

SOME PERIPHERAL FORMS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN AND ORIENTAL ZODIAC TRADITIONS IN HEATHEN LITHUANIA

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Abstract

I have previously presented some evidence concerning the possibility of a Baltic zodiac, documented by archaeological artefacts and supported by historical sources (Vaiškūnas 2000). It seems clear that such knowledge was imported into the Baltic region from Classical and Medieval cultures to the south. If the Baltic zodiac was a simple copy of the Mediterranean one, it would be of minor interest for the iconography of Baltic constellations, but in the Baltic versions we observe very important differences from the Classical model. In this paper I analyse the relevant traditions in more detail and discuss these differences in the hope that it can offer us valuable information about sky mythology in northern traditions.

Key words: ethnoastronomy, zodiac, constellations, mythology.

Introduction

The analysis of the decorations on a large wooden scoop (Fig. 1) found in the basement of the church in Grodno has presented strong arguments for the hypothesis that a distinctive zodiac was widely used in Lithuania in the late Middle Ages (16th c.) (Vaiškūnas 2000).

It is known that wooden scoops played an important role in pagan rituals in the Baltic and Slavic countries. In Lithuanian and Byelorussian museums there are several ancient drinking scoops, but the Grodno example is exceptionally large (half a metre in diameter). The reason for including a pagan ritual scoop among church furniture in the 16th and 17th centuries could very well have been the resistance of local people to its destruction or rejection. Using it to hold ancient objects of veneration could also have been a way of attracting people to the church. It is supposed that the Grodno scoop served as a baptismal font. When it was discovered, its surface was completely covered with polychromatic paintings typical of the 17th-century Christian tradition (Pan'shyna 1987, p.18). This later polychrome covered an earlier monochromatic linear decoration in which we recognize a pagan version of the zodiac. The scoop was taken to Moscow for restoration and it was there that the upper coat of polychrome was taken off and the older decoration uncovered.

Up until now there have been a lot of unanswered questions concerning the circumstances and details both of the discovery of the scoop and of its restoration. It is essential to know what scenes were depicted in the polychromatic painting. Only a small fragment of one of these paintings has been preserved near the handle on the outer surface of the scoop (Fig. 2). We see a bearded man wearing a big conical fur cap and looking as if he is holding a baby in his arms. It might represent a baptismal scene, in which case the complete decoration may have represented the whole ritual of baptism. This is very probable, taking in account that the scoop was used in the church for baptismal purposes. There are also polychromatic paintings preserved on the inner side of the scoop, but unfortunately these are not

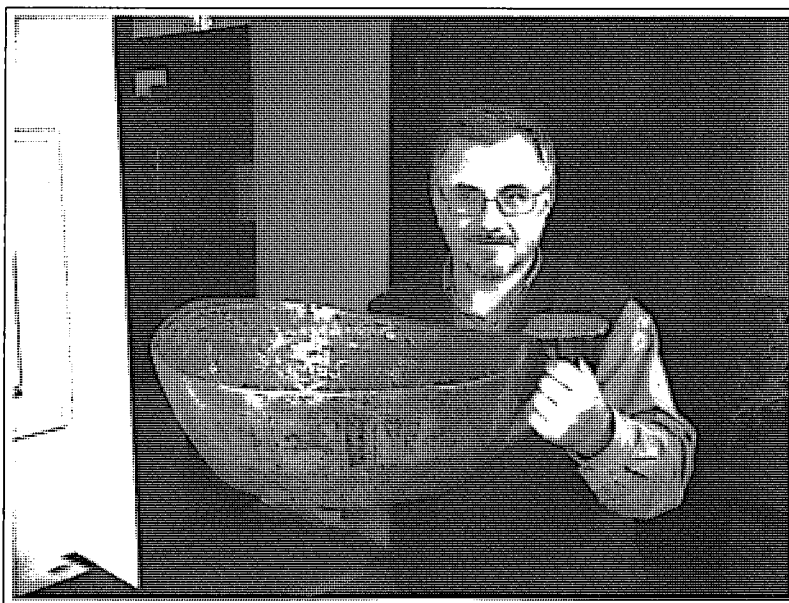


Fig. 1. The ancient ritual scoop being held by the author (Raubichi Folk Arts and Crafts Museum, Byelorussia, 2007). Photograph by J.Vaiškūnas.



