

SPECIAL IMAGERY ON THE COȚOFENI-TYPE CERAMICS

ABSTRACT

This study is based on the analysis of some special imagery to be found on the Coțofeni-type ceramics and we shall dwell on the problems posed by this fact. Seen either as extreme stylisation of human figures (P. Roman, I. Emödi) or as stylised anthropomorphical images (I. T. Lipovan), the images hereby analysed are known from the sites of Almaș Săliște, Bretea Mureșană, Cozia, Cugir, Deva, Igrîța, Miercurea Sibiului, Nandru, Sebeș, Turdaș and Zlatna. In his approach, the author, in order to substantiate his point of view, will refer not only to expert opinions, but also to the interpretation of symbols and the role thereof within a community, more specifically, a Coțofeni-type one.

One can distinguish two main types of special imagery on ceramics:

Type I. The image consists of a circular flattened button with a diameter of between 2.5 and 4 cm, from which starts a radial prolongation which seems to have had vertical position, which has been recently certified by the Cozia sample. The exception is supplied by the Igrîța vessel, where the image evinces an oblique, upward prolongation. On the edge of button, 4 samples (Almaș Săliște, Sebeș, Cozia, Igrîța, Răchita) have incisions, placed radially, in other 2 cases (Cugir and Zlatna), the incisions center around the button. In all situations, the radial prolongation is decorated with incisions.

Variant 1. The image is smaller in size than the main type, having however the same morphology with 2 main components: a circular flattened button, much smaller in diameter (1.5-2 cm) and vertical radial prolongation, but downward unlike the previous type, one doesn't encounter here any radial incisions on and around the button.

Variant 2. This type so far illustrated by one only, the Turdaș one, could be considered as a variant of main type, given some similarities, in matters of form and ornamentation. It is, however,

basically different from the main type representations, in that from the flattened button (of 5 cm in diameter) there are 4 downward prolongations.

Type II. The images consist of a triangular print with rounded corners and one of the angles strongly elongated downwards. In the edges of the print, incisions similar to the those on type I.

The author thinks that this print contains anthropomorphic solar images, strongly stylised, in which the deity's head is replaced by the solar disk whereas the head is a mere radial prolongation. Such images are known, both on ceramics and stone on vast area of Europe (Cleargh, Capcir, Vivarais, Ilkey, Măgura and in Scandinavia), places where those images are also said to represent an anthropomorphic solar deity; here are analogue images on some engravings in Roumania in the *Peștera Cizmei* (county Hunedoara) as well as on a dolmen leg at Gura Haitii (county Suceava).

An interesting aspect is provided by the Igrîța vessel which served as main vessel of the "A" inhumation grave. The finding, attributed I. Emödi to the "D" phase of Baden culture, can rather be – in our opinion – ascribed to the 3rd Coțofeni phase. The fact that this vessel with solar images was intentionally broken outside the cave, then deposited in the cave as funeral object, alongside the presence, around and on the skeleton of some traces of coal and ashes, suggests the performing of some solar rituals, with the kindling of ritual fires.

As for the dating of the special imagery on the Coțofeni except the Nandru (the 2nd Coțofeni phase) for type II, apart one, which is of a particular type, the rest of the finding belong to the Coțofeni 3 form. One can see a concentration of imagery occurrences at Igrîța (Crișana) situation one must ascribe to the process of gradual regionalizing of the Coțofeni features in the last evolution phase of this culture.

In the present study, the author also resumes the topic of anthropomorphic Coțofeni plastics. He dwells upon the modelling of the female statue's head as a disk which, according to the author, should be ascribed to the Urano-solar beliefs which affected these samples as well.

The prayer posture of Coțofeni type statues considered to represent the Goddess Mother, is interpreted to be a proof that the Goddess Mother was subordinated to another deity, presumably an Urano-solar one. It cannot be ruled out that the anthropomorphic solar images on the Coțofeni-type ceramics considered in the present study do in fact represent that particular deity. Also concerning the anthropomorphic Coțofeni, the author denies any relationship to the Baden-type ceramics advocated by certain scientist, considering the resemblances to local neolithic plastic to be more relevant.

It is interesting to note the absence of images of this kind in the early Transylvanian Bronze Age. They appeared somewhat later and in another area, on the early Monteoru ceramics. One can finally say that the Coțofeni culture area was integrated into a very broad space, whose unity can be stated, based upon the existence of a coherent and unitary symbolism. This symbolism, generated by the Urano-solar beliefs of the communities which inhabited different regions of Europe, in the pre-Historic period will provide a basis for the later images of Urano-solar deities from the written document's period. One can speak, at the same time, the author asserts, about some Indo-European connections of the Coțofeni communities, which is underlined by the very essence of the present paper.