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PRESERVING ANCIENT SYMBOLS IN RURAL AREAS OF BANAT. THE CONTINUITY AND PURSUIT OF LOCAL IDENTITY

COLGIA FLORINA-ARIANA¹, TEODOR MATEOC-SIRB¹, NICOLETA MATEOC-SIRB¹

Abstract: Traditions, folk costumes and symbols play a central role in preserving the cultural identity of Romanians. The transmission of these elements from one generation to another preserves history, customs and national values. In this article, the authors highlight that traditional costumes, with motifs and colors specific to each region, reflect the cultural diversity of the country and local pride. Symbols, such as bracelets or floral motifs, express the beauty and spirituality of Romanian communities. By preserving these elements, folk culture becomes a bridge between the past and the present, strengthening the sense of belonging. In addition, the transmission of traditions contributes to the promotion of national identity both in the country and abroad. This stimulates respect for authentic values and encourages the preservation of cultural diversity. In conclusion, folk traditions and symbols are essential for maintaining and promoting Romanian cultural heritage.

• Introduction

The symbols of the traditional costumes from Banat seems to originated from the goddess Isis and appear to be the same symbols and the same colours even after thousands of years. Isis holds a cross in her hand, similar to Byzantine crosses, found in the embroidery on the Banat costume.

Ancient Egyptian mythology and religion portray Isis as the goddess of magic, of life, the goddess of marriage, a symbol of marital harmony as well as of a woman's fidelity to her husband.

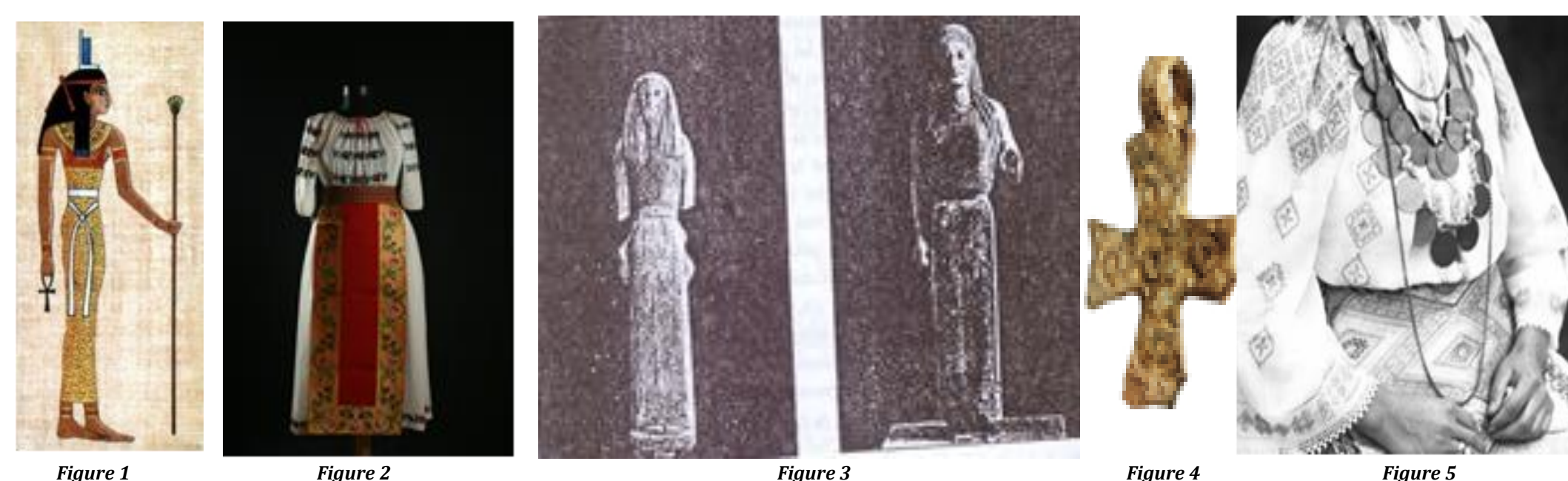


Fig. 1 Isis Goodes (Source: <https://www.psychicsophia.com/isis/>)