Fig. 2. A extant fragment of a polychromatic painting on the scoop. Photograph by J.Vaiškūnas.

informative as they consist only of depictions of vegetables. Some hope remains of eventually discovering the contents of the former Christian painting, because the restoration took place in 1956 and 1968 when it was customary to keep a full photographic record. This documentation must have survived somewhere.

Zodiacal signs on the scoop

Even more questions arise when we come to the original circle of 12 signs, executed using an archaic monochromatic technique. The ancient pictures are laid out around the outer surface of the scoop in a band 10 cm in height. Each of the 12 pictures is framed by geometrical ornamentation. The presence of images of the sun on most of the signs suggests that they are closely related to the sun's pathway through the stars, i.e. the zodiac. Images 4, 8, 10 and 11 in the sequence counting clockwise from the handle of the basin can easily be associated with the traditional zodiacal signs of **Gemini (4), Libra (8), Sagittarius (10) and Capricorn (11)** (Fig. 3; Plate III: 4; Plate IV: 8, 10, 11). Furthermore, the position of these signs in the sequence shows that this is not just coincidence. We can conclude that the pictures on the scoop undoubtedly represent the signs of the zodiac. Starting clockwise from the handle of the scoop we then have these signs (Fig. 3; Plate III: 1-6; Plate IV: 7-12):

1. (An image difficult to interpret) – 'Pisces'.
2. A figure in a fur coat – 'Aries'.
3. A horse rider (riding from the right to the left) – 'Taurus'.
4. Two fighting warriors with two Suns between them – 'Gemini'.

5. A bird reminiscent of a peacock (orientated to the left) with the Sun above its back – 'Cancer'.
6. A bird reminiscent of a peacock similar to the mentioned one in 5, but orientated to the right with the Sun above its back – 'Leo'.
7. A bird reminiscent of a crane or a stork (orientated to the right) with the Sun above its back – 'Virgo'.
8. Two Suns (one in the bottom-left corner of the frame with rays like a swastika and the other in the top-right corner with straight rays) – 'Libra'.
9. A big and a small deer with two Suns (one in the top-left corner of the frame with rays like a swastika and the other in the bottom-right corner the straight rays) and Moon (?) between them – 'Scorpio'.
10. A warrior with a pike in his right hand above his head and a disc of the Sun under his hand – 'Sagittarius'.
11. A goat galloping (from the right to the left) and the Sun above its back – 'Capricorn'.
12. A horse galloping (from the right to the left) and the Sun above its back – 'Aquarius' (Vaiškūnas 2000, p. 321).

A comparison of this Baltic scoop zodiac (BZ) and the traditional zodiac (TZ) permits us to distinguish 3 groups of zodiacal signs on the scoop. They are:

- I. The signs preserving the same image as the TZ signs, namely Gemini (4), Libra (8), Sagittarius (10) and Capricorn (11).
- II. Signs that differ from the TZ, but which can be understood as a variant: Aries (2) and perhaps Pisces (1).
- III. Six signs that are absolutely original and differ completely from their equivalents in the TZ: Taurus (3), Cancer (5), Leo (6), Virgo (7), Scorpio (9) and Aquarius (12).

These three groups of signs seem to reflect the collision of two traditions – the Mediterranean and the Baltic (or perhaps even a wider, north-eastern European pagan tradition). The drastic replacement of certain signs of the zodiac with others that were completely different could be the result of a strong attachment to local mythological traditions.

This seems especially likely if the imported zodiac was used for practical purposes, i.e. if it served not only as a magical set of symbols but also as an observational star calendar corresponding to a distinctive local tradition – in other words, to well-rooted local constellations. An indication that this could be the case is that the first sign of the BZ is not that of Aries but that of Pisces. Thus, it seems, the local tradition took into account the real position of the vernal point and not the conven-

