Early Cultural Attitudes Towards Women

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Abstract: In all cultures of the world, women seem to hold a special symbolic place as their multifaceted roles and purposes enabled the collective consciousness to associate them to magical powers and practices, to natural phenomena and supernatural dimensions. They are creators, they are muses, both powerful and delicate, both fertile and androgynous, earthly and astral, and therefore are extensively represented in rituals and art in such impressive, captivating and diverse manners that they seem infinite. A thorough analysis, though, reveals a number of universal attitudes and views towards the ways in which various civilizations understand and depict women.
Keywords: *mythology, women, deification, Mother Earth.*

If we consider Strabo's assertions according to which "especially women inspire men with fear of the divine" veridical [Strabon, 1974: 165], then we must take into account the woman's ability to imagine even since the first totemic generations of speaking humans [Churchward, 2007: 45], a mysterious cosmogony that substantiated "the celestial law, the absolute sign of justice and the foundation of nature" [Orfeu, 1970: 218]. The ability to imagine, easily noticeable in mankind's first religious books, surprises with a symbolic "tripartition" [Kabatek, 2017: XII] between "the *practical* world, the world of *religion* and the world of *fiction*" [Kabatek, 2017: XII] upon which it overlays the cosmological revelation of the woman, on three symbolic levels, *the virgin, the mother and the goddess*, respectively the *Sun, the Earth* and *the Moon*, to which as many initiatory dimensions correspond, all cosmically predestined, in synonymous formulations in all cultures of the world: "there are three (nornes) sage virgins, named *Urdr, Verdandi, Skuld* (past, present and future), which decide the fate of the people" [Young, 1954: 12], respectively "the three horae: *Good Order (Eunomia), Justice (Dike) and Peace* (*Eirene*)... caught in round dances" [Orpheus, 1970: 210], in which "the past and present are just a state of sleep, but we also exist in the past and in the future through the *immortal Spirit*" [Swami, 1884: 35], therefore through the *universal Self*, in this context the woman being not only the *particular Self*, but also the *matter*'s enigma, compulsory to be known through revelations, according to

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the verses of the *Prashna-Upanidhad (The Questions)*, in which Kabantih Katyayana asked "Who created all things?" and he was answered that: "The Creator, meditating on the world, imagined spirit and matter", in which the idea that "The Sun is the spirit, matter is the Moon" [Swami, 1884: 39] has its solid roots.

Therefore, not surprisingly, in every primary religion references to the initiating role of the wise virgins are encountered, "maidens of the dawns", the role of enlightenment being mentioned in the Finnic theories [Taylor, 1890: 125], but also by most of the historical known sources: "Hence come the maidens mighty in wisdom/ Three from the dwelling down 'neath the tree... Laws they made there, and life allotted/ To the sons of men, and set their fates" [Peterson, 1923: 9], the cosmic model of the wise maiden Tiamat, i.e. "the maiden of Life", the Moon [Legge, 1891: 181], within the polar civilization, establishing the totemic mystical revelation in the time of the lunar calendar, while "The moon knew not what might was his./ The stars knew not where their stations were." [Peterson, 1923: 4], and all these enticements towards cosmogony and mystery were decided by the gods, so of mystery, who "Through their sure counsel and by their great commands/ Ordained the renewal of the Moon-god,/ The reappearance of the moon, and the creation of the month,/ And ordained the oracle of heaven and earth" [Jastrow, 1917: 70]. "The sacred tree" is itself a symbol of universal fertility, "one of the concepts of primitive cosmogony was that of a prodigious tree which overshadowed the whole world" [Murray, 1900: 110], indicating that the very "eternal creation is a tree, with roots above, branches on the ground; pure eternal spirit, living in all things" [Swami, 1884: 37].

The maiden, "that pretty girl, the Goddess of Wisdom" [Swami, 1884: 22], who understood and passed on the laws of nature, is in fact the primary and rudimentary, if not deeply metaphysical, myth of the androgynous, because it represents the cosmological identity of the Maiden-Moon, whom the Sun hadn't yet separated with its sword; the Sun was still not called Aplu (translated as Red or the later name of Apollo), and the Moon, before being named Alba, still benefited from pre-Celtic names such as Eftepir (in Dacian), Lucia (in Latin), Maya (in Slavonic), Ishtar (in Sumerian), Issis (in Egyptian), Voluspo (in polar languages) etc., in this primordial age of the totemic language, "Sun and Moon (or cup) markings and fire symbols are very intimately connected with each other; it is difficult to separate them." [Murray, 1900: 29].

The body of the woman-maiden, both earthly and astral, renders such symbolic representations in the statutary expressions: willowy body, wrapped in fasciae disposed in the shape of a diamond (the initiation in the Mountain and the initiation in Heaven), the head and arms, summarily represented, rather as suggestions than as artistic expressed realities, imagining the shape of the cross, the cross representing the Sun and Sky, but as well Time, where "...the Sun is the eye of the world" as it is called in "Katha-Upanishad" [Swami, 1884: 36], and was defined as "a cross perishable in safety" – the leit-motif in Eesha-Upanishad [Swami, 1884: 15,16], and the totemic representations from the cross, that recall of the later "Celtic triangles", mark in fact, the Life's path (axis) between "the

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place from where the sun rises and the one from where the sun sets, all are comprised by Deva and no one passes beyond" [Swami, 1884: 16], the correspondence between the Universe and the human body being rooted in the verses of the first religious books of the humankind (Mandookya-Upanishad), in which Heavens represent the head, Sun - eye, Air - breath, Fire - heart, Water - belly, Earth - feet, and Space - body [Swami, 1884: 59]. In the Boreal Symbolics (Continental Europe), in which the head of the Maiden is represented under the form of a bud, the Heavens and Sun are represented as a unique and unitary identity and do not have distinct totemic representations, only the other elements (Air, Fire, Water, Earth and Space) being represented distinctively and always, over millennia, through the same symbols.

The maiden, daughter of the Earth, but also sister of the Sun, present in the Romanian mythology as Ileana Cosânzeana, reveals, after a thorough etymological research, other dimensions of the initial mysteries, lost in the customs' and traditions' permanent degeneration. "Ileana Cosânzeana reduplicates from a mythical perspective the anthropomorphic state of the moon... the sun depicted as a woman marks an androgynous prefiguration, which will later be a mythical figure indisputably feminine, the moon, with her anthropomorphic aspect, Ileana Cosânzeana" [Vulcănescu, 1987: 368], but the Romanian personification of one of the Shaman's "heavenly wives" in the "Shaman-wife relationship" [Eliade, 1987: 97, 88] derives from a universal status quo, in which "the name of Ileana derives from the Greek name *Ilia* - sister of the Sun Ilios, that after receiving the suffix *-iana* became Ili-ana, and by restraint, Ileana", but also from the Latin name Iana or Diana Iana, sister of the Sun for the Romans and goddess of the moon. And the second part of the name, Cosânzeana, derives from the Latin term "consensus" (an advisor, a divine counsellor), a particular title given to the 12 gods of the Olympus counsel, of which Diana was also part of. From the epithet Iana Consulens or Iana Consens derives the name that receives the suffix *-ana*, Cosentiana, and, by the aspiration of the consonant *t*, Cosenzeana, Cosânzeana" [Vulcănescu, 1987: 369].

In the time of the first totemic generations of humans that were able to speak, the name of the wise maiden was "Ma", ancient myths stating that the Earth had a girl – spring, which was called Ma (the month of May, this being the source whence it derives the dance with the "malanka" masks. This type of dances still is a Romanian custom, but it was moved around New Years Eve) because, in ancient times, the New Year began in May, Polybius mentioning that "the year was fulfilled at the rising of the Pleiades, for this was the manner in which time was measured" [Polybius, 1966: 373]. Mircea Eliade, as historian of religion, surprisedly discovered this monosyllabic primordial name in the European religions and later the Indic ones, in the latter acquiring other semantic values. "In the Indo-Germanic languages, the word defining the 'moon' is the oldest of all the words that make reference to the heveanly bodies. The root of the word is 'me', which in Sanskrit becomes 'mami', 'I measure' proving once again that the moon was the means by which time was measured"

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[Eliade, 1991b: 210]. Mircea Eliade took the term, along with a rather unfortunate expression, from a German philosopher who defined all the "preliterate" linguistic and symbolic relics, although it was known and written in all the works of the history and philosophy of culture that "Totemism is the first Sign Language in forms, symbols and ceremonies to express their ideas, thoughts and beliefs, it is a Sign Language in all its phases, which must have taken thousands of years to work out, and to read and understand which, you must take all separately; you cannot group them together" [Churchward, 2007: 48] and that the first generations of humans that had the ability to speak, because they did not know counting, called the initial couple BaBa, and the second phase, that of the Maiden Ma (Ma, for fertility), the phase of birth, MaMa, from where, in fact, it originates and is widespread, in most languages, the word "mama", referring to Mother Earth, in various cosmic or even mythical aspects: "Divine Gaia, good mother of gods and mortal men" [Orfeu, 1970: 191]; "Others were born from Gaia and Ouranos,/ three great and mighty children not to be named" [Hesiod, 1987: 9]; "The nature, skilled mother, the begetter of the whole world" [Orfeu, 1970: 191]; "The shadowed Gaia, mother of the Gods in Heaven" [Solon, 1970: 30]. Even time, in the remains of European ancestral memory, represents "the offspring of Gaia and of the sky bursting with stars" [Orfeu, 1970: 194], and the Titans, from whom we inherit the carols, are "the glorious children born from Gaia and Ouranos", "the origin and the beginning of the ancestral mankind", and hence "the parents of all nations in the world" [Orfeu, 1970: 207], being notorious the fact that "Heaven which by it is bright and pure/ Earth rendered thereby firm and sure/ Spirits with powers by it supplied/ Valleys kept full throughout their void/ All creatures which through it do live/ Princes and kings who from it get/ The model which to all they give." [Legge, 1891: 81].

These primordial symbols of the woman-mother also persisted in the Romanian mythology, but as remains of the late mysteries, the clearest example being the "funeral of the Caloian", occasion for "making sacrifices (almsgivings), asking the young man (parable to the ritual of sending a messenger to Zalmoxis) to pray to the Heaven (the Lord) to give 'Lots of water to wet us,/ so as many fruits to grow!'." After three days, the little coffin was exhumed, taken to a stream and thrown in so as to be carried away (as in the real funerals of the Germanic, Scandinavian and Celtic peoples), the final sacrifice (almsgiving) being a pie ("ghizmana") and other dishes necessary for a party just like one from the ancient Dacia, where there were also young men present, who also brought wine and fiddlers. In some villages, the votive offerings were represented by two statuettes, the Father of the Sun and the Mother of the Rain." [Drăguşanul, 2005: 27].

The same status of the woman-mother, Mother Earth, which continues that of the Maiden Ma (spring), can be found in all cultures of the world, as a verse from the Mahabdarata states, "through the light of history, which destroys the darkness of ignorance, everything between the four corners of the world is

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completely enlightened" [Swami, 1884: 6] because "looking to the various people in different parts of the world, all having the same totemic ceremonies, the same signs and symbols, the same works of rude arts, all point most conclusively to one common origin" [Churchward, 1913: 45]. In the ancient Sumerian culture there are proofs of the religions' succession through the effect of "the Shepherd lost his flock", successions in which "the Gods of heaven and earth invoked the name of Anu and Enlil", thus of Heaven (Anu) and of the first initiator (The Great Shepherd, "Enlil of the Mountain"), which become "the soul of heaven and the soul of earth" [Legge, 1891: 65].

The body of the woman-mother, Mother Earth or, with distinct totemic meanings (for example, the exceedingly large feet), the Goddess of the Hearth, comprises more or less symbolic elements of the human face, the voluptuous parts of the body are represented with exaggerations of the round parts, and the totemic symbols are embedded only on the legs, thus on the fragment of the body that symbolizes the Earth. Likewise, the fertile womb, materialization of Water, is boldly curved, suggesting both an earthly and heavenly roundness.

Both female identities, maiden and mother converge to the final meaning, that of the goddess, whether that goddess is the Moon or, later, planet Venus, or it is the Earth or Nature. The representations are often linear, but in some cultures dedicated to the moon, such as the Egyptian or the Sumerian one, there are also double body representations, in which the woman is a Queen, thus an empress between Heaven and Earth. Thus, a materialisation of the spirit and a spiritualization of the matter take place, in a strange mythical and mystical fusion of *the worldly that ascends towards divinity* and of *the transcendent that descends* [Vulcănescu, 1987: 362]. And if "the first cosmic symbols, veritable mental syntheses that link different levels: Moon, Woman, Earth, fertility" [Eliade, 1991b: 210, 211], propose a "tripartition" [Kabatek, 2017: XII] rather symbolic between "worlds" more likely revealed than known, this tripartition is being shattered with the emergence of regional organized religions, which have to justify and sanctify social and historical orders. And the poetic symbolism of the first stylistic creations, in which we include the "initial state" [Guenon, 1998: 37] or Customs, would degenerate, first, through the deification of the attributes of the Universal Spirit [Swami, 1884: 31], despite the belief that "nothing that is eternal can be produced by what is not eternal" [Mundaka-Upanishad, I, 12: 32], and that "the law of degradation of meaning, understanding by this any alteration, any loss or oblivion of an original significance... a law that is mostly verified in folklore – where certain gestures and verbal formulae are preserved even after their primordial function and original meaning have been lost", both in the semantic and mythical plan, the primordial profound metaphysical values being altered proportionally with the civilization's gains, because "the history of the mankind's mental life, far from having a permanent evolution, experienced a series of degradation and death of the fundamental institutions", but this "slow decay of some mental synthesis, in no way inferior to the syntheses that followed, may be reconstructed in its most important stages" [Eliade, 1991a: 13].

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Once with *the descent of the transcendent* and, thus, with the deification meant for the transformation of the heavenly bodies into human beings, that travel through time and space, the deified woman has royal attributes and apparel that combine the imperial with sacredness. *The Son of Heaven* appears in almost all religions, and especially in the Egyptian, Sumerian and Chinese ones, as the state ruler of some territories and peoples, and his great souls' Shepherd's crook turns into a sceptre. As a *Goddess*, the woman attains the sublime, both in spirit and in the spiritual-material images of her body. Nothing of what existed was lost, especially that, in the mystical dimension, the virtues of the Wise Maiden and Mother Earth were found reunited, in variable proportions in the annual feasts that keep the rhythm of a cosmic march all across the earth. This representation and image of *Goddess* constitutes, in fact, throughout the entire story of human civilization, the unique and stable dimension of the *Woman*, which we are obliged to pass on to future generations.

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