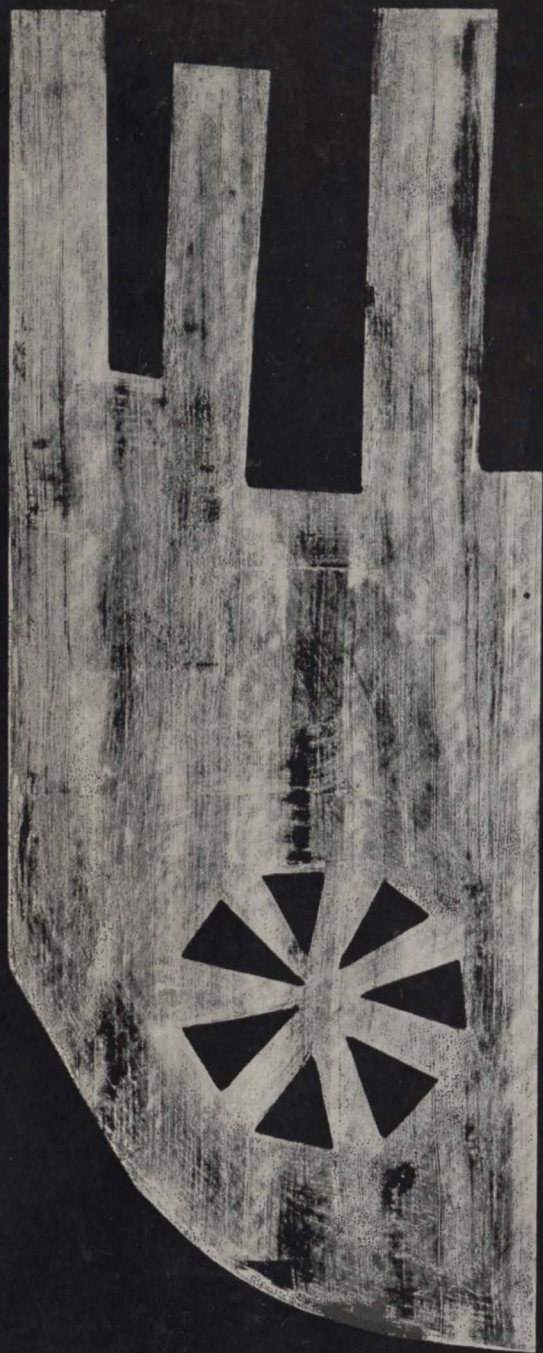


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**Romanian
Folklore and Folk Art**

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Folk art has aroused the legitimate interest of Romanian researchers, who have tackled many of its problems, investigated its forms and their evolution and established a whole typology. They have also drawn maps showing the geographical areas of spreading of certain phenomena, and have attempted to give historical explanations. Decoration of folk art objects has also been studied, and categories of the motifs used by folk craftsmen were classified, its links with the surrounding scenery being repeatedly stressed.

This time, however, we shall deal with a new aspect of folk art, namely, the thoughts of those who created the objects which make up this age-old art. We will therefore try to dwell both on the aspects of folklore and its visual forms of art. The subject of the present study, which undoubtedly carries us back into the world of fairy-tales and ancient beliefs, sometimes a very remote past, only represents a part of the ancient folk art. For instance, the whole problem concerning the origin of style is not explained and only a few elements are selected. Since it is frequently a question of what science calls survival, we will not be surprised by the analogies between 19th-century Romanian art and that of mankind's remote past.

We present in the following pages several examples of Romanian folk art in which the creators' imagination has played a decisive role. The period we refer to covers the end of the 18th century, the 19th century, and the early years of the 20th century, that is, the period when Romanian folk art was fairly well known and traditions were still sufficiently alive to prove our hypothesis. Our main interest is centered on the way in which man's world outlook influenced folk art and the artistic forms to which it gave birth.



At a time when the study of ancient art and of European urbanistic art began to be widespread and the history of arts was no longer based on descriptive facts but attempted to explain them, whole aspects of universal art had remained largely unexplored. Indeed, at the beginning of the 20th century, folk art, primitive art, and prehistoric art were still ignored or barely understood. The idea that folk art could be of any scientific interest was not easily accepted, mainly because of its character of applied art. The peasant's blouse was considered a mere item of clothing; the jug and the plate were regarded as containers either for storing food for future use or for consuming it. Their artistic value was simply neglected.

During the 19th century, when the wide movement for national resurgence spread throughout Europe, more numerous facts concerning folk art came to the fore; the first studies mainly dwelt on its beauty, the skill of the popular craftsman and the colours he used. But for a study of folk art history this is not enough; it is of as little use as a description of the beauty of the letters in a, let us say, Armenian MS, for instance, which would tell us nothing about its contents and would not reveal the meaning of each letter or word. The fact that ethno-

this is not the problem which interests us; what really interests us is the intimate and motivated relationship between folk art and the life of the group which creates it. The folk artist is not a camera, deprived of ideas and feelings, which sets down mechanically and at random on wood, clay, or cloth the motifs of surrounding reality; he is a human being who is part and parcel of the social group to which he belongs, attached to its life and traditions, has a technical training and creates in order to satisfy the established requirements of this group. His mind and soul contain some knowledge, thoughts, and opinions regarding the things which surround him. It is these thoughts that leave their imprint on his work and we must endeavour to discover the entire life of this group if we wish to understand thoroughly how style has attained the forms we see. This explanation is related to iconography, a discipline which "... explains pictures discovering their sources; analyses the world of ideas, their complications and structures, and brings to light the background and mechanism of the forms of themes and compositions."¹

The study of folk art has developed in this direction along the same lines as religious mural painting. Religious painting, used in churches, was first included in the history of art because of its beauty. Later, it drew attention because of its historical value: the identification of the portraits of former rulers, the scenes of life in the past and the costumes of the period. Finally, the last phase is interpretation, when painting is intimately linked with man's life; one may notice that the interpreted images are not set down at random, but follow a pattern related to the traditions and trends of those times and reveal the ideals of the creators. Moldavian 15th and 16th-century mural paintings can no longer be understood today, except when connected with the hard struggle for independence led by the Romanian Principalities against Turkish rule in those times.

We will find the same phases in the study of decoration in folk art. It first drew attention because of its beauty, a phase for which the classification of geometric, plant, animal, and symbolic motifs is sufficient.

Later, it was noticed that some of the motifs were common in universal art; they were given a scientific name which sometimes was the same as that discovered in villages. At other times, those who use a very old motif no longer know the initial meaning and have forgotten its real name, perhaps because of the transformation of the motif once its meaning was lost. That is what happened in the case of the sun motif with intersected arms bent at the end, which was called "spindle" (*vîrtelniță* in Romanian), because it looked like that tool used by weavers. However, the circular sun motif is called "wheel" or "small coin" for obvious reasons — which also imply that the original meaning was lost. The same thing occurred in the case of the exotic animals seen in Oltenian rugs, where the lion becomes a dog, the tigre — a cat, and the parrot — a cuckoo. This second phase of interpretation has helped us better to understand folk art decoration.

Finally, the third phase, besides stressing the beauty and identification of motifs, adds an essential aspect: it justifies the choice of motifs and their use on certain objects and not on others, by establishing a close relationship with the feelings and thoughts of those who made and used those objects. Thus it becomes possible to decipher the ornament and establish

that in our folk art it really has a meaning. Yet, satisfactory explanations for its interpretation are difficult to find as only fragments have survived from the past. Few of the old people in villages still remember anything about former customs: since Romanian folk art goes back many centuries, and in certain cases even millenniums, the significance and even initial form of many motifs have been lost in the course of time ¹.

At the origin of part of these motifs lie the marks of ownership which were used whenever social life made it necessary. In the Apuseni Mountains each family had its own mark visibly carved on the exterior walls of its house; this mark appeared on all the items belonging to the same family. Potters and ironsmiths also used their own marks on their products as signatures. Some of the families in Northern Oltenia used to order a whole set of crocks and porringers asking the potter to include their own distinctive mark of ownership in the decorative pattern, so that at village gatherings their crockery should not get mixed up with that of the other villagers. Women also placed the household mark of ownership on the cloth they wove, before taking it to the fulling mill. There are many more such instances. In this way, ownership marks became integrated in the very pattern and became decorative motifs. It was the same everywhere else where signatures in the form of geometric signs had an important significance in social life.

Folklore is the field where the thoughts, feelings, and customs of those who lived long ago can be discovered. Folk visual art and peasant folklore lived side by side for a long time, springing from a common source. They were united and closely participated in different moments of life, completing each other. But scientific investigation has broken this unity, examining them separately. We will try to bring them together again, which is no easy task since neither folklore does mention the folk art items to which it is linked, nor does the necessary folklore information accompany the familiar folk art objects or the collections displayed in museums. Both the illustrations and the text endeavour to present several aspects starting with the homely forms of common objects, gradually reaching forms of art. Wishing to offer readers the opportunity to appreciate the life of folk art items, we have placed next to the reproductions of certain objects, carefully displayed in museums, the information collected in villages.

The utility of this type of presentation is clearly illustrated in the writings of two scholars: one of them, Nicolae Cartoian, studied the themes in religious painting, which he interpreted concisely and with authority. He wanted us to penetrate "the most intimate meaning of the icon and to understand those things which puzzle us by studying, on the one hand, the folklore material orally collected from the villagers today and, on the other, the cycle of religious legends in old Romanian literature . . ." ² "There are many such legends which testify to the close connection between written literature, religious art and oral folk literature" ³; the other, I. D. Ștefănescu, besides briefly mentioning motifs and their interpretation in several of his publications, dwelt at length on this subject in two of his studies. In both of them he

¹ This does not exclude the fact that many motifs, particularly those of recent date, have definite names. The direct and realistic reproduction of the colour and form of a flower, for instance, is current in the new folk art.

² *The Saviour and the Grape-Vine*, extract from "Buletinul Imprimeriilor Statului," București (Bulletin of State Printing Works)

³ *Adam's Deed*, Bulletin of State Printing Works, No. 3, Bucharest

be found in the churches erected by the boyars and princes, though they also penetrated into the peasant churches, either imitating the fantastic elements on the more important local monuments (as in Oltenia and Wallachia), or else quite distinct from those seen in the local churches (as in Maramureş)¹. There is a greater number of fantastic creatures in folklore than in the fine arts. We will only discuss those which appear in both domains.

THE HORSE AND THE UNICORN

The presence of the horse motif in folk art is one of the most surprising, both because of its position and constant recurrence. The horse frequently acquires an unusual character because the imagination of the peasants endowed it with fantastic elements whose origin must be sought in the remote past. The horse was present in the folklore of all Indo-European peoples.² The magic horse, which played an important part in fairy-tales, had four, eight, or even twelve wings, with which he performed acrobatic flights. He carried up into the air fairy-tale heroes or else Saint Elijah in his chariot; it reached the moon whenever necessary, flew as fast as the wind and thought, and saved Ileana Cosinzeana, the fair maiden, from the dragon's clutches. It fed on glowing embers, spoke to its master and warned him of danger. The horse was deeply attached to its master, helping him in all circumstances and did not part with him until death.

The position held by the horse in former popular beliefs is complex, as it seems to have performed several functions at the same time. Though in fairy-tales the horse could fly up to the moon and draw Saint Elijah's chariot all along the Milky Way and over the clouds, the distinct psychomotor effect of the horse in antiquity which carried souls up into the sky no longer appears in folklore. In exchange, it appears to us in other clearly outlined aspects. The strangest, and more frequently encountered in the past, is the horse skull impaled on fences of dwelling houses, and particularly places where special plants were grown, such as vegetable gardens, vineyards, and melon patches. Its function was to keep away both visible and invisible beings which might be harmful to the crops. Old people in the Huşi vine-growing area tell that in the

¹ See: *Scurtă istorie a artelor plastice în RPR* (Short History of Plastic Arts in the People's Republic of Romania), Academy Publishing House, Bucharest, 1957, p. 21

² See: Jean Muşlea, *Le cheval merveilleux dans l'épopée populaire*

past no one dared to trespass on a vineyard protected by the head of a horse impaled on the fence; people used to make a detour to pass it.¹ According to information obtained in villages and handed down to us,² the horse head served this purpose in Northern Moldavia, Vrancea, Bacău, the Dobruja, the plain in Southern Wallachia, Muscel, Gorj, and Năsăud. The horse head was used even more frequently in the areas where the migratory tribes had passed or settled, as in the south of Romania. The Slavs made the same use of the horse head.³ The cult of the horse was also widespread among the Turks, who until quite recently considered that a thoroughbred was the most precious gift that could be offered. Likewise, the number of horsetails given by the Sultan to his high officials varied according to their importance. Arthur Byhan notes that the cult of the horse also existed among the Caucasian peoples⁴ and was found in similar forms among the Germanic nations.

Finally, there are further records of the magic horse grouped around Saint Theodore's feast days. The facts described below have no connection with the religious Saint Theodore's day. Simion Florea Marian states this quite clearly: "While the Church celebrates the memory of a single Saint Theodore, in those days the people celebrated both the religious and the mythical one under the name of Saint Toader. Moreover, from what will be said below we will become convinced that it is the unreal and mythical Saint Toader that people, and particularly women, celebrated with greater reverence . . .⁵ He was a young man who rode a white horse and owned several horses — called Saint Toader's horses or "the Saint Toaders." Saint Toader's day coincided with the first day when alms began to be given for the dead, his horses being celebrated on the following days. All sorts of stories used to circulate in connection with the Saint Toaders; they were frequently described as handsome young men, with a horse tail and hoofs; at other times it was said that they were horses who had been transformed into young men.

Their feast days had to be observed; people were not allowed to go to the mill, spin, sew, or cut. Those who did not observe those days were haunted by the hor-

¹ Information communicated by N. A. Mironescu

² Information communicated by Henri H. Stahl

³ See: E. Z. Blomqvist, *Krestianskie postroiki russskih, ukraintzev i belarusov (poselenia, jilisha i hoziaistvennye stroenia)*, Moscow, 1956

⁴ See: *La civilisation caucasienne*, Paris, 1938, p. 224

⁵ Simion Florea Marian, *Sărbătorile la Români (Romanian Festival Days)* Vol II, p. 37, Bucharest, 1899, Academy Publishing House

and Maramureș, horses and riders¹ are placed in the central group of figures². Similar scenes are repeated in ornamental strips bordering peasant napkins and pillowcases. Some of these examples show the influence of Oriental religious art, proved by the fact that they are of more recent date, and the foreign origin of the costumes worn by the figures reveal the difference between this style of decoration and traditional Romanian folk art.

There are many stories about handsome Prince Charmings, but they do not find an echo in folk art, the examples showing horse and rider being probably of more recent date and linked to foreign folklore.

The *Unicorn* is a fabulous animal, a white horse with a horn stuck in his forehead. Alexander the Great's horse and that of Saint Theodore often appear under this form.

In comparison with the peoples of antiquity, Western Europe, and Byzance, the Romanians knew very little about the unicorn. It was said that the unicorn had magic powers, particularly its horn. To drink out of the horn was an antidote for all poisons. The powdered horn of the unicorn usually figured in "medical recipes."

It is probable that the unicorn became known in Romania through cultivated art and printed books. It was mentioned in *The Physiologies and Bestiaries*, in Dimitrie Cantemir's *Hieroglyphic History* and in the legends spread about Alexander the Great.

The unicorn was mentioned more frequently in the 18th century, though it seldom appeared in folklore or in the fine arts. In some churches (particularly in Oltenia and Wallachia), which date from a period when subject matters taken from writings such as the ancient philosophers or the sibyls³ were introduced in painting, the unicorn appears as a fable character⁴. We have also come across the unicorn in a church in Oltenia where it figured alone in a painting on the exterior wall and looked like a white horse with a single straight horn on its forehead; the ancient philosophers formed a frieze all around the church high up on the walls.

¹ See: Paul Petrescu, *Calul și călărețul în arta populară din România* (The Horse and Rider in Romanian Folk Art) in *Homage to George Oprescu*, Bucharest, 1961, Academy Publishing House

² See: Paul Petrescu and Paul H. Stahl, *Romanian Hand-made Rugs*, Bucharest, 1966, Meridiane Publishing House

³ See: Tudor Pamfilie, *Sibile și filozofi în literatura și iconografia română* (Sybils and Philosophers in Romanian Literature and Iconography), Birlad, 1916

⁴ See: *Cum arată inorogul și ce știu românii despre el* (What the Unicorn Looks Like and What the Romanians Know about It), in "Folklore Researches," Vol I, Bucharest, 1947; also the wooden churches of Maramureș which, besides other fantastic creatures, also include the unicorn, see: Victor Brătulescu, *Biserici din Maramureș* (The Churches in Maramureș), in the "Bulletin of the Commission for Historical Monuments," Bucharest, 1941

THE DRAGON

The dragon is frequently mentioned in our fairy-tales and was usually defeated by a brave hero. As a rule, the dragon's evil deeds led to conflicts with the local inhabitants.

Since dragons were imaginary creatures and there were many different stories about them, they appeared in the strangest forms.¹ It was generally believed that they were related to serpents. They had monstrous heads with very long ears and poisonous fangs, and a tongue of fire inside a mouth which resembled that of a scorpion (as they are represented in feudal ceramics, for instance). However, a dragon could also have more than one head, each with several tongues. The body was very large and covered with coloured scales; sometimes they had legs. The whole air rang with the sound of their swishing tails; one look from their cold eyes made everybody freeze.

Belief in the existence of this animal was well established. Traian German said that in summer, if the sky was covered by heavy grey clouds carried by a strong wind or if hail destroyed the labour and luck of a whole year, the Romanians, talking of the misfortune which had befallen them all, mentioned that they had seen a dragon as large as a cart with tail swishing from left to right rising from behind a hill or a forest.² Dragons had wings with which they flew. Serpents that have not been seen by man for a long time grew wings. They lived in lakes, in mountain pools and in dark forests; precious stones emerged from their frothing mouths. There was a storm wherever they rose and fought each other.

"Wizards, who have power over the weather ride dragons."³

In the folk art dragons appear relatively seldom in comparison to folklore. The most common representation is the dragon slain by Saint George. The latter is pictured astride his white horse, plunging his spear into the mouth of the dragon. The dragon is smaller than in the story because in their painted icons the peasants did not observe the proportions between living creatures and objects. The dragon is made to look as hideous as possible: he resembles the dragon described

¹ See: Traian German, *Folk Meteorology (Observări, credințe și obiceiuri)*. (Rites, Beliefs, and Customs); Blaj

² *op. cit.*, p. 133.

³ I. A. Candrea, *Preminte Solomon*, in "Folklore Researches," Vol. I, Bucharest, 1947; Traian German, *op. cit.*, pp. 141 and the following

in folk tales, the connection being obvious. The dragons painted on icons or the walls of village churches vary exactly as in folklore. There is a striking resemblance between this scene with the dragon represented in peasant art and in icons and religious mural paintings. It is frequently repeated in painting, ceramics, wood-carving, and carpets.

The dragon forms an isolated element in decorative art probably due to his out-and-out evil role. Yet the rope carved round a wooden church in Northern Moldavia ends in the head of a dragon, and the handles of peasant carved wooden spoons also end in a dragon's head.

The picture of Saint George, who was the patron of livestock breeders, was widespread among the Romanians in the past. This was due to the fact that he represented the symbol of good overcoming evil (embodied by the dragon). This subject, a rider fighting a terrifying creature to save a fair maiden, fired the imagination in old days and was a source of Inspiration for some of the most valuable artistic achievements.

The connection between earthenware-making and folklore is very little known. If we examine the names given to the different parts of a pot, we will notice a surprising fact. It has a "head" at the top ending in a "lip" which surrounds the "mouth," which is sometimes prolonged forming a "beak" which facilitates pouring. The pot also has a "voice" if you tap its sides. The "head" is supported by a "neck," which is placed on a "belly" (sometimes also called "bellows"), which is the rounded part of a large vessel. The whole pot stands on "buttocks." It is held by the "tail," which sometimes has a hole, called "tit," for drinking.

The names used for the different parts of a pot are always identical to those given to the parts of the body. This is perhaps one of the most eloquent examples of anthropomorphic terms used to designate the different parts of an object. At the same time, some of the names recall various parts of the body of birds or animals. This does not seem to be a simple coincidence, since it is more or less general. This fact is confirmed by the study of folklore connected with clay, wooden, or metal pots. In the above-mentioned story about the Saint Toaders who attacked the girls going to the mill on forbidden days, it is said that one of the girls saw in time that the Saint Toaders, in the guise of young men, were waiting at the mill, so she ran home: "When her mother heard about it, she immediately turned all the pots and pans in the house upside down. The young men, on realizing that the pure maiden did not return, turned themselves into horses and tramped to death the other girls . . . then went to the pure maiden's house to kill her too. But they found the door locked and received no answer when they knocked and shouted. Whereupon the horses, incensed at having allowed the girl to escape, shouted to the pail to come and open the door. But the pail answered that it could not move as it was turned upside down. Then they called to the other vessels but received the same answer. Only a broken pot, which the mother had forgotten, began to clatter towards the door. Luckily, the mother saw it in time and kicked it, breaking it into pieces."¹

¹ Simion Florea Marian, *Obiceiuri (Customs)*, Vol. II, p. 47

Artur Gorovei¹ and Barbu Slătineanu² both mention a number of beliefs connected with pottery. There is certainly a practical reason for the custom of placing empty pots upside down, as all the water is drained out and they are kept dry and clean. This also explains why they were so hastily turned upside down in old days. Pots placed upside down on the rails of the fence and on pegs is a common sight in Romania; a less common sight are the pots placed upside down on the pole around which a haystack is built or on the spires of pointed shingle roofs.

The strong belief that especially clay pots were alive was based on the conviction that clay could acquire a soul. Old paintings representing the creation of Adam and Eve out of clay, had next to them lumps of clay exactly as on a potter's workbench.³ After his death, man becomes a lump of clay again, or, according to a Romanian popular saying, he becomes "pots and jars." That life was born out of clay, a widespread belief in Antiquity, likewise present in the Bible and adopted by Christianity, became deeply rooted in the mind of the Romanian peasants. They believed that the potter had stolen the craft from God, but, being unable to blow life into it, he had to place in it the fire to give it a voice and a soul.⁴

These facts are further confirmed as many of the clay pots are given the form of animals or human beings. They are mostly used for containing liquids (pots, pitchers, jugs) and are made in Wallachian and particularly Oltenian villages.⁵ Though they were made in large numbers at the beginning of this century, their type has begun to disappear owing to the loss of their former functions. The wedding pitchers made in Oltenia and Wallachia, particularly in the pottery centres of Oboga, Curtea de Argeş, and Şimiani (the latter no longer exists), are well worth noting. The pitcher either has the shape of an animal or else has little clay figures of animals stuck to it. The pitchers of Oboga decorated with lions and serpents, or shaped like birds (storks, hens, or an undetermined species) and surrounded by their young, are very popular. These wedding pitchers are also placed on the roof of the house. They are often large-sized and represent human figures, particularly women. The most characteristic types are decorated with the various parts of an animal: pots with a horse head, with two la-

¹ See: *Credințe și superstiții ale poporului român* (Romanian Popular Beliefs and Superstitions), Bucharest, 1915.

² See: *Ceramica Românească* (Romanian Ceramics), Bucharest, 1938

³ See: I. D. Ștefănescu, *Iconographie de la bible. Images bibliques commentées*, Paris, 1938, plates V and VI

⁴ See: Barbu Slătineanu, *op cit.*

⁵ See: Barbu Slătineanu, Paul H. Stahl and Paul Petrescu, *Arta populară în RPR — Ceramică* (Folk Art in Romanian Ceramics), Bucharest, 1958

teral wings recalling the winged horse or with feet recalling those of an eagle. Their decoration is completed by symbols (rosettes and crosses). This category with evident fantastic elements resembles and is almost identical with those made by the Romanians of Timoc and those used at weddings in Bulgaria¹ and Yugoslavia. It is evident that pots with animal shapes are linked to the Balkan area. Their occasional use at weddings shows their special character. However, it is difficult to establish the origin and affinities of human and animal shapes in Romanian pottery owing to scanty information.

The wedding pitchers representing a hen or a stork surrounded by chickens, which are sometimes placed on the roof, symbolize the newly-wed couple's wish to prosper.

Animal-shaped objects are also to be found in wooden and other types of objects (wooden pots shaped particularly like birds). Pots shaped like human beings or animals are of prehistoric origin and were taken over from Chaldean and Egyptian pottery. Many similar examples are to be found in old Chinese and South American ceramics. The wooden pots used by the tribes in Australia and Negro Africa are famous. This shows a common trait between ancient or primitive art and European folk art.

When ready, the pot made by the potter's hand acquires a certain autonomy resembling that of the human being it imitates. What is the explanation of this identity between the pot and the being represented? It is based on an element characteristic of man's thinking in the past: the belief that an identity existed between the name and the person who bore it, that if you learned somebody's name you could perform the necessary superstitious operation to obtain whatever you wanted from that person. When writing became known, the supernatural possibilities of the man who could write increased, since people believed in the identity of the written name and the person who bore it. It was also believed that there existed an identity between the drawing of an animal and the animal itself. The belief was even stronger in the identity of a being and the carved or clay figure which represented it in all its details.

In Romanian folk art, the artistic aspect of these pots is not always the same. In the case of pottery, the shapes are not always so well made as in wood-work in which the figures are always clearly cut. In pottery there are sometimes too many decorative elements, particularly when small figurines are added to the

¹ Georgi Bakardschiew, *Bulgarische Keramik*, Sofia, 1956

vessel. However, in some cases, despite the overloading decorations, the shape is proportionate particularly when the pot is shaped as an animal. However, the grotesque figurines and vases with fantastic elements, sometimes found at fair stands, do not belong to the traditional folklore and are therefore outside the subject under discussion.

Many centuries ago, in his *Leatopiseșul Țării Moldovei* (Chronicle of Moldavia), Nicolaie Costin noted that "By the year 7188, A.D. 1689, in the month of December, there appeared for ten days a star with a tail, which the Romans called Cometa, that is broom. The tail was so long that it covered half the sky, starting from a star below towards Hungary between the south and the west. Then it climbed every day further north, growing shorter behind and travelling northward according to the motion of the heavens, the stars revolving westward. Thus the comet continued its way for seven weeks until the first of February; then it went out and vanished. Astronomers from many countries met and prophesied what would happen in the world owing to this portent; soon after the appearance of the comet there was great strife between the armies of all the empires and countries surrounding the Turks, the fiercest being between the empire of the Turks and the empire of the Germans, as is written below."¹ Victor Anestin, a tireless searcher of the sky who also popularized science, commented marginal notes regarding heavenly events, made on prayer books, psalters and, less, on gospels. He quoted extracts from a letter which describes the appearance of a comet in 1853: "Everybody was terrified when a star with a tail appeared in the sky; they came out into the street, kneeling down to pray, and set the church bells ringing; most of the old people said that the world would sink and everybody would perish. When the women heard that this was the end of the world, they began to cry . . . other people said there would be riots and great battles . . . I remember that at Rîmnicu Vilcea too, everybody was frightened when they saw the star with a tail for the first time; prayers were said even at the Bishop's Palace."²

This passage is significant as it describes the atmosphere and supposed connection between the fate of the Earth and human life on the one hand, and heavenly events, on the other; in the 19th century this belief was still strong even in towns.

¹ *Cronicile României sau Ietopiseșele Moldaviei și Valahiei* (Chronicles of Romania or Chronicles of Moldavia and Wallachia), Vol II, published by M. Kogălniceanu, Bucharest, 2nd edition, 1872, p. 20

² *Bolizii ce s-au observat în România între 1836 și 1853, după manuscrise și documente* (Meteors Observed in Romania Between 1836 and 1853, According to Manuscripts and Documents), Bucharest, 1912

The scientific explanations given about the sun, the moon, and the stars, their origin and evolution, had to fight for a long time against astrology. Even when knowledge, which formed the basis of modern astronomy, gradually began to spread and develop during the Renaissance in towns and universities, superstitions still persisted in the villages for many centuries. In this respect, in the regions inhabited by Romanians the situation was the same as in other countries. "Astrology seems to have penetrated early in our land, brought by the military elements of the Roman colonization in Illyrium and by Syrian merchants from the Pontic cities . . . Despite the opposition of the Church and village authorities, books which satisfied the natural curiosity of the human soul spread from the Byzantines to the Slavs, penetrating into our literature as early as the 16th century. It was typical of circumstances in Romania that forbidden astrological books were actually copied and printed by priests and that in the 19th century they were actually manufactured in the metropolitan printing shops in Jassy. Many of the editions printed in Bucharest and Braşov were based on the Calendar of the Seven Planets, brought out by the metropolitan printing press in Jassy in 1816."¹

Throughout the last century, the calendars printed for the use of villagers contained astrological information, thus helping to maintain general superstitions².

Beside accurate facts concerning the sun, the moon, the constellations and the measuring of time, there were legends and superstitions based on widespread ancient conceptions.³ These asserted, even when folklore recordings increased, that the planets and stars were living beings bound by secret links to man and that he who knew of those links could change life and foretell the future. Though the folklore about the sun and moon is well known today, the same cannot be said about their representation by folk art.

THE SUN

The Dacians' cult for the sun was strengthened by the Roman occupation of Dacia when local beliefs came into contact with those of the populations from va-

¹ Nicolae Cartoian, *Cărţile Populare în literatura românească* (Popular Books in Romanian Literature), Vol. I, Bucharest, 1929

² See: Mircea Tomescu, *Calendarele româneşti* (Romanian Calendars), 1733 – 1830, Bucharest, 1957

³ See: Ion Otescu, *Credinţele ţăranului român despre cer şi stele* (The Romanian Peasant Beliefs About the Sky and the Stars), Bucharest, 1907

rious parts of the Roman Empire. The most widespread vestiges of those times are the reliefs representing god Mithras seen in all the regions occupied by the Romans. They testify to the existence of an organized cult. Undoubtedly, the Middle Ages took over those ancient traditions changing them with the passage of time.

It is difficult to study the sun motif in folk art, owing to its multiple forms, its existence in the art of other peoples, the alterations suffered up to the 19th century, and to the fact that it has often been mistaken for other motifs. The important place given to the sun in folk art and folk tales in the past cannot be detached from the sun's natural function. Being the main source of light and heat and pursuing a regular course, the significance of the sun to farmers was that it ripened their crops. Among the European peoples, the beliefs about the sun, so frequent in Antiquity, have survived up to the 20th century. The sun was considered a human being with a beautiful face. He lived somewhere at the end of the world in a palace in the sky. In the morning he climbed into a chariot drawn by white winged steeds (the same magic white steeds which always appear in fairy-tales) or even stags, after having first placed a crown of rays on his head. He drove up into the sky to see what was happening on Earth. Then he stopped for a moment to eat a piece of consecrated bread and drink a glass of wine, at midday, when it is good for man to have his meal, too. His meal and drink over, the sun resumed his journey and began to descend towards the west. In the evening he was red and dusty, red with anger because he had seen all the evil on Earth, and dusty because of his journey. Before going to bed, the sun bathed so that next day he was clean and bright. His human features are amplified by his being endowed with human sentiments: love, jealousy, lust for revenge, and so on. He had a mother and a sister — the moon. Mortal women fell in love with the sun because of his beauty. The skylark and the sunflower were young girls who had fallen in love with the sun and had been punished: the first, being turned into a bird, flies high into the sky in the hope of reaching the sun; the second, changed into a flower, always turns to look at the sun. Their story is widespread and told in many versions. The sun was sometimes conjured to act as a charm against disease and rain, or to acquire physical beauty, to become "as beautiful as the sun" as an old proverb goes.¹

The aspect of the sun in Romanian folk art varies.

¹ See: Ion Otescu, *op. cit.*; See also: Tudor Pamfilie, *Cerul și podoabele lui după credințele poporului român* (The Sky and Its Adornments According to Romanian Popular Beliefs), Bucharest, 1915

— The simplest way of representing it is a circle. This simple motif which is easy to draw is frequently encountered on objects where it no longer represents the sun as such, its ancient significance being lost in the 19th century.

— The centre of the circle can be marked by a dot or even a smaller circle. A number of rays starts from this central part. When there are four rays, the picture is identified with a cross drawn inside the circle, the symbol of the disciples in our old religious art, and it is difficult to distinguish it from the picture of the sun. There are generally six rays. In this case, too, the picture is often mistaken for motifs taken directly from religious wooden or stone carvings with different significance. At other times the circle has eight or even more rays. The name of "wheel" is generally given to the above-described motif. The same name is given to the central motif made up of concentric lozenges found in certain peasant hand-made rugs placed on the floor or walls. A motif, whose origin is Asiatic and which really represents a wheel like those painted on the outside of churches, is likewise called "wheel."

— A circle with curved rays inside, suggesting the movement of the sun; this motif is also mistaken for other motifs such as flowers or coins.

A varying number of straight or curved lines start from a central point, though the circle is absent. In the first case the motif is taken to be a stellar motif. The sun motif featured in this shape mainly appears on objects where curved lines are easy to achieve (fabrics, painting). The motif where three or four lines start from a central point is likewise interesting: it is generally called the "reel" as it recalls this tool used in weaving; however, the names of "swallow's foot," "boar's tusk," and "snowdrop" are also used because of the resemblance to surrounding creatures or objects¹ and indicate the loss of the initial meaning even if the position and aspect still preserve the traditional character. In reality, however, all these represent the sun in two of the oldest forms found in European and Asiatic folk or cultured art.

Finally, when the circle contains human elements (eyes, nose, mouth, and sometimes ears, eyebrows, and hair), we witness testimonies of the belief about the "sacred sun," a being with human features given concrete representation in the fine arts.

The sun does not appear in the same way in all the wakes of folk art. It can generally be considered the predominant motif in wood-carving. In the past, the belief that an entrance needed to be guarded was very strong. In Bukovina, the threshold,

¹ See: Artur Gorovei, *Ouăle de Paști* (Easter Eggs), *Folklore Study*; Bucharest, 1937, p. 109

gate, and windows were considered boundaries which had to be carefully guarded.¹ Green trees or only branches and weeds were placed at those spots as defence against visible or invisible enemies. Therefore, in this case, the sun played the part of defender, at least originally. In the 19th century, and even in the early-20th century, gates were decorated with the sun motif — a simple circle, or rather a circle with straight or curved lines inside.² In Gorj, Oltenia, the sun motif sometimes covers the whole surface of the gate as well as the pillars, transversal beam, and wings.³ Sometimes the top part of the fence is also marked with the sun motif. This motif also decorated the door- and window-frames of the houses which had to be protected. However, it appears more seldom than on the gates and in a simpler and less artistic form, as if the craftsman was in a hurry. Some of the Transylvanian houses, however, are an exception. The window-frames of the houses at Mărginimea Sibiului are richly decorated, the sun being usually included in the patterns. It also appears at the top of the verandah pillars called “head” (in Oltenia) which correspond to the capitals of the classical columns, as well as on the supporting beam above the pillars. The same motif sometimes appears at the entrance to the stables, on hayricks, tool sheds, and barns (in Oltenia and Northern Transylvania). When the houses are targeted, the sun motif is modelled of the same material on the façade and side-walls, usually in the form of a simple circle or circle with rays inside. This is a very frequent decoration in Oltenia and Wallachia.

The decoration of the gates of wooden churches usually includes the sun in the same simple geometrical forms and without any human elements. Though there exists a link between Romanian wooden churches and those in the Southern Balkans, the wood-carving rather resembles Nordic art.⁴ The sun motif was used in all the Romanian provinces and can be seen on buildings dating from the 16th century and up to the 19th century, when it disappeared. It was carved on doors, around windows,

¹ See: Elena Niculiță-Voronica, *Datinile și credințele poporului român* (The Customs and Beliefs of the Romanian People), Vol. I, 1903, p. 376

² See: Dimitrie Comșe, *Album de creștături în lemn* (Album of Wood-Carvings), Sibiu, 1915; A. Dima, *Drăguș, un sat din Țara Oltului* (Drăguș, a Village in the Land of Olt-Făgăraș). *Împodobirea porților, interioarelor caselor, opinii despre frumos* (The Decoration of Gates, Interiors of Houses, Opinions on Beauty), Bucharest, 1945. A. Dima's study of gates has shown that the prevailing motif is the sun also in other regions of Transylvania, such as Sibiu, Cluj, and Năsăud.

³ Ion Voinescu, *Monumente de artă țărănească din România* (Peasant Art Monuments in Romania), Bucharest; George Oprescu, *L'art du Paysan Roumain*, Bucharest, 1937; Paul H. Stahl, *Porțile țărănești la români* (Peasant Gates in Romania), in “Studies and Research of Art History,” No. 2/1960

⁴ See: P. I. Makușenco and Z. A. Petrov, *Narodnaia arhitektura Zakarpatia*, Kiev, 1956; V. P. Samoilovici, *Narodne tvorcistvo arhitekturi siliskogo jittisa*, Kiev, 1961

on porch pillars, along the beams supporting the roof and even on walls. The wood-carvings decorating the doors of churches deserve to be carefully examined as they rival with the carvings on pillars and on large gates of households. The doors of the wooden churches in Transylvania are treated as real decorative panels on which is carved the sun in movement or the sun with straight rays, together with stars, rows of superposed zigzags and torsels forming compositions of the greatest interest.¹

The sun motif is equally frequent in the interior decoration of churches and houses. The simple circle, or the circle with straight or curved rays, is carved on the old wooden furniture in houses or churches. Many of these pieces of furniture have been reproduced and described in various publications and are well known today. The circle (or fragments of a circle) is also carved on wooden peasant chests. A particularly interesting example is the wooden church from Răpciuni, which has been brought to the Village Museum in Bucharest. Its exterior, particularly the areas around the doors, porch, furniture and interior decoration include an unusually large number of sun symbols. We will see here, painted or notched, many of the usual representations of the sun in wood-carving, so that this church can be considered as a temple of the sun. Though it is almost impossible to make a statistical survey in this sense, it is our impression that the sun motif appears more frequently in wood-carving in Transylvania and Northern Moldavia. The same motif is also to be found in the neighbouring countries, as well as in more distant parts or in the art of extinct peoples.

The decoration of the beams on the ceilings of peasant houses is well worth noting: the central beam of the room is decorated with crosses and short inscriptions, as well as with the sun motif in the form of a simple circle or a circle with rays. Medicinal herbs, money, and the family's valuable possessions were kept there, and the midwife used to lift the newborn child to touch the ceiling for luck. The carved beam in the middle of the ceiling is also to be found in the neighbouring countries² and in the houses of the national minorities.³ The central

¹ See: Coriolan Petranu, *Monumentele istorice ale județului Bihor* (Historical Monuments in the Country of Bihor), *Bisericile de lemn* (Wooden Churches), Sibiu, 1931, and *Bisericile de lemn din județul Arad* (Wooden Churches in the County of Arad), Sibiu, 1927; Victor Brătulescu, *Biserici din Maramureș* (The Churches in Maramureș), in the Bulletin of the Commission for Historical Monuments, Bucharest, 1941; V. Drăghiceanu, *Vechea biserică de lemn din Grămeștii Vilcei* (The Old Wooden Church at Grămeștii Vilcei), Bulletin of the Commission for Historical Monuments, 1910; Ghika-Budești, *Evoluția arhitecturii în Muntenia și Oltenia* (The Evolution of Architecture in Wallachia and Oltenia), Part IV, Bucharest, 1936, fig. 980

² See: E. Z. Blomqvist, *Krestianskie postroiki russskih, ukraintzev i bielorusov*, Moscow, 1956, V. P. Samoilovici, *op. cit.*

³ See: K. Jekelius, *Das Burzenland*, Vol. III. p. 65

beam, also called the "master beam," played an important part in embellishing the room. In the finest examples the sun motif is repeated along the lower part: the carvings on both sides add to the richness of the decoration, which by far surpasses any utilitarian scope, even in 19th-century houses. In the region of Bran, colour is added to the carvings.

The sun is one of the most frequent motifs to be found on the wooden implements and household articles used by peasants in Romania. It is either notched, or painted and burned with a red-hot poker. There are no human elements, only the simple circle with straight or curved rays inside.

The sun motif is notched or drawn in colour on the votive monuments in Hunedoara, Oltenia, Wallachia, and Moldavia. Some of these monuments, particularly in Oltenia, were almost entirely covered with pagan symbols, even more than with the sign of the cross.¹ On the painted monuments in Southern Oltenia we will find the "reel" motif, but not on those decorated by notching (except in Hunedoara). On votive monuments in Wallachia (dating from the 19th century), a carved sun, set in the centre, has evident anthropomorphous elements: eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. The circle, with human elements, is mainly to be found on suchlike monuments.

In ceramics, the circle appears sporadically, usually at the bottom of porringers; its identification with the sun motif is not certain. This motif, surrounded by small fir branches, appears on a vessel made at Horez early in the 20th century.²

On the other hand, the sun motif (a simple circle, a circle with rays, the central point with straight or curved rays or surrounded by dots) is frequently used in the metal ornaments of the peasant costume and on objects made of bone (particularly powder horns). We thus see this motif on the jewelry of the peasant women in the Pădureni area, Hunedoara Region, and on powder horns in all parts of the country. The sun in movement with intersecting arms, bent at the ends, frequently appears on the powder horns. Even when the motif remains simple, as on the women's jewels, each piece being decorated with a simple circle or a circle with a central point, the general effect is fascinating. These metal ornaments form an essential part of the costume worn by women in the Pădureni area.

The sun motif is less clearly visible in hand-made textiles: in rugs, carpets, tapestries, towels, and knapsacks we see it as concentric rhombs called "wheels";

¹ See: A. Tzigara-Samurças, *L'Art du Peuple Roumain*, Genève, 1925

² See: Barbu Slătineanu, Paul H. Stahl, and Paul Petrescu, *op. cit.*, fig. 19

sometimes rays in movement, in the form of zigzags, appear around the edges. The circle with straight or curved rays inside is frequently seen on the different pieces of a costume and particularly on ornamented fur-lined coats throughout Romania. In these cases the sun motif is called "little coin." The motif is easier to recognize when the name "sun" clearly indicates the content of the motif as in the Bihor Mountains,¹ and în Gorj,² whereas in the Perșani area³ and in Muscel⁴ we will find it under the name of "wheel."

The motif used for painted Easter eggs is called "sun" and also "wheel."⁵ In these cases the sun is represented with inside or even outside rays. When the "reel" (also called "violin," when represented by two intersecting arms) appears, it is certainly another version of the ancient symbol of the sun, even though those who painted it no longer knew its meaning, the more so as the name of the motif meant something quite different.

THE MOON AND THE SUN

Popular imagination has woven many stories around the sun and the moon which are represented as a couple. The sun is the male and the moon is the female. The sun is made of gold and the moon is made of silver. Unconsummate love unites them; the story goes that the sun pursues the fleeing moon. Their love cannot be fulfilled as they are brother and sister and their mother does her utmost to prevent them. The stories about the sun and the moon are widespread.

In Romanian folk art the moon is always represented as accompanying the sun. In fact there are no stories about the moon alone. In folklore we find the moon associated to the cycles of animal and plant life, linked to plenty, growth, and fecundity. Sowing, harvesting, and tree felling are carried out according to the phases of the moon. The most important moment in its evolution is called "the New Crescent."

¹ See: N. Dunăre, *Textilele populare românești din Munții Bihorului* (Romanian Folk Textiles in the Bihor Mountains), Bucharest, 1959, p.46

² See: G. Focșa, *Evoluția portului popular din zona Jiului de sus* (Evolution of the Romanian Peasant Costume in the Upper Jiu Area), Bucharest, 1957, p.59

³ See: Cornel Irimie, *Portul popular din zona Perșanilor* (The Peasant Costume in Perșani Area), Bucharest, 1958, p.89

⁴ F. B. Florescu, *Portul popular din Muscel* (The Folk Costume in Muscel), Bucharest, 1957

⁵ Artur Gorovei, *op. cit.*, p. 109, describing the sun motif under its different names and the "cock" motif which is considered the sun bird

In folk visual art, the sun and the moon are frequently endowed with human features: eyes, eyebrows, nose, and mouth. Their traditional position is that seen in mitral reliefs: the sun is on the left and the moon on the right. Their eyes look in front or at each other. The moon is usually represented as the crescent, the concave side facing the sun, and is seen in profile. As in folklore, this representation of the moon marks the importance of the "crescent" phase. In the more carefully worked compositions, the moon is accompanied by a star, "the Morning Star," or by several others placed in the concave part.

In Romanian folk art, the sun and the moon motifs are more frequently represented in the Transylvanian icons painted on glass and to a lesser degree on those painted on wood in the rest of the country. They appear most often in the scenes of Adam and Eve standing near the Tree of Life, the Last Judgement, and so on, and occupy the upper corners as in the reliefs representing scenes from the cult of god Mithras. Sometimes the back of the throne on which the Virgin sits has the sun and the moon carved at the top — as is sometimes the case with church pews — but then the sun has no anthropomorphous elements, being represented as a rosette or a circle. In Transylvanian woodcuts¹ the sun and the moon are placed in the upper part. Their resemblance to those on icons painted on glass is very great and it is probable that the same models were used. The sun and the moon also appear in the mural paintings of the wooden or stone village churches in the different provinces.

Votive monuments form a separate category. The sun and the moon are painted at the extremities of the arms of the cross; the sun stands on the left and the moon on the right when we look at the cross. However, the two together are rarer than the motif of the sun alone and do not have anthropomorphous features; they may be newer and are used in church murals. In Northern Moldavia there are stone crosses where the two motifs, with or without anthropomorphous elements, are placed at the intersection of the two arms. The motif of the sun and moon also appears on the doors of the wooden churches in Northern Moldavia. They have the same anthropomorphous character on the rural printed calendars.

THE STARS

The stars appear almost as frequently as the sun in a wide variety of compositions. There is rich folklore concerning the stars. The most widespread assertion

¹ See: Ion Muşlea, *Xilografurile ţăranilor români din Ardeal (Romanian Peasant Xylographs in Transylvania)*, 1939

is that each man has his own star to which his life is linked. This is based on the ancient hypothetical link between human fate and the heavenly bodies. When a star vanished it meant that a man likewise died. Such old sayings as "his star has set" or "his star has gone out" have been widely circulated. When a large star fell, it meant a great man had died, and the stars of the first magnitude were the stars of emperors.

Stars were wise, they had human features, they thought and showed men the way. A text written in 1784 tells us what a star could do :

*Three kings from the East
Travelled with a star,
They followed the way
Shown by the star.
When they rested
The star waited.
When they set off again
The star led the way.
But when they reached Jerusalem
The star hid.¹*

*Trii crai di la răsărit
Cu steaua a călătorit
Cînd în cale purcedea,
Steaua înainte mergea.
Cînd sta de odihnea,
Steaua tot îi îngăduia.
Cînd în cale ei intra,
Steaua tot îi îndrepta.
La Jerusalem dacă au ajuns,
Steaua iarăși s-a ascuș.*

There are many other examples.² People conjured the stars in their charms.³

Beside the life each star could have, there were groups and constellations which were compared to objects and creatures connected with man's daily life. Looking at the sky, it seemed to man that the stars formed a cart, a rake, a plough, and so on, about which stories are still told.

Let us follow the different forms in which the stars appear in folk art :

We will first mention the star made by children and carried from house to house to sing carols in winter. Some of these stars, made of brightly coloured paper and painted, are most attractive,⁴ resembling those used by the other European peoples.

¹ See: M. Gaster, *Chrestomație română. Texte tipărite și manuscrise* (Romanian Chrestomathy. 16th—19th-Century Printed Texts and Manuscripts), Vol. II, Leipzig, Bucharest, 1891, p. 139

² See: Ioan Bianu and Nerva Hodoș, *Bibliografia românească veche* (Old Romanian Bibliography, 1508—1830), Vol. II, Bucharest, 1910, p.96

³ See: Artur Gorovei, *Descîntecele românilor* (Romanian Charms), Bucharest, 1931, p. 146

⁴ See: Tudor Pamfilie, *Sărbătorile la români. Crăciunul* (Romanian Festival Days: Christmas), Bucharest, 1911, p. 127

In Oltenia and Wallachia particularly, the star appears in a wide variety of forms at the bottom of peasant porringers. It is engraved in lines or dots by means of the tip of a *horn* and then coloured in different shades. Sometimes the star has a double outline, also made up of dots or discontinued lines, as is usual in Romanian ceramics. At other times the star covers the whole surface of the vessel. More rarely, different geometrical motifs are arranged to form a star. In Oltenia this star motif¹ is sometimes a replica of the paper or wooden star carried by children at Christmas. You can recognize the round central part, the rays and the paper ribbons which unite the tips of the rays.

We also find the star motif on large pots and jars, either painted or in the form of clay lozenges applied to the most prominent part of the pot or jar, alone or forming part of a pattern which includes snakes, frogs, and the wave motif. The star frequently appears on the porringers made in the north of Romania, the Land of Oaş and Maramureş, where it appears in the form of an aster, a flower resembling a star, treated in the mediaeval and Byzantine styles.² The patterns reproduced on those porringers are also found on the painted ceilings of the wooden churches in Northern Transylvania.

The star, due to its beautiful shape and the way it decorates the porringers, plays an important part in Romanian painted pottery and is frequently used by potters throughout the country. This motif is enhanced by the masterly way in which it is painted, particularly at the Horez potters' centre.

The star motif also plays an important part in the icons which represent Nativity, where it is placed in the centre. In the Transylvanian icons painted on glass the star has sometimes human features as it is represented with an eye in the centre.

The same motif is frequently used for painted eggs and is known as the "star" motif in North Moldavia, Dîmboviţa, Muscel, Vilcea, Tecuci, Dolj, and Cîmpulung.³ However, it is sometimes also called the "shepherd's star," which name may designate the Morning Star.

¹ The most beautiful examples are the porringers from Horez; see: Paul Petrescu and Paul H. Stahl, *Ceramica din Horez* (Ceramics of Horez), Bucharest, 1956, ESPLA

² See: Paul H. Stahl and Paul Petrescu, *Ceramica smălţuită românească din Transilvania* (Romanian Glazed Ceramics in Transylvania). "Studies and Researches of Art History," Nos. 1-2/1956, Bucharest, Academy Publishing House

³ See: Artur Gorovei, *op. cit.*; N. Dunăre, *Die Verzierung der Ostereier bei den Rumänen*, in "Zeitschrift für Ethnologie," Braunschweig, 1959

In wood-carving the star is frequently accompanied by other motifs, particularly the sun. Included in larger compositions the star is often seen on the door-frame of church doors, where it forms successive lines of stars, and on the gates of houses.

The peasant women throughout Romania use the star motif in textiles and particularly on embroidered blouses, skirts, and aprons. Leather-workers used it on ornamented fur-lined jerkins. This motif used in textile or leather clearly suggests a star and is called by this name. In the Gorj and in Bihor areas it is called "star" or "little star,"¹ in Hațeg it is also called "star."² However, in this case it is no longer a single large star, in the centre, but a group of stars decorating the free spaces as in wood-carving. This produces the same effect as the motifs called "geometrical" which are a repetition of several motifs, forming a beautiful succession which enhances the beauty of the composition as a whole.

In paintings representing the Virgin, a star is generally placed on her shoulder, and another, usually with eight rays, on her brow. In more recent paintings, the star has sometimes been transformed into a flower, set in the same places. The painting of this star and its persistent position can only be understood by consulting folklore.

"With a star on his brow" is a popular saying which means that the person is lucky or has special talents. In this case it is the Morning Star with its many rays which usually shows the importance of the person carrying it on his brow. For instance, North Moldavian folklore insists that an ordinary star has four rays and the Morning Star eight,³ according to an established hierarchy.

In certain cases there is a group of many stars. This time we are referring to the stars covering a large area and not those which fill in free spaces in textiles and wood-carvings. The former symbolize the sky, particularly in paintings on glass and wood, the murals in village churches and the paintings on wayside crosses and those in Oltenian graveyards. The representation of the star motif on the tall crosses in the graveyards in Southern Oltenia strikes us particularly: a right angle is divided in two by a diagonal line; one part is painted in a light colour and has the sun motif in one corner, while the other part is painted dark

¹ See: G. Foçașă, *op. cit.*; N. Dunăre, *Textilele populare românești din Munții Bihorului* (Romanian Folk Textiles in the Bihor Mountains), Bucharest, 1959, ESPLA

² See: Romulus Vuia, *Portul popular din Țara Hațegului* (The Folk Costume in Hațeg), Bucharest, 1962, ESPLA

³ See: Elena Niculiță-Voronca, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 380

blue, and suggests a starry night. It seems to be the symbol of day and night. In painted eggs, groups of stars fill in the larger spaces between motifs, or the motifs themselves, especially when they refer to the sky (e.g. the "lightning"). The stars often appear as small dots because of the small size of the painted object as in the case of eggs.

The group of stars which forms the Milky Way or the "Lost Way" deserves full attention. Many stories are told about it. One of these stories says that a shepherd on his way to heaven met the devil and started a fight in which the shepherd was helped by his dog and the devil by a bear. Several of the constellations known to the peasants (the Cart, Horse, Dog, Bear, and Cart Axle) took part in this fight, and finally the devil was defeated and upset the shepherd's milk pails. The story goes that the Milky Way is a road followed under certain circumstances. According to some, it was the road taken by the dead to reach heaven and that is why it was called the "Lost Way"; others maintained that those who had been taken in bondage by the Turks returned home by taking the Milky Way, which was therefore also called the "Slaves' Way." Saint Elijah also drove his chariot along the same way.

The "Lost Way" (also called the "Lost Road" or the "Lost Path")¹ was often represented on painted eggs. The sinuous line of this motif suggested the Labyrinth. White dots, symbolizing stars, filled in the motif. Their presence may be explained by the fact that many of the painted eggs were designed for the dead. In bygone days, people believed that the dead returned home during Easter. The villagers used to sit on the banks of a stream quietly eating cakes and eggs, whose shells they threw into the water with the idea that they would reach the dead. The connection between this motif and the memory of dead ancestors is confirmed by its presence on the pots made in Wallachia for the fairs of the "old men," meaning the forefathers. These pots were skilfully decorated, the motifs frequently including stars and the "Lost Way." Alms were given in these "old men's" pots. The "Lost Way" also decorated the Easter eggs together with other motifs, such as the sun. We often find it in textiles, too, when it is called the "way," the "lost way," or the "twisted way."²

Thus, the role played by the star in folk art is as important as in folklore, being one of the most frequently used motifs after the sun. However, in this

¹ See: Artur Gorovei, *op.cit.*, p.85 and the following pages

² See: Nicolae Dunăre, *op. cit.*, p. 48

case too we will find that the old meaning is lost in the transition from ancient to new Romanian folk art, the motif now being only used for its own beauty.



This survey would be incomplete if we did not mention the unity which exists between the motifs in Romanian folk art and cultured art. As we cannot dwell here at length on the particularly rich motifs found in cultured art, we will only mention a few examples which we believe will help the reader better to understand folk art.

The sun by itself, in the forms already mentioned, appears in wood-carving on church doors and houses¹ and on church furniture². We can also find it in household pottery and monumental ceramics,³ as well as in silverwork⁴. In stone carving,⁵ the sun is one of the chief motifs on tombstones, door- and window-frames, and interior decorations. In all these cases the motif is usually a circle with straight or curved rays inside.

The sun and the moon, mostly with anthropomorphous features, appear frequently: the sun is featured full face and the moon in the form of a crescent sometimes with one or several stars on its concave side. They are represented on murals

¹ See: A. Zagoritz has collected a number of examples described in *Pentru Muzeul Prahovei: o casă veche românească* (For the Prahova Museum: an Old Romanian House), Bucharest, 1915; Paul H. Stahl, *Vechi case și biserici de lemn din Muntenia* (Old Wooden Houses and Churches in Wallachia), in "Studies and Researches of Art History," No. 2/1963, Academy Publishing House

² See: A. M. Zagoritz, *Mobilierul bisericesc* (Church Furniture), Bucharest, 1915; Nicolae Iorga, *Les arts mineurs en Roumanie*, Bucharest, 1934, Vol. II.

³ See: Barbu Slătineanu, *Ceramica românească* (Romanian Ceramics), Bucharest, 1938, and *Ceramica feudală românească* (Romanian Feudal Ceramics), Bucharest, 1958, ESPLA; Corina Niculescu, *Ceramica* (Ceramics), "Inventory of Monuments and Objects of Art in the Reign of Stephen the Great," Bucharest, 1958, Academy Publishing House.

⁴ See: Teodora Voinescu, *Argintăria în colecția de artă medievală din tezaur* (Silverwork in the Treasure's Collection of Mediaeval Art), "Study of the Treasure Returned by the USSR," Bucharest, 1958, Academy Publishing House.

⁵ See: Ghika Budești, *op. cit.*, second part, Bucharest, 1931; Virgil Vătășianu, *Istoria artei feudale în Țările Române* (History of Feudal Art in the Romanian Principalities), Vol. I, Bucharest, 1959, Academy Publishing House; Mihai Berza, the Chapter *Arhitectura și decorația sculptată a monumentelor* (The Architecture and Carved Decoration of Monuments), in "Inventory of Monuments and Objects of Art in the Reign of Stephen the Great," Bucharest, 1958, Academy Publishing House; *Stema Moldovei în timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare* (The Emblem of Moldavia Under Stephen the Great), "Studies and Researches of Art History," Nos. 1-2/1955, Academy Publishing House

in churches¹ and on icons alike; our old books, until the 19th century, have popularized these two aspects². One of the most beautiful art treasures is old Romanian embroidery and especially that which represents the same scenes as in religious murals. Some of these scenes include the sun and the moon with well-marked anthropomorphic features.³ In tragic scenes, the sun and the moon look sad and wear their hair loose as was the former custom among the Romanian peasants when mourning.

The stars appear either in groups, symbolizing the sky (in church murals, icons, embroidery, wood-carving, and metal book bindings), or alone, as in the scenes representing Nativity, when a ray descends straight from the star to the newborn babe, like in folk art.⁴ Explaining the presence of the stars in religious painting, I. D. Ștefănescu said that the picture is a symbol of Byzantine thought. The symbolic meaning of the different parts of the church is clearly explained by different authors: Dionysius the Areopagite and Simon of Thessalonika, the anonymous author of Ecclesiastic History. The latter work shows that the church is the Heaven on Earth in which Christ moves. The sanctuary represents the upper region of the sky where the throne of God stands; the cupola is the terrestrial sky, the visible sky. The Eternal Word will therefore be represented there by the image of the Pantocrator. The earthly sky opens in the distance to make *Him* visible to

¹ There is a vast bibliography of which we mention: I. D. Ștefănescu, *L'évolution de la peinture religieuse en Bucovine et en Moldavie depuis les origines jusqu'au XIX^e siècle. Nouvelles recherches. Etude iconographique*, Paris, 1929, 2 vols. Also *L'art byzantin et l'art lombard en Transylvanie. Peintures murales de Valachie et de Moldavie*, Paris, 1938

² Ioan Bianu and Nerva Hodoș, *op. cit.*

³ Corina Niculescu, *Broderiile din Țara Românească în secolele XIV-XVIII* (14th-18th-Century Embroidery in Wallachia); Maria A. Muzicescu, *Broderia din Moldova în veacurile XV-XVIII* (15th-18th-Century Embroidery in Moldavia), in "Study of the Treasure Returned by the USSR," Bucharest, 1958; Teodora Voinescu and M. A. Muzicescu, *Broderii și țesături* (Embroidery and Textiles), in "Inventory of Monuments and Objects of Art Under Stephen The Great"; Maria A. Muzicescu, *La broderie roumaine au Moyen Age*, in "Revue Roumaine d'histoire de l'art," tome 1, No. 1, 1964; I. D. Ștefănescu, *Broderiile de stil bizantin și moldovenesc în a doua jumătate a secolului al XV-lea. Istorie, iconografie, tehnică*. (Embroidery in Byzantine and Moldavian Style in the Second Half of the 15th Century. History, Iconography, Technique), "Moldavian Culture Under Stephen the Great," Bucharest, 1964, Academy Publishing House

⁴ I. D. Ștefănescu, *L'Eglise Doamnei (de la Princesse) à Bucarest. Les peintures murales*; in the "Bulletin of the Commission for Historical Monuments," the year 36, Bucharest, 1943

us.”¹ The same belief that the sky opened on certain days was widespread in Romanian folklore.

Though “a folklore of town-dwellers and boyars” has not been collected as it did not last very much there exists a certain connection between towns and villages as regards both decorative elements and folklore.

¹ *L'évolution de la peinture...* p. 69, Vol. I

In the study of folklore motifs one of the richest and most interesting subjects is the tree. Trees aroused a wide interest throughout Europe and Asia. The old cultures in America, as well as some of the peoples of Africa provide rich examples in this direction. Therefore it is a universal motif which has a number of particularities in Romanian folklore. The method we use to seek abstract correlatives for art enables us to identify that which is really characteristic for Romanian folk art and forms an organic part, surpassing a simple imitation. This identification is necessary as a number of foreign representations of the tree penetrated into Romanian art brought from the great trends of universal art.

The motif generally known as the Tree of Life has an ancient origin: the Romanian people used it at a period which coincided with the birth of this motif, but has roots going even deeper into the past of this area. There is a surprising number of rich tales, beliefs and forms of art in connection with the Tree, showing that dendrolatry has long since played an important part in the life of man. The evolution of the Life Tree motif provides the opportunity to see its transition from the forms in which it appeared in old customs to those of decorative motifs on art objects.

We will dwell more closely on the aspects which are evidently linked to Romanian folklore, that is, which may be considered local. The presentation of the material collected for this chapter is facilitated by I. D. Ștefănescu's study of the tree in the old golden seals of Wallachia.¹ We must also mention the description by Paul Petrescu concerning the forms assumed by the Tree of Life in art², as well as the facts which we were able to collect about it from the Romanians and Moslems in the Dobruja³.



¹ See: *Cu privire la stema Țării Românești. Arborele din pecețile și bulele sigilare de aur* (Concerning the Emblem of Wallachia. The Tree on Seals and Gold Sealed Bulls), Bucharest, 1957, Academy Publishing House

² See: *Pomul vieții în arta populară din România* (The Tree of Life in Romanian Folk Art), in "Studii și Cercetări de istoria artei" (Studies and Researches of Art History), Bucharest, No.1/1961, Academy Publishing House

³ See: *La dendrolâtrie chez les turcs et les tatares de la Dobroudja*. "Revue des études sud-est européennes", Bucharest, Nos 1-2/1965, Academy Publishing House, and *La dendrolâtrie dans le folklore et l'art rustique du XIX^e siècle en Roumanie*, published in "Archivio internazionale di etnografia e preistoria," Turin, 1959

In the past, the normal aspect of a tree was enhanced by the peasant's imagination and fairy-tale atmosphere, and was a result of the way in which people interpreted nature in those days. The customs concerning the tree have not yet been systematically examined. We will group here some of the most important, briefly describing the most widespread forms, beginning with the customs connected with the calendar year, and then ending with those linked to the chief events in man's life — which enable us to reconstitute the former image of the tree.

The customs linked to the calendar concerned the whole village community. Most of them were the same in all parts of Romania.¹

The *sorcova* still used today in the form of a stick with coloured paper flowers, is connected with New Years' Day carolling. In the old days it was composed of the branch of a rose bush, apple-tree, or pear-tree, decorated with coloured or silver paper, gilded metal threads, and artificial flowers. Children wave the *sorcova* tapping the shoulder of their elders to whom they wish a Happy New Year. Formerly, they used to cut the branches a few days before the New Year placing them in water so that the buds should appear and turn green. The verses recited on that occasion also mentioned the tree from which the branch had been cut.

The *plugușor* or "little plough" is an important custom celebrating the New Year. A fir-tree, decorated with coloured paper flowers and streamers, is set on a plough placed on wheels or sledge runners. Several youth accompany the plough, shouting, stopping before the cottages and wishing a Happy New Year to the householders. The whole ceremony is linked to agricultural customs which preserve the old beliefs and also the archaic forms of farming.²

On the last Sunday before Lent, a long pole decorated with flowers and ribbons used to be raised on a height near the village. Straw and twigs were heaped at the foot of the pole. Then the villagers set fire to the pole and stood around it in a circle waiting for it to fall. The pole fell and it was believed that the villager towards which

¹ See: Ovid Densușeanu, *Graiul din Țara Hațegului* (The Dialect in Hațeg), Bucharest, 1915; Teofil Frincu and George Candrea, *Românii din munții Apuseni* (The Romanians in the Apuseni Mountains), Bucharest, 1888; Simion Florea Marian, *Sărbătorile la Români* (Romanian Feast Days), Vol.III, 1898—1901, Bucharest; Pamfilie Tudor, *Sărbătorile de vară la români* (Romanian Summer Feast Days), Bucharest, 1910; idem, *Sărbătorile de toamnă și postul Crăciunului* (Autumn Feast Days and Feasts Before Christmas), Bucharest, 1914; Ion Slavici, *Die Rumänen in Ungarn, Siebenbürgen und der Bukowina*, Wien and Teschen, 1881; Elena Niculiță-Voronca, *Datinele și credințele poporului român, adunate și așezate în ordine mitologică* (The Customs and Beliefs of the Romanian People Collected and Arranged in Mythologic Order), two volumes, 1903.

² See: Henry H. Stahl, *Comentarii etnografice pe tema Plugușorului* (Ethnographic Comments on the "Plugușor" Theme), in "Revista de etnografie și folclor" (Ethnographic and Folklore Review), Bucharest, 2/1965, Academy Publishing House

it fell would be lucky the whole year. Then all the villagers danced round the fire. They took the wheel of a cart or a plough and wrapped it in straw, then set fire to it and let it run downhill.

On Saint Toader's Day, the first Saturday of Lent, wedding ceremonies were performed around a flowering tree. The guests danced round the tree and hung small loaves of bread in its branches.

On March 1, a *mărțișor* or charm was hung round the neck of children for a few days, then hung in a tree. If the tree thrived during the year, the child whose charm was hung in the tree would be lucky in life. Willow branches, to which beneficent powers were subsequently attributed, were brought to church on Palm Sunday.

Many customs were observed on Saint George's Day, on April 23, for he was considered the real patron saint of Spring. It was believed that on Saint George's Day ghosts and witches could make cows barren. Their power was destroyed by placing green branches on the roofs of houses, in front of the door and above the windows. Lumps of sod with green grass, into which hazelnut, oak, beech and pear branches had been stuck, were also placed above the doors and windows of houses and stables. Shepherds used to light fir branches and dry grass forcing the sheep to pass through the smoke. The villagers blew on mountain horns and rang little bells being convinced that the ghosts could not pass the boundaries of their sound. So we see that the tree and its green branches play a leading part in the chief festival days connected with farming (the little plough) and livestock breeding.

May Day was celebrated as the *arminden*. The peasants decorated the fence of their courtyards with oak, beech, willow, and raspberry branches. A tree (the *arminden*), whose branches were cut off except for a few at the top, was fixed into the ground where it remained until the harvest season. It was said that its branches drove away evil spirits. On the same day, the peasants gathered around a tree in the forest where they had a picnic. Linden branches were placed in the rooms on the eve of Whitsuntide. The second and third day of Whitsuntide were considered harmful to man. A piece of wood stuck into the belt, or linden, oak, or poplar branches placed on the roof were the best protection.

On October 26, the day of the patron saint of Autumn, a fir was burnt in the evening in the middle of the village. The children were given fruit to eat and the men ran a leap over the glowing ember to become immune against every disease. The glowing embers were then placed at the foot of the trees in orchards to ensure a good fruit crop for the next year.

Even this short list of the occasions in which trees are used as symbols in village festivities will show us the important part the tree has played in the events of man's life. Various magic powers were also attributed to the tree: that of being the symbol of happiness and the friend and protector of the home, family, livestock, and crops. It was believed to drive away many dangers. In Spring, when a tree flowered and grew green, its hidden powers were supposed to grow too. That is why in winter the peasants cut off branches and set them in water in the house to grow green. The most frequently used branches were those of the fir, willow, apple-tree, pear-tree, oak, beech, linden, and hawthorn.

The tree was just as widely used for festivities connected with family life¹. Fir branches are always present at weddings, though they may sometimes be replaced by the branches of apple or plum-trees.

A proposal always included on the part of the groom an apple into which metal coins had been placed as a gift for the bride. A fir-tree decorated with flowers, tinsel, ribbons, embroidered veils and little bells was always carried at the head of the bride's procession as it passed through the village lanes. At the end of the ceremony, the fir-tree was usually fixed to one of the porch pillars of the house or to one of the spears on either end of the roof's ridge. During the wedding dance one of the guests carried the fir in his arms. The fact that the fir was placed near the house and kept there till it got dried was due to the belief that if ill-wishers took it and left it at a crossroads, the marriage would be broken.

When the wedding procession crossed the village, the bride's waggon was driven loaded with all the household articles which made up her dowry. Embroidered bridal veils, which were later given to the driver of the waggon, were hung on the fir branches which decorated it. The wedding guests followed the bride's waggon in decorated carts. In certain parts, the day on which those carts were decorated was called "fir day." Fir branches also decorated the neighbouring houses. The bride wore a small wreath made of fir leaves or twigs. In some parts of Moldavia the wreath was only made of fir twigs.

In Transylvania, the fir was replaced by a "standard," in the Apuseni Mountains the top of a fir-tree was embellished with embroidered bridal veils, ribbons, and

¹ See: T. Burada, *Datinele la nuntă ale poporului român în Macedonia* (Wedding Customs of the Romanian People from Macedonia), Bucharest, 1883; G. Fira, *Nunta în județul Vilcea* (Wedding in the County of Vilcea), Bucharest, 1928; Artur Gorovei, *Datinele noastre de nuntă* (Our Wedding Customs), Bucharest, 1910; Elena Sevastos, *Nunta la români* (Weddings in Romania), Bucharest, 1889

bells. In other parts of Transylvania, the "standard" consisted of a simple pole decorated at the top with small bells and embroidered veils, above which were placed ears of wheat and flowers; cakes made in different shapes were hung in each arm of a cross fixed on top. The "standard" was therefore decorated in the same way as the fir and played the same role, showing that a fir had been originally used. Sometimes intermediary forms were used; when the fir was young, all the branches were cut off except the two lateral ones at the top; then it was decorated in the same way as the "standard."

When the wedding procession reached the house of the bride's parents, a song was sung about a tree's wedding:

*We have heard
You have a heavenly flower
And with joy we think
For these two youngsters
The time has come to wed
Like two blossoming trees
For they blossom
But do not yield fruit
And we have come
To re-plant them
In the imperial garden
To blossom by next year.¹*

*Noi am auzit
C'aveți o floare de rai
și nouă de cu bun trai
Că la ești doi fii le-a venit
Vremea de căsătorit
Ca la doi pemi de'nflorit
Că'nfloresc
Și nu mai rodesc
Ear noi am venit
Ca s'o răsădim,
La grădină'mpărătească
Pin'la anu să'nflorească*

The bride was dressed by the old village women; in Oltenia and Southern Transylvania, they often made the bride sit under the tree, leaning against the trunk or near it. After the wedding, the fir was fixed to the top of the tree under which the bride's hair had been arranged.

About a year after the wedding, the young couple made ready for another ceremony in connection with the tree. In autumn, during the vintage, the young couple brought clay pots and made pies which were placed inside the pots and distributed among the guests. That ceremony took place before lunch on Sunday. The wedding tree or apple, as it was called, was decorated with fruit and placed in the ground at the head of the table with a small fir-wood stool next to it. A wax snake with an apple in its mouth, a piece of white linen, red threads, pies and candles were

¹ See: Simion Florea Marian, *Nunta la români (Romanian Weddings)*, Bucharest, 1889, p. 842

placed on the tree. A pot full of pies was placed before each guest. A diminutive tree or a tiny branch was fixed in one of the pies. The big tree was given to the godfather and godmother, and that is why there were no branches in their pies. In some Transylvanian regions, the ceremony of the apple was celebrated on the eve of the wedding.¹

The tree played an equally important part at funerals.²

A fir, decorated with flowers, textiles, and fruit, was set in front of the dead person's house. If necessary, the fir might have been replaced by an apple or plum branch. In Northern Transylvania, a "standard," like the one described before, was placed in front of the house. Ribbons, wool or cotton threads, a pie and a candle were hung on it. A fir was always used in case a young man or girl died before marriage and an engagement ring was hung on the tree. In some parts of Transylvania only the top branches of the fir were left, on which embroidered veils, the rings of the deceased, and a small bell were suspended. The tree was placed on the grave beside the cross or stele. In Gorj, wool in various colours was tied round fairly large portions of the trunk. This custom recalls the old Mediterranean ceremonies. For instance, a symbolic pine-tree, which represented Attis, existed in the cult of Cybele; the pine was wrapped in bands of coloured wool as King Mida's daughter had swathed the body of Attis, who died near a pine.³

A funeral pillar was formerly placed on a grave, then was replaced by the cross. We often see this in Transylvania and Oltenia. Sometimes it stands next to the cross and the decorated tree stuck to the ground. The pole was probably closely related to the other two. At times it was decorated with embroidered veils, flowers, and a wooden bird.

A fir with straight branches (*Abies alba*) was usually chosen for funerals. It was carried by one of the dancers at the head of the procession and was decorated in the same style as the fir used in wedding processions. A number of rites were performed when the fir was brought from distant parts. The young village girls went out to meet it, singing the song of the fir.

¹ See: Simion Florea Marian, *op. cit.*; Benedict Viciu, *Colăcăritul. Obiceiurile țăranilor români la nuntă* (Wedding Customs of the Romanian Peasants), Sibiu, 1885

² See: T. T. Burada, *Datinele poporului român la înmormintări* (Funeral Rites of the Romanian People), Jassy, 1882; Simion Florea Marian, *Înmormintarea la români* (Romanian Funerals), Bucharest, 1892; Elena Niculiță-Voronca, *op.cit.*

³ See: *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines*, published by Charles Daremberg and Edmond Saglio, Vol. II, Paris, 1892, p.100.

We have chosen two versions of this song, one from North Moldavia and the other from Gorj, which have struck us as being particularly beautiful. In the first version, the fir speaks and explains to us its sorrow:¹

— *Oh fir, little fir*
What ails you, dear?
Why're you swaying without wind,
Without a breeze or without word,
Till your branches touch the ground,
Without wind or rain,
Without heal for sadness?
Has your trunk grown weak,
Have your boughs decayed,
What is the matter?
— *My boughs have not decayed,*
Nor has the trunk grown weak,
But three stalwarts with hatchets
Came to see me
To fell me to the ground
And take me to the plains;
Three brothers from three parts
To cut me into pieces.
To hew me into boards
To send me down to mourn,
To creak along the lanes,
To bury me in graveyards
And to burn me to ashes!

— *Bradule, brăduțele!*
Ce-ți este drăguțule?
Ce te legeni fără vînt,
Făr'de vînt făr'de cuvînt,
De-ajung crengile-n pămînt,
Făr-de-vînt, făr-de ploiuță,
Făr-de leac de neguriță?
Ori trupina ți-a slăbit,
Ori vițele-au putrezit,
Ori altceva ai pățit?
— *Vițele n-au putrezit,*
Nici trupina n-a slăbit
Dar la mine c'au venit
Trei voinici cu trei topoară
La pămînt să mă doboară,
Să mă ducă-n jos la țară;
Trei frățiori din trei părți
Să mă taie în trei bucăți.
Să mă facă vîlurele,
Să mă ducă-n jos cu jele
Pe-o parte de drumurele,
Să mă puie-n ținterim
Să mă vadă ars în scrum!

In the second version, it is evident that the fir is destined to take part in a wedding, taking the place of the bride.²

Clad fir
From where did you come,
From high up in the mountains
From flowery meadows,
From stony places
To marshy lands
Head downwards
Without knowing where

Brad incetinat
De unde-ai tunat,
Din virșor de munte
De la flori mai multe,
De la loc pietros
La loc mlăștinos,
Cu capul la vale,
Fără pic de cale.

¹ See: Simion Florea Marlan, *Înmormîntarea . . .* (The Funeral . . .) p. 105

² See: *ibidem*, p. 101

*Till they cut you.
The brave youth
Who fears no man
Whistled the whole time,
He settled things
And gave orders
That seven woodcutters
And all on horseback
Should bring you,
Bring you to him
From the flowery meadows
And cut down firs
With nine hatchets.
For he has travelled far
Wandering over land and sea,
But has not seen
Nor found
A wife to his taste
To bring home and wed;
After his wanderings
He has found
A wife in the mountains,
From flowery meadows,
As tall as a fir
And as beautiful as he.*

*Și pîn-te-or tăiat,
Tot or fluerat
Tinerelul cel voinic,
Care nu-i frică de nimic,
El a rinduit
El a poruncit
Ca șapte gropași
Și tot călărași,
El să mi se ducă
Și să mi te-aducă
De la flori mai multe
Cu 9 topoare
Brazii să-mi doboare
Că el a umblat
Țări a-nconjurat
Și nici a aflat
Nici a căpătat
Nevastă să-i placă,
Soție să-și facă;
După ce-a umblat
El a căpătat
Nevastă de munte,
De la flori mai multe,
Naltă și brădoasă
Ca el de frumoasă.*

Formerly, a young girl walked beside the fir if the deceased was unmarried. She took the place of his betrothed and even wore an engagement ring during the ceremony. She also wore mourning for a time after the funeral.¹

The grave fir might have been replaced by an apple-tree, pear-tree, or plum-tree, decorated with fruit (sometimes wrapped in tinsel) and differently-shaped cakes, and lumps of dough as well as the usual coloured ribbons and embroidered veils. A candle and a jug of water were placed next to the tree. As soon as the funeral was over all those things were given away to the poor. A fruit-tree was often planted on the grave after the funeral and tended for many years afterwards.



¹ See: Jean Mușlea, *La mort-mariage, une particularité du folklore balkanique*, Paris, 1920; Tancred Bănățeanu, *Le mariage des morts et ses reflets dans le folklore indo-européen*, in "Revue des Etudes Indo-Européennes," Vol.IV, 1947

We have left at the end some of the more unusual customs which are essential in helping us to understand the significance of the tree as a symbol for people in the past.

The ceremony officiated at the funeral of those who had died unmarried, by which they were wedded to a tree, acquired a more definite significance in certain cases. Formerly there was a large number of sheep-owners at Poiana Sibiu, who left together with their sons, leading their flocks to distant parts to graze for years on end. The boys who were taken on these seasonal movements of flocks were between 12 and 14 years old, and in most cases, on the eve of their departure, their parents married them to girls of their own age. This marriage, which both the church and the state disapproved of, was called "marriage with a fir" because it took place in the forest under a fir-tree. It bound the boy to the girl and he was obliged to marry her as soon as he returned.¹ Frincu and Candrea² described another similar custom: if a young unmarried girl was with child, she was led by two old women to a wooden fence or near a poplar or willow. Her hair was plaited like that of the girls about to get married, then her head was covered with a veil. The old women circled round the girl, repeating a formula by which she was married to the fence or the tree. The girl then changed her clothes and was henceforth considered a married woman.

The shepherds of Southern Moldavia used to confess their sins to a fir-tree.³

Finally, another custom which recalls the ancient customs in every detail, was to tie strips of clothing to a tree, thereby guaranteeing the health of a person and bringing him luck.

At the Monastery of Sîmbăta in Southern Transylvania,⁴ a tree to which people tied bits of cloths grew near a well that was supposed to have water with miraculous power. Everywhere in Romania the cult of water was associated with that of the tree. In Oltenia, roadside wells are always guarded by old oak-trees. The custom of planting a tree near a small wayside chapel or cross is still observed in many places. Sometimes trees have been specially planted near the door of a church. At other times, tall trees were planted on either side of the entrance to the church; they recall the well-known story of two young people who were in love but had to be

¹ Information communicated by H. H. Stahl

² See: *op.cit.*

³ See: Traian Herseni, *Probleme de sociologie pastorală* (Problems of Pastoral Sociology), Bucharest, 1941

⁴ H. H. Stahl, *Un sat din Transilvania: Drăgușul, Boabe de grâu* (A Village in South Transylvania: Drăgușul, Grains of Wheat), March, 1933

parted. They were buried on either side of the church, and trees sprang up from their bodies uniting their branches above the church.

In the 17th century, Macarie, the Patriarch of Antioch, visited the towns and monasteries of Wallachia and Moldavia. He planted a tree with his own hand at the monasteries which he visited in Wallachia; this custom seems to have been greatly observed at Cozia.¹

Several conclusions can be drawn from the above. Thus, we see that the tree symbolized a beneficent influence and protection for man on festival days.² In the main events of a man's life, the tree became personified. The fact that people made confessions to a tree and that it could play the part of bride or bridegroom shows that it was considered to have a heart and a soul.

The trees used in ceremonies had to be green and living. Their assimilation with a live being went so far that people even talked to trees. They threatened to cut the tree if it did not yield fruit and to tend it if it did. Trees were cut down at night at full moon, when the supernatural beings which were supposed to live in them seemed to go away; Romanian fairy-tales often mention these beings, particularly the fairies. Here are some of the most important:

The story of the trees which grow on the graves of the two lovers is widespread; sometimes a vine or a rose bush grows on the girl's grave and winds round the trunk of the tree growing on the boy's grave. Another story is about a girl who lived in a laurel-tree which she only left with its permission. One day she disobeyed and was seduced by an emperor's son, whereupon the laurel-tree did not receive her back. There is also the story about the youth who picked three golden pomegranates in the Garden of Eden. From the first and the second pomegranates emerged two girls who died of thirst; the youth gave water to the third girl and thus saved her.³



¹ See: *Călătoriile patriarhului Macarie de Antiochia în Țările Române* (The Journeys of Patriarch Macarie of Antioch in Wallachia, 1633—1658), published by Emilia Cioran, Bucharest, 1900, p. 164

² The tree seldom played a nefarious role. It was believed that the devil lived in the horn-beam so that its wood was never used in building houses. Fairies lived in the walnut-tree. The devil and the serpent were apt to hide in the twisted branches of the hazelnut. The devil was liable to hide in any tree and even in cats; that is why during a thunderstorm Elijah pursued the devil striking trees with lightning, so it is dangerous to shelter under a tree or to keep a cat in the house.

³ See: Lazăr Șăineanu, *Basmele române în comparație cu legendele antice și în legătură cu basmele popoarelor învecinate și ale tuturor popoarelor romanice* (Romanian Fairy-Tales Compared to Ancient Legends and to Those of the Neighbouring Peoples and All Romance Peoples), Bucharest, 1895

A whole world of thoughts and traditions, connected with trees, is revealed to us, which appears in art from the moment people began to decorate living trees. Though trees have a short life because they grow dry as soon as they are cut, they become an object of art like the paper star carried by children. The above is confirmed by the care with which the bark was decorated, the strands of wool in alternating colours tied in its branches, particularly on the funeral fir. As the objects tied in the tree generally appear in folk art, we will describe some of them here.

The gingerbread birds tied to the branches generally represented a dove or a cuckoo. The dove symbolized the soul and was supposed to embody that of the dead. In the Transylvanian regions where poles were placed on the grave, the soul-bird, carved in wood, was fixed on top. That custom came down to us from the peoples of Antiquity. Folk poetry explains this clearly.

In the love story of the Sun and the Moon, Uncle Adam takes the Sun to Paradise :

*He unlocked Paradise
And went in
But what did they see ?
Small lighted torches,
Small spread tables
Small filled glasses.
Round the table
Were small trees
In blossom
And in their branches
Small birds
That were not birds
But small children,
Small proud angels;
They sang divinely
Bringing comfort to the parents.
We are fortunate
In our parents
For they looked after us;
If they die,
They will live
With our memories¹.*

*Raiul îl descuia
În el că intra
Dar ei ce-mi vedea ?
Făclioare aprinse,
Mesioare-ntinse,
Păhărele pline.
În jur prejur de masă
Niște pomișori
Sînt verzi înfloriți
Dar pîn crîngurele
Niște păsărele
Da nu-s păsărele
Ci sînt copilași
Mindri îngerăși;
Cîntă fericește
Părinții s'odihnește.
Ferice de noi.
De părinții noștri;
Cînd ei ne-au făcut
Bine ne-au grijit;
Dacă or muri
Au cu ce trăi
Cu ce ne pomeni.*

¹ See: Tudor Pamfilie, *Cerul și podoabele lui* (Heaven and Its Ornaments), Bucharest, 1915, p. 136

The cuckoo, a common bird in Romania, heralded spring and foretold the future. The way it calls, the number of "cuckoos" you hear, and the place from where it calls were all future portents. The cuckoo was also supposed to announce death. His was Ștefan and when he sang he called his golden brother who lived in Paradise.¹ His presence in the decorated tree therefore suggested Paradise.

The ribbons and head veils (usually finely embroidered) symbolized unity. The couple was united by them during the wedding ceremony, for each held one end of the veil. The wedding guests were then given the veils tied in the tree or to the "standard," just as the mourners received the veils attached to the funeral tree. The veil at the top of the pillar or fir placed on the grave, was left there. In Antiquity, the participants in that ceremony were bound by a ribbon to the divinity which was supposed to dwell in the tree; the same custom is still widespread in Asia.

Sometimes, a ladder made of dough helped souls to climb up the tree in order to eat. This is a survival of the small metal ladders found in prehistoric graves (as for instance those of the Scythians), which helped the dead to reach heaven. This ladder also appears, in a modified form, in church murals, those of Northern Moldavia being brilliant examples.

The little bells were intended to drive away invisible beings and harmful creatures, such as snakes, mice, and insects. The fruit and cakes were for the dead. The gilded fruit, cuckoo, and pomegranates recall those in the Garden of Eden and in fairytales. The hand fashioned out of dough mainly decorated the tree in Wallachia. The tree which was the dwelling of the soul also recalls the invocation of divinities. In very rare cases its image was notched in the central beam of the main room of the cottage together with other motifs.² The serpent, as represented on decorated trees, as well as on the carved gates in Oltenia, seems to be connected with the biblical legend.



Beside the cases when it is an art object, the decorated tree often appeared as a motif on other objects. Its origin is certainly the same as in the old customs and tales. We consider that the most interesting examples are to be found in dwellings.

¹ See: Simion Florea Marian, *Ornitologia populară română* (Romanian Popular Ornithology), 1883, 2 vols.

² See: I. Voinescu, *op. cit.*

It had to protect the inmates from bad weather and against invisible beings which were supposed to be harmful to man. How was it possible to transform the interior of a house into a forbidden area for these beings? We will mention here several ways in relation to dendrolatry:

As soon as the framework of the house was finished, a green tree or branch, preferably a fir, was fixed to the roof top. However, the green tree soon dried and fell down. That is why it was replaced by the spires or spikes set at each end of the ridge; the houses therefore have these wooden spires, carved with a hatchet, chisel, or hammer. The 20th-century spires are generally sawed out of thin planks. The oldest spikes are simple and pointed at the end; one or two swellings mark the spire near the top or also near the bottom. Those cut with a fretsaw are generally made out of one plank or two intersecting planks forming an upright rectangle; in both cases they are broader at the bottom, tapering towards the top, recalling the outline of the fir-tree. Sometimes glazed clay spears are placed on the roof which have the same shape; a clay bird is occasionally placed on the roof. Sometimes they are knob-like, with birds set on them, resembling those decorating the marriage cups described above and are therefore connected with a wedding. However, even when the spear (whatever material it is made of) suggests a fir