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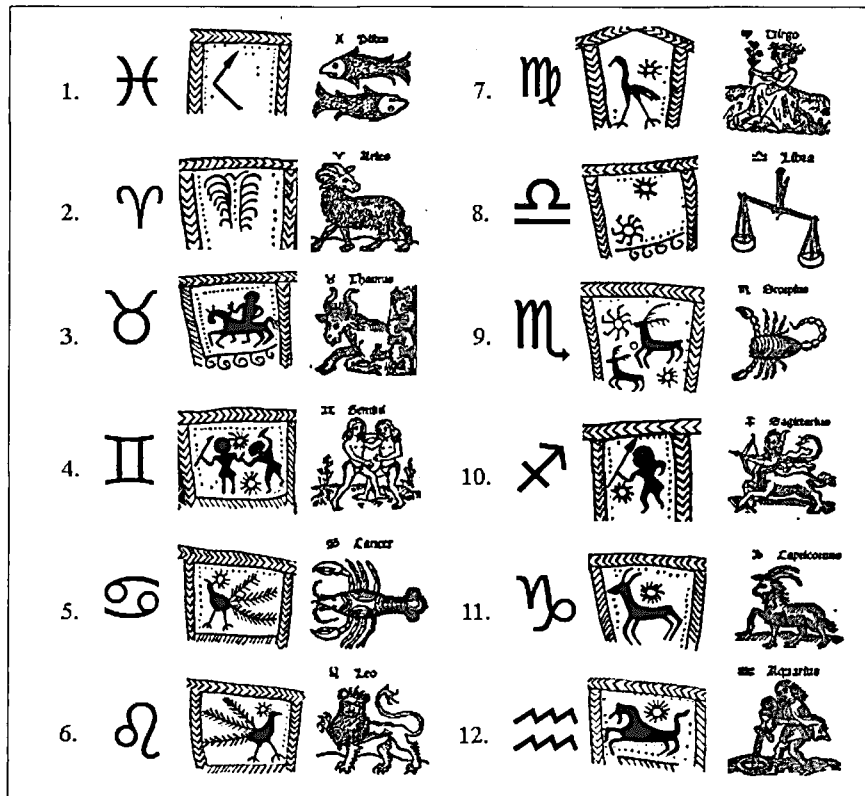


Fig. 3. The signs of the Baltic scoop zodiac (BZ) alongside European zodiacal signs from 16th-century medieval woodcuts.

tional one fossilized at the end of the first millennium BC. This implies that the classical Mediterranean zodiac was not merely imported but adapted to local use within a distinctive calendrical tradition based on actual observation of the sky. Let us accept this as a starting hypothesis in order to try and understand the six enigmatic signs. For this, we will need to investigate local calendrical traditions. As the folk calendar traditions that have reached modern times are mostly syncretic in character, it will be useful to examine some elements of the Christian calendrical tradition and in particular Christian hagiography, which has absorbed a great deal of pagan calendrical symbolism.

As shown in one of my previous studies, some of the BZ images are linked with winter solstice and Shrove Tuesday carnivals masks from the Baltic, Slavonic and other European nations. The most characteristic carnival characters are **a goat, a horse, a horse rider, a crane and a deer**, all of which are also found among the BZ signs. This permits us to suggest that the carnival figures had a solar-cosmological meaning and to explain them as a procession of mythic-astral creatures bringing back the imprisoned Sun to the world (Vaiškūnas 2000).

Zodiacal signs and seasonal calendar

N. Laurinkiene has studied the semantics of archaic Lithuanian calendar songs and revealed their main

distinguishing symbols, motives for cosmological imagery, and myths. She independently distinguished the following images in their order of principal occurrence: water, a tree, **a deer, a horse, a peacock**, a building, a bridge, swingers, fire, and *Kalėda* (Laurinkiene 1990, p.83). We can see that the three zoomorphic signs in this list also occur in our eccentric BZ list: **a deer (9), a horse (12), and a peacock (5-6)**. It is interesting to note that these signs are 90 degrees apart from each other in the Baltic Zodiac and mark quarters of the zodiac circle. If we join the constellation of Taurus, which corresponds to the rider, to these signs then we obtain a cardinally oriented cross dividing the zodiacal circle into four parts. This subdivision coincides with the so called Persian Cross comprising the four Royal Stars of Persia (Aldebaran, Regulus, Antares, Fomalhaut). These Guardians of the Sky were noticed by Persian astrologers around 3000 BC and used as a rudimentary seasonal calendar.

All four of these stars are among the brightest 25 stars in the sky, having an apparent magnitude of less than +1.5. However, this particular set of stars was chosen because they are distributed around the sky at approximately six-hour intervals in right ascension. The reason why they are called "royal" is that they appear to stand aside from the other stars in the sky. Throughout a year, each star is "dominant" for several months in the night sky and one can guess the season simply by noticing which star is dominant.