Fig. 2 Traditional costumes Marius Matei Collection

Fig. 3 Female statuettes from the island of Delos and from the Pelasgian period (Source: Densușianu N. 2002, Pag. 82)

Fig. 4 Byzantine cross (Source: <https://zaksantiquities.com/shop/artifacts/bronze-artifacts/byzantine-cross-2/>)

Fig. 5 The shirt of the Banat folk costume (șiu pag), Chizătău, Timiș County with the sign of the cross, Chizătău, Timiș County (<https://www.muzeul-etnografic.ro/>)

Isis holds a cross in her hand, similar to Byzantine crosses, found in the embroidery on the Banat shirt.

Adorning the head is very important in the Banat folk costume. Over time, the decoration of the head has become more symbolic, just like the embroidery on the costume.

The traditional women's costume from Banat covers the head, body, and leg coverings. It varies depending on the season, but the predominant materials are wool, hemp, linen, and leather.

• Material and method

The research methodology uses methods and techniques adapted to the subject matter, namely a bibliographic study conducted through scientific documentation, which went through several stages: gathering information on sources, collecting data, processing, and analysing them. The main methods used are direct observation, comparison, and content analysis.

• Results and discussions

Married women, through the adornment of their heads, even in the second half of the 20th century, showed us that the symbol of the sun had not yet disappeared from the popular culture of Banat. Braided and circularly styled hair was an initial symbol of the sun disc. Then, wearing a bun or a headpiece decorated with gold (or silver) coins, during holidays, indicated the symbolic preservation of the connection with the light of the sun (Apollo-the father) and the moon (Iana or Diana), the legend also found in the area of today's Dobrogea, in the country called Istria in antiquity.

Tassels or little decorations always accompany the attire of girls and women, as well as that of small children and of horses, foals, calves, lambs, and animal chicks. The knot of Isis is a term known to this day and represents life. It also symbolizes the magical powers of the goddess Isis, which allow her to grow protective wings.

The lace adorns the bottom of the skirt, which resembles a tassel, as well as the identical hem of the shirt's sleeves. It can also be considered that the hem is also a zig-zag element, a symbol used on ancient vessels. Isis is also present in the knot of the braids that tie the girls' hair.

For women, tassels hang from the headscarf, sometimes down to the waist, and sometimes even the hem is made of tassels (as in the dance costume from the Banat plains); in small children and young animals, these are placed around the neck. Tassels are also present on the straps on the horses' heads.



Bun or a headpiece decorated with gold or silver coins, tassels hang from the headscarf, the knot of Isis in the girl's hair and around the neck of small children.
Source: Personal archive and Tipa V., Gogolan A., 2010

Mater Gaia statue, similar to the upper part of the Banat folk costume
Source: Densușianu N., 2002 and Tipa V., Gogolan A., 2010

In the Romula Malva fortress, a statuette called Mater Găea was found, which in Romanian culture is identified with Baba Caia or Maia, and has the same shape, in the upper part, as the traditional costume from the Banat plain region.

• Conclusions

The analysis highlights that head decorations in women's folk costume are symbols of the sun and the goddess Isis, and on shirts, skirts, and aprons, the influence of several gods can be identified.

There is also an order regarding the sewing of the costume and the weaving of the bands, as well as in wearing it. Everything was symbolic, everything was hidden from the profane, but clearly presented to the community.

From the present research, several conclusions clearly emerge: the existence of a civilization with the same beliefs, not only in the Banat region but also in the areas we today call Transylvania, Dobrogea, Oltenia, the Tisza region, and even further, Italy, France, Greece. These populations adopted the same deities, whose protection and goodwill were carried daily on their clothing.

The infinite creativity of women, who sewed and wove symbols and thus carried the written story of their beliefs from one generation to another, thereby achieving a continuity of our local identity.