 262 and the following);

– **7 seas and 7 countries or 7 worlds** met in different myths and fairy tale;

– **7 triangles** from the column from Căscioarele (Dumitrescu VI, 474, 481);

– **7 weights** from the loom in Sanctuary 2 from Pața (Lazarovici 2000);

– **7 small weights and 7 big weights** from the loom set on the benches from the two rooms, in the sanctuary from Sălcea (Ordentlich *Dicționar*, 257);

– **7 questions** asks Ghilgameș concerning the way people had from 1 to 7 children treated in the underground world (Krammer 1962, p. 262);

– **7 floors have the ziggurat** (7 planetary circle by; Eliade, *Cosmologie*, p. 34; *Morfologia religiilor*, p. 119);

– **7 terraces have the temple from Barabudur** (Eliade, *Cosmologie*, p. 34);

– **7 cats from the tree of life** has at Ugriens (Eliade, *Cosmologie*, p. 34);

– **7 symmetrical holes on the little sanctuary from Căscioarele, 4 temples up (the house of the 4 primordial gods);**

– **7 women with tress** after Women god (Daniel 1987, p. 123; culture Mohenndjo – Daro).

Concerning the symbols on the back of eagles we notice that those from the altar on the right have the double arrow as sign (fig. 6/2, being the one which brings and gives the message to the gods) and the other the double axe, sign of power, fig. 6/1, at other eagles on the feather are the trident, as it known as symbol of gods, of Poseidon, the god of waters fig. 6/4 and also from 3 to 5 parallel lines (fig. 6/3).



Fig. 6. Detail with scenes in which appear symbols the eagles from Çatal Hüyük  
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In the myths and legends of the Roman-Greek world Hermes turns into an eagle (*Legendele Olimpului, Typhoon*), being used as messenger or courier in heavens, mostly used by Zeus, and he also brought the dead people to Hades, in Hell (eagle *Legendele Olimpului*, p. 163, sec. *Hermes*).

Christians that bring the word to God represented by the verb consider the Eagle. The same himself is considered solar bird, his trajectory from sunrise to sunset is assimilated with *axis mundi* (Clebert, 1971, p. 71-72, Cevalier-Gheerbrant, 1975, p. 476).

**The resurrection.** In the most ancient sumer legends the Hell or the Greeks' Hades, in Jewish Şeol was called in the sumerian language Kur (or "The Big from Down"), having in the beginning the signification of the mountain, then space which separated the ground crust from the primordial sea. In that place were gathered all the shadows of dead people, there you could arrive after you traversed with a boat "the river consuming of people" under the lead of "the man with the boat", a Charon of the Summer (Krammer 1962, XX, p. 215). The first legend of resurrection is with 1000 years older than *The Bible* or *The Book of Isaia* (XIV, 9-11) which speaks about the death of the king of Babylon. It is about the death of the big king Ur-Nammu who arrives in the Kur city where begins to visit the 7 gods of Hell. That world has similar orders: the "scribe", "7 judges", "priests" who establish the residence of the newcomer.

Temporary returning from hell, with certain occasions are mentioned (*The Bible, The Book of Samuel XXVIII*) when the shadow:

- of Enkidu, going out from the Kur City, throw himself in the arms of his master and friend Ghilgameş (Krammer, 1962, XX, p. 217 and cap. XXII în *Epopea of Ghilgameş*);

- the goddess Inanna (in the Sumerian Inanna derived from Nin-anna which means the master of the Sky), the goddess of the Sky and Ground, called "The Big One from Up" descended in Hell and returned from "The Land without Returning" with the condition that her place be taken by demons and taken in Hell Dumuzi (Tamuz from *Biblie, Ezechiel*, VIII, 14) and who therefore becomes god of Hell, after her hand and leg turned into dragon parts.

- At the Akadiens, in the myth of the divine pair *Hieros gammos* the goddess of love Iştar (her correspondent in Sumer was Inanna) and Dumuzi her partner Tammuz in Summer (Eliade, 1981, p. 67). Dumuzi dies on the day of 18<sup>th</sup> of the month Tamuz (June/July) and revives 6 months later (on the New Years Eve when takes place the marriage *hieros gamos* with Inanna).

- The prophet Samuel is called from Şeol, at the request of King Saul.

The birds rendering by incisions, stylized, is a rarely apparition in Balkans. She appears mostly in the Turdaş and Vinča cultures, on the lids of vases (the owl Lazarovici 1973, 14/2, 27/12, 29/3-4,6; 32/7; 1979, pl. XXIIIA-B), rendering idols or night birds, the owl.

**Symbols concerning the Eagle.** Between the birds of sky (term which defines a series of birds with a mythic role) the eagle is considered the last stage of the animal life, its last metamorphosis (Clebert 1971, p. 28). The alchemists assimilate the eagle with the symbol of sublimation, the passing from solid state in gaseous state. This fact determines us to think at some folk expressions concerning the big passing where in the passage to death, life is compared with the smoke and the body from solid state passes into gaseous state (by leaving its soul or by burning).