Lithuanian ethnoastronomical data provide evidence that an analogous four stars, corresponding to the four parts of the world, might have been familiar in the traditional folk calendar (Vaiškūnas 1993, p.334). However, there is no documentary evidence to suggest which particular stars were used. On the other hand, it is widely known that the heliacal rise of the Pleiades and Sickle asterisms, within the constellations of Taurus and Leo respectively, are associated with the beginning of spring and summer seasonal labours. Thus we have direct proof that in the traditional folk calendar these constellations were familiar as seasonal markers. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the seasonal star calendar might have been based on the observation of the heliacal rise and set of the constellations that marked seasonal periods of labour.

We have distinguished the synodic positions of the BZ signs that might have been linked with the following significant calendar dates in the 16th century:

Leo – Peacock		
Heliacal rising	~ IX.23	Autumn equinox
Heliacal setting	~ VII.23	Beginning of rye harvest
Morning culmination	~ I.25	Midwinter, holy day “a Colt baptizing”
Evening culmination	~ IV.23	St. George, beginning of spring labours
Scorpio – Deer		
Heliacal rising	~ XII.23	Winter solstice
Heliacal setting	~ IX.23	Autumn equinox
Evening culmination	~ VI.23	Summer solstice
Aquarius – Horse		
Heliacal rising	~ III.23	Spring equinox
Heliacal setting	~ I.25	Midwinter, holy day “a Colt baptizing”
Morning culmination	~ VII.23	Beginning of rye harvest
Evening culmination	~ XII.25	Kalėdos Christmas
Taurus – Rider		
Heliacal rising	~ VII.10	“Seven sleeping brothers”: the beginning of the rainy days of summer (Vaiškūnas 1999)
Heliacal setting	~ IV.23	St. George, beginning of spring labours
Morning culmination	~ IX.10	Autumn sowing time
Evening culmination	~ II.25	St. Matthew, day when the lark returns

Leo – a Peacock

In the mythologies of various nations of the world, the image of a peacock is widely associated with astral symbolism – starting with the allegorical image of the peacock tail to represent the starry sky. In the ancient mythologies of Egypt, India and Southeast Asia

a peacock is considered to be a solar symbol (MNM II 273). The image of a magic bird with glowing feathers, which occurs in the folklore of various nations of the world, is also linked with a peacock. The most familiar images are those of the Russian “zhar-ptica” and Slovak “fire bird”.

The peacock is characteristically represented as a cosmological and astral symbol in the folk songs of Baltic, Slavic and other European nations (Laurinkienė 1990, p.81-83; Tokarev 1988, p.273-274). In Lithuanian and Russian tales we come across its analogue – a magic bird with glowing golden feathers. This bird is mentioned in fairy tales along with a glowing horse and a very beautiful girl *Aušrinė* – Venus. The hero of the tales brings back the girl, the horse and the bird from the prison of some chthonic creature that had seized them (Vėlius 1994, p.116-129). In the astronomical code this liberation might correspond to the first appearance of a celestial body, representing the hero of the myth, after its temporary invisibility, i.e. to the heliacal rise of a celestial body. If so, it could be linked to the emergence of Venus after a period of invisibility as well as the heliacal rise of **Aquarius (the horse) at the spring equinox and Leo or Cancer (the Peacock) at the autumn equinox**¹.

A motif occurs in East Slavonic songs where an image of a peacock is linked with the rising Sun and early morning: “Early in the morning the sun was dancing, la, la, lio, even earlier a peacock had been flying” (Laurinkienė 1990, p.82).

As we have already mentioned, the heliacal setting of Leo at the end of July is linked with the beginning of the rye harvest. Herein lies the origin of the name of the asterism in Leo known as the Sickle.

The stars of Leo and Cancer culminate before dawn about the beginning of November. Virgo, which corresponds to the Crane in the BZ, rises to the east of them. This triplet of BZ stars stretches from the east to the south covering half of the sky. November 11th is linked with birds in the folk calendar. This day is ascribed to St. Martin, the patron of birds. Lithuanians, Latvians and other European nations considered that St. Martin’s day marked the beginning of winter (Lideks 1991, 518, 227; Tokarev 1983, p.97). On this day, Samogitians used to take a goose to church to offer it up. Goose was

¹ It is worth mentioning that in various world traditions Venus and Regulus are frequently confused. For example, Mesopotamian iconography shows Ishtar standing on a lion. In any case, the sign of the lion marks the Caniculus and is initiated on July 22nd by Saint Maria Magdalena, a Christian continuation of Venus. It is possible that parallel traditions were present in pagan North Eastern Europe, with Maria Magdalena being the Morning Star (A. Lebeuf, personal communication, 2007).

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eaten on this day as a seasonal dish and it was called Martin's goose (Poška, 360-361; Lebeuf 1996, p.150-151). On Martin's day the Latvians used to offer up chickens and eat them (Lideks 1991, p.218-222).

Aquarius – a Horse

Replacing the sign of Aquarius with the Horse does not seem accidental bearing in mind that it is usual to depict horses next to Aquarius, examples being the Greek Pegasus and the Little Horse (Equuleus) and the Babylonian Horse (Rogers 1998, p.22-24). A constellation known as the Horse is familiar in Baltic and Slavic traditions. However, it is not reliably identified with particular stars.

A mythical horse is depicted in the Lithuanian calendar and in Latvian mythological songs. In Latvian song, a cosmic horse is directly linked with the dome of the sky and the ecliptic. It is said that the Sun rises at the saddle of the horse and the Moon rises at its bridle; and at the end of the reins *Auseklytis* (Venus) is rolling (Laurinkiene 1990, p.77-78).

Bearing in mind that the Horse serves as the Aquarius sign of the zodiac, it is interesting to note a visible link between a magic horse and water in Lithuanian and Russian fairy tales (NRS 133). Sometimes we notice that water seems to be the horses's living place. Such a horse or horses appear from the seas and are able to rise into the sky. A similar image of a horse can be traced in Celtic traditions. A ruler of the afterworld island *Riangabair* "the horse of the seas" was familiar to the Celts (MNM I p.636). Considering the Babylonian tradition linking the area of the constellation Aquarius with the cosmic ocean, replacing this sign with the symbol of the "Horse of the Seas" does not seem accidental. A reconstructed Lithuanian calendar festival called *Kumeliuko krikštynos* 'Baptism of the Colt' or *Krikštai* 'Baptisms' might also be linked with the image of the sky horse. It was celebrated all night long at the end of January or at the beginning of February. A. J. Greimas considered this festival to be lunar in character and maintained that it was the Lithuanian New Year (Greimas 1990, p.320-322). The position of the Horse in the BZ does not contradict A. J. Greimas' hypothesis. Aquarius is the last (12th) sign of the zodiac and its heliacal setting exactly coincides with the all-night celebration of the Colt baptism at the end of January and beginning of February. It is significant that the heliacal rise of the Horse constellation coincides with the spring equinox.

The zodiac considered here differs from the classical Mediterranean one in that the latter takes note of the situation of the Sun in each constellation and thus of

the period of invisibility of that constellation, while the northern zodiac proposed here marks the first or last apparition of a constellation over the horizon.

Scorpio – a big and a small deer

Many researchers have studied the cosmological image of a mythical deer. T. Gamkrelidze and V. Ivanov (Gamkrelidze 1984, 519) maintained that a mythological deer might embody a constellation. V. Tumėnas supported this view using Lithuanian data (Tumėnas 1992, p.64).

In Bulgarian and Russian folk songs a heavenly deer is directly linked with the ecliptic and celestial bodies travelling in it: "– God turned himself to the deer / with a bright sun on his forehead, / with a moon on his chest, / with lots of stars over his body" (Bulgarian song); "I was on the bank of the Danube... / a deer was drinking water... / a new moon was on his right thigh, / and a bright sun on his left thigh, / oh, in front there was a morning dawn / oh, lots of stars under the deer" (Russian song) (Bernsham 1990, p.32).

In Lithuanian folklore a mythical deer is linked with Christmas celebrations. Folk songs sing of a deer with nine antlers, where a fire is burning and smiths are forging metal. The smiths make a golden cup, a golden ring or a crown of pearls, which symbolizes the Sun (Greimas 1990, 468). According to Lithuanian and Latvian mythology, a heavenly smith forged the Sun and hung it in the sky. Ipatij's manuscript (around 1252) and an insertion (1261) in the Russian translation of the Chronicle by John Malala mentions this heavenly smith and calls him *Teliaveli* (BRMŠ I p.260, 266).

It is not only the appearance of the Sun but also its further destiny that is linked with a smith and with forging. E. S. Piccolomini (Pope Pius II), in his 1477 book, mentioned a Baltic tribe that worshipped a huge iron hammer, with the help of which the Sun was released from "the strongest tower", into which it had been locked by some powerful king. It is maintained by the tribe that the signs of the Zodiac or some Giant with a powerful hammer broke into the tower where the Sun was imprisoned (BRMŠ I p.589, 591, 595; Vaiškūnas 2000, p.319).

The Sun, then, is linked with the Heavenly smith and he is linked in turn with a deer of nine antlers and with Christmas. Stories about a white deer, which appears at Christmas, are still remembered now. As recently as 1984 a story was recorded in Southern Lithuania: "... children, wait and look through the windows – a deer will come. ...he will be very nice /.../ white, white /.../ with a wonderful wreath /.../ his feet will be white,

so you can distinguish him... He fell, they say, from the sky, so the clouds washed his tail and coloured his hoofs. And when deer appears from the forest then Christmas will come” (Ragevičienė 1996, p.9).

The appearance of the deer before Christmas might be linked with the heliacal rise of the stars of Scorpio. This constellation is released from the rays of the Sun and some of its stars appear over the south-east horizon just before Christmas.

In various European nations there is a very close link between the deer that brings back the Sun and the Christmas patron (Saint Nicholas, Santa Claus, Papa Noel, Father Christmas, etc.) who comes riding with deer. Santa Claus resembles the image of the returning Sun itself when he comes sitting in a sleigh with his deer in harness, wearing red clothes and delivering gifts. In Lithuanian folklore the image of the rising or riding cart and the Sun delivering gifts is well known. It is supposed that Lithuanian Christmas songs about *Kalėda*, who comes riding in cart and delivering gifts, are precisely about the Sun. It is so called owing to the name of the festival itself: Christmas is the festival for the Lithuanian *Kalėdos* (here *Kalėda* is the singular form of the word *Kalėdos*). In folklore *Kalėda* is audibly associated with the act of forging: Lith. *Kal-ėda* “Xmas, Christmas” // *kal-ti* ‘to forge’, *kal-vis* ‘forger’. This serves to confirm the association between Christmas (*Kalėdos*) and the story of the cosmological forging of the Sun.

Alongside Santa Claus, another character is worth researching and that is Saint Hubert. He is linked with November 3rd, hunting, Christmas, and an unusual deer, and is patron of metalworking (!). According to the legend, on Christmas evening Hubert went hunting and saw a deer with huge antlers with ten branches. He got ready to throw a spear, but stumbled and fell down. At that moment the deer became lit up and Hubert saw a shining golden cross among his antlers. Here we have a reference not to the Sun, but to the spiritual light of faith, and accordingly, Jesus is traditionally represented as the new Sun².

Other research also proves the link between the returning Sun and the rebirth of the world for a better life. T. A. Bernstam researched the semantics of the Russian youth games “jashcher” (pangolin) and “olen” (deer) by analysing the widespread image of a deer in various nations. She came to the conclusion that this image could be perceived as an embodied idea of spring, as a symbol of the Sun sending its warmth and awakening plants, animals and people (Bernstam 1990, p.33). V. V. Ivanov and V. N. Toporov consider the deer a zoomorphic symbol of spring and virility (Ivanov,

² A. Lebeuf, personal communication, 2007.

Toporov 1965, p.130-131). For N. Laurinkienė the image of the deer relates to the rebirth of the world. A deer is a symbol of rebirth and renewal for Evenks, Georgians, and some other nations. During the ritual of the *inkonipka* spring festival, Evenks staged the hunting of a cosmic deer. The cosmic deer was killed, but later, miraculously revived together with nature. In the Georgian traditions a deer was also related to the spring festival. Georgians believed that on St. George’s day a deity would send a deer for the participants of the festival (Laurinkienė 2000, p.31).

We can see that a deer symbolizes light and the renewal of the world. But it is also linked to the shortest days and the lowest rise of the Sun in the dome of the sky. For instance, an Irish poem of the 9th century tells of a deer that announces the coming winter: “I have a message for you: / a deer was roaring, / the winter is snowing / and summer left. / The winds are cold / **the sun is close to the earth -/ its way is short.** / The sea is rough. /.../ The frost has frozen the wings of the birds. / This time is severe. / I have a message for you” (Šletė 1984).

After the autumn equinox, when the path of the Sun becomes shorter and the night becomes longer, the cosmic deer disappears in the evening rays of the Sun, announcing winter. During the winter solstice it emerges in the morning dawn after about two and half months of invisibility. The coincidence of the heliacal rise of Scorpio with the winter solstice is perhaps the reason for linking the stars of Scorpio with the mythical Deer that played such an important role in the myth of the returning Sun or recovery of the Sun (see also: Rappenglück 2008).

Taurus – a rider

It is known that the heliacal setting of the Pleiades, a swarm of stars that belongs to the constellation of Taurus, is linked to St. George’s day. This day is very significant in the folk calendar, because it marks the beginning of the summer season and agricultural work. The rider that is depicted in Taurus is linked to iconography of St. George. St. George is considered to be a patron of horses and he is depicted as a rider on a white horse. The rider in the BZ might represent a pagan deity who was later replaced by the image of St. George. *Ūsiņš* might have been such a deity in Latvian mythology, *Avsen’* or *Jarilo* – in Slavic mythology and *Perkūnas* – in Lithuanian mythology. All of them are represented as horse riders. In the reconstructed Lithuanian mythological images, which interpret the disappearance of the Pleiades after their heliacal setting, *Perkūnas* emerges as a hero who goes down to

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hell and retrieves Mary's Sieve (the Pleiades) from the chthonic creature (Vaiškūnas 1999, p.231–233). Considering the aforementioned folk stories about the hero who releases a glowing bird, a horse and an exceptionally beautiful girl (Venus), we can guess that in the constellation of Taurus could be found the third hero of this plot – a liberator. That would correspond to the story where St. George releases the girl from the dragon. Saint George, celebrated on April 23rd, can be considered the patron of the zodiacal sign Taurus 22 IV – 21 V.

Conclusions

From the analysis of the Grondo zodiac we can maintain:

1. That the distinctive signs of the BZ zodiac derived from local mythologies;
2. That the position of the signs corresponding to constellations related to local calendrical traditions;
3. That the signs of the BZ generally correspond to the colure points in the interval between the 12th and 17th centuries.

However, it is not clear how the original signs of the zodiac emerged. Had the original names of the constellations been familiar before colliding with the classical zodiac? Or were they simply created on the basis of the classical zodiac according to the local mythological calendrical images? Additional research is needed to answer this question. It is very probable that the signs, which replaced the signs of the classical zodiac, were familiar and of great importance in the local pagan tradition as constellations that played a significant role in the local seasonal calendar. We can even argue that these constellations played a very prominent role in the local tradition; otherwise they would not have replaced the original ones. We know that the northern pagan barbarians were fascinated by the Roman culture and dreamed of becoming Romans themselves. In the historical sources we can even trace legends about the origin of the Lithuanians from the Romans.

The substitution must have been motivated by strong needs. We can assume that the four most peculiar symbols in Lithuanian calendrical folklore – the Peacock, the Horse, the Deer and the Rider – can be interpreted as four cardinal seasonal star calendar points.

Another thing we cannot know is when this zodiac was taken over and modified. Knowledge of the zodiac from the Mediterranean and Eastern countries could have reached the shores of the Baltic Sea at any time from the 2nd millennium B.C. onwards, since, as we know,

commerce and contacts had already been established between the Baltic and Mediterranean regions by this date. Amber trade routes stretched from the Baltic Sea to Greece, Italy and Asia Minor. Later, the trade was more intensive with the Roman Empire, and in the 5th–7th centuries with the Goths. Very close trade relations are documented between the Balts and the Arabian Peninsula (Gimbutiene p.127, 131). However, there is no doubt that in the case of the system of zodiacal signs found on the Grondo scoop we are not encountering a piece of folk art or a composition of mythical images, but two distinctive cosmological images and calendar systems, based on astronomical practice. Research concerning the adaptation of the classical zodiac into the pagan cultures of other European nations might reveal further valuable information in this field of pagan star lore.

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PERIFERINĖS VIDURŽEMIO IR RYTIETIŠKOJO ZODIAKO TRADICIJŲ FORMOS PAGONIŠKOJE LIETUVOJE

Jonas Vaiškūnas

Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama jau ankstesniuose autoriaus darbuose aptarta savito baltiškojo Zodiako egzistavimo galimybė. Folklorine medžiaga grindžiamas šios srities hipotezės (Vaiškūnas, 2000) patvirtinti ir išplėtoti leido pažintis su vienos iš Gardino bažnyčių rūsyje pokariu rasto, XVI a. datuojamo apeiginio kaušo dekeru, kurį sudaro praėjusio amžiaus 6-ajame dešimtmetyje restauruojant kaušą po polichromine tapyba aptikti

senesni degintine technika atlikti kontūriniai piešiniai. Ornamentiniais rėmais vienas nuo kito atskirti 12 ženklų vaizduoja gyvūnus, paukščius ir žmones. Piešinių semantikos ir išdėstymo struktūros analizė parodė, jog šie atvaizdai atitinka 12-os tradicinių Zodiako ženklų sistemą.

Kaušo Zodiako ženklų atvaizdus lyginant su dabartinio tradicinio (TZ) zodiako ženklais galima suskirstyti į tris grupes (3 pav.; Plate III: 1-6; Plate IV: 7-12):

1. Ženkla, išsaugoję tą patį vaizdą kaip ir tradicinio Zodiako ženklai, būtent: Dvyniai (4), Svarstyklės (8), Šaulys (10) ir Ožiaragis (11).
2. Ženkla, besiskiriantys nuo TZ, tačiau galintys būti pripažinti TZ ženklų variantais: Avinas (2) ir galbūt Žuvis (1).
3. Originalūs, visiškai neatitinkantys TZ ekvivalentų ženklai: Jautis (3), Vėžys (5), Liūtas (6), Mergelė (7), Skorpionas (9) ir Vandenis (12).

Šeši originalūs Zodiako ženklai yra: Raitelis – Jautis (3); Povas I – Vėžys (5); Povas II – Liūtas (6); Gervė – Mergelė (7); Elnias su elniuku – Skorpionas (9); Žirgas – Vandenis (12). Šių ženklų svarbą vietinei mitologinei ir kalendorinei tradicijai liudija jų populiarumas tautosakoje. Elnias, arklys ir povas laikomi populiariausiais su kosmologiniais motyvais siejamais zoomorfiniais kalendorinių dainų personažais (Laurinkienė, 1990, p. 83). Kita vertus, Elnio (9), Povų (5–6) ir Žirgo (12) atvaizdų išsidėstymas Zodiako rate vienas kito atžvilgiu 90 laipsnių intervalu leidžia spėti šiuos ženklus galėjus būti svarbių kalendorinių sezonų orientyru. Prie šios trijulės pridėjus Jaučio žvaigždyną atitinkantį Raitelio ženklą, gauname Zodiako ratą į 4 ketvirčius dalijančius 2 koliūrus.

Nustatyta, kad šiuos 4 Zodiako ženklus atitinkančių žvaigždynų sinodinės pozicijos XII–XVII a. galėjo būti svarbios sezoninio žvaigždžių kalendoriaus gairės. Astronominiais duomenimis paremtas prielaidas bandoma tikrinti ieškant sąsajų tarp originalius Zodiako ženklus atitinkančių žvaigždynų sinodinių pozicijų ir kai kurių kalendorinių papročių bei kosmologinių folkloro vaizdinių.

Prieinama išvada, kad apeiginio kaušo piešinių visu- ma sudaro savitą vietinės tradicijos transformuotą tradicinį Viduržemio kultūros Zodiaką. Perimto Zodiako dalies ženklų pakeitimas vietinę tradiciją atitinkančiais ženklais gali rodyti egzistavus reikšmingas vietines pagoniškas astronomines-kalendorines praktikas ir tradicijas. Pakeitimų pobūdis, originalių zodiako ženklų padėtis ir jų semantinis kontekstas liudija vėlyvaisiais viduramžiais Lietuvoje dar buvus astronomine praktika pagrįstą ir savita kosmologija motyvuotą sezoninį žvaigždžių kalendorių.

III

III. ASTRO-
NOMICAL AND
ETHNOCOSMO-
LOGICAL
INTERPRETA-
TION OF AR-
CHAEOLOGICAL
AND ETHNO-
LOGICAL
ARTEFACTS