The eagles often appear with human legs, and this association tight on their belonging to gods (Eliade, 1981, p. 47).

At Çatal Hüyük appears a scene concerning a creation in which **The mother Gea** with the baby in womb is attended by two pairs of eagles, the scene repeating itself on the Turkish cilims (Gimbutas, 1991, 138, fig. 7-29.3).

The Eagle is the king of birds, symbol of kings and emperors. The Eagle is considered substitute or messenger of the highest Uranian divinities and of the heavenly fire, the sun (Chevalier – Gheerbrant 1975, p. 475). The eagle is considered a primitive and collective symbol of father and all the paternity figures. The Eagle is symbol of the hunters and farmers, civilization, and also of the Uranian and Chthonian divinities. What is met at Çatal Hüyük, shows us how early appears the mythological allegory, in the 7<sup>th</sup> millennium, even in its first half since the discoveries from the first Neolithic sanctuaries date. The eagle appears as symbol of the duality Sky-Earth.

Setting the eagle on the eastern wall of the sanctuary can be interpreted as a signification of regeneration. The fact that other sanctuary from Çatal Hüyük the eagles bring figures on altars guarded by skulls and from these are birth, people, animals and other beings, we see in it the symbol of the regeneration of life.

In the Christian world it is believed that the Eagle takes soul of dead on its wings to bring it back to God, means the descendant of light on the ground (Chevalier – Gheerbrant 1975, p. 478).

We also find at Chevalier the idea that if the eagle is on the right part is a good auspicious, idea found in Iliada (Chevalier – Gheerbrant, 1975, p. 478). The presence of eagle in the sanctuary with skull is tight on the symbol of bad auspicious, the symbolistics of left, night, malefic. The black Eagle is the feminine symbol, the white Eagle is the masculine symbol, we ask the question concerning the eagles from Çatal Hüyük, some red (sanctuary E VII, 21) assimilated to fire, blood, so to life, others black (render maybe the carcass eagle).

There is another category of eagles, which appear in different mythologies, the Eagle which eats the carcasses, purifying, the Carcasses Eagle, being, both in America, and in Africa, the symbol of fertility and abundance (Chevalier – Gheerbrant, 1975, p. 481). At Çatal Hüyük the Carcasses Eagle is the one, that brings the body without head and deposits it on the altar guided by the skull or on other altars guided by eagles from which it regenerates a new life.

Bound on the Eagle flight, of the Gaia, of the raven or swan, these are forecasting signs, of good auspicious on the left: "the knowledge of the prayer of the Carcasses Eagle will be benefice to you on the ground of the thousands of fields". The night, between tenebrous and death, the eagle goddess Isis brings to life the soul which will revive in the dawn with these words: *Carcasses Eagle (mother) conceived during night thanks to your horn, Slave to you, cow brunt remained* (Chevalier – Gheerbrant 1975, p. 481).

**Eagle and Prometeu.** In This Myth eagle its messenger from Gods (Eliade, 1981, 269, p. 456).

*The raven beak* (Eliade, *Births*, and p. 83-84) or *the dentate vagina* is the passing between the worlds (to the ground entrails or to heaven).

In the folk Roumanian ceramic the eagle on the vase from Oboga (Petrescu, P., – Stoica, 1981).

*Representations of kidnappers on vessels:* A characteristic of the Vinča culture is the presence of vessels with lids. Some of these render different forms of birds (owl, Gaia) (Lazarovici, 1979, pl. XXIII/A3, 8-13; B9, 12, 18, 2223). We memorize that these vessels belong to some amphora and the lid has two holes on the top. More often these vessels are nicely colored. The most beautiful exemplars are in Banat from Parța (Gimbutas, 1989, plate 1) and from Zorlențu Mare (Lazarovici, 1979, p. 211, fig. 39).

The presence of the bullhead in the sanctuaries with eagles and in all the other sanctuaries is tight on the cult of bull, the cult of the creative force, representing the heavenly gods. The bull symbolizes the masculine militant spirit of the elementary power of the blood. But this, by the examples of some Mediterranean – Anatolian divinity (**Osiris** in Egypt, **Sin** in Mesopotamia and others in Persia; at Mongols, at Iakuți). So it is about the bull, a moony animal, bound on the night (Chevalier – Gheerbrant, 1995, p. 337). At Parța appears in the sanctuary in the sunrise room, ritual tight on the initiating in the mysteries of the sacred marriage (*hieros gamos*) between the Big Mother Goddess (Mater Gea, La Grand Mer) and the bull.

The association between night, sleep, death was often recalled, the bringing of the dead people by the Eagle, the bird of the death, and leaving in the account of night gods, suggests the big passage or the passage from the inconsiderable sphere, and it marks the returning of the earth peregrine in cosmos, said very eloquently Romulus Vulcănescu (Vulcănescu, 1987, p. 103).

In the funeral ethnology and the mythology of death, in the mythology of the big passage at Romanians it appears under the shape of the bird of soul, bird present on the funerary pillars, being pointed out by Florea Marian and Tache Papahagias R. Vulcănescu precises (Vulcănescu, 1981, p. 194, 198).

Along the millennia the archetype Life-Death-Life or Death-Regeneration appears, we believe, very early, once again together with the first civilization



from the Near Orient, shiny underlined in the sanctuaries from Çatal Hüyük as it has been shown above. Some are also mentioned in the Old Europe civilization, in the Neolithic civilizations from Balkans. They are hidden or displaced from a category to other.

The goddess from Çatal Hüyük appears as a young divinity (mother) giving birth to a child or a bull, old woman often accompanied by a kidnapping bird (Eliade, 1981, p. 47).

**Elements, which associate to the Regeneration, are:**

– **the buskull** (Gimbutas 1991, p. 431) which represents the regenerative utter (examples at Gimbutas, 1991, p. 431, 245, 256, 256, 7-35, 7-36), it may be associated with many other examples such as:

– **The double axe**, which appears on the feather of an eagle from Çatal Hüyük, appears in the hands of some minion goddesses or with other symbols from the same civilization (Gimbutas 1989) is associated with the buskull and the ritual corneas, in the Micenian, at Salamis, Cyprus (fig. 151), on the linear ceramics in Slovakia (Gimbutas 1984, p. 187, fig. 150, 1-2).

– **on one of the plates from Tărtăria**, Maria Gimbutas (1984, p. 88, fig. 43) sees 2 animals (goats?) and the tree of life suggests the celebrating sacrifice and the return to a new life; it also appears on the buskull plates, the double axe, the altar and other magic signs, the anchor, the bracelet from *spondylus*, the facile figurine and a mortuary mask, set in the hole of cult.

**The Romanian mythology.** Following in the Romanian mythology the role of the Eagle, we see it very modest. Some attributes are replaced by **Pajură** (Vulcănescu, 1987, p. 538) which was identified with the imperial eagle, supernatural bird, divine messenger, divine courser, pseudoavimorf demon, bringing messages to the goddesses and arhedemons, still the young girls, serves the demonic creatures of the forests and ground, the ally of the witches, beathes in the river of Jordan, in the fantastic fairy tales has the value of a civilizing hero.

From the Legends of the Fauna about the Eagle, we find out that they were ex-emperors turned into eagles by spellings, they live in the mountains, nestle on tops and look from up above as the emperors. They shout screams of grief, they feed with prey and dead bodies. The Eagle lady was an angel sent as messenger of God to feed two children left in the forest to dye. Another eagle lady from the other world comes to save the children who become emperors, and they take care of her till the death (legends from Muntenia – in the *Legends of the Fauna*, p. 334-335, after Mirea *Legends*; Marian *Ornithology*; Zanne, *The Proverbs of Romanians*).

**Gaia.** Gaia is a kidnapping bird with rusted feather, with hooked beak, with strong claws and the tail like a fork (Latin *Milvus milvus*) (*The Dictionary of the modern Romanian language*, s.v. gaie). The description of Gaia's characteristics, its features, of the symbolistic reminded us of a study started three years

ago (Ghinoiu, Iclod, 1996, at a seminar about death and regeneration). Gaia appears as mother of the gods. Therefore, after Hesiod (*Works and Days*, 108) about the creation, says that “the gods and dying people have the same origin”... because the people are born from Ground too (gegeineis) so as the gods were made by Gaia (maybe derivated Greek Gea, Eliade 1981, p. 266-267) since the first generation, in those goldy relatives.

From the study of Ioan Ghinoiu we notice that along the 8 millennia of civilization, some of the attributes which at Çatal Hüyük eagle had, at the Romanians they are set on the account of some relative of this one, Gaia, more present, more numerous, more active in the spiritual life of the Romanian people.

### **The significations of Gaia, bird goddess after Ioan Ghinoiu:**

- autogiving, the goddess of Regeneration and Transformation;
- the name of Gaia from her sound ga, ga; so called as’ “puhoieru”, the bird of the Turk, Gaia, the partner Cocogaia, the raven lady, the eagle;
- it takes the soul from death and the empty body by soul, Gaia, the Raven lady or the eagle by excarnation;
- the claws are for excarnation;
- the beak appears in Turkish, goat, Brezaia, synonym with the falus;
- the wings to transport the soul.

### **Gaia’s attributes, characteristics:**

- kidnapping bird, migrates, strong, cruel, apace, invincible is part from the series of kidnapping birds,
- forecasts and prays to God for rain, fruit and fertility,
- to find Gaia, watch out that Gaia takes you,
- games by Mother Gaia, by Old Woman Gaia, Gaia and the hatching hen, by the Chicken Gaia,
- takes the soul “Cock Gaia sang, he took the soul”,
- appears on the funeral pillars in the cemeteries from Oltenia and the south of Transylvania,
- on the painted eggs appears also Gaia and the eagle.

Should it add the name of the sacred Dacian mountaine’s Cogaion, is it a simple concord?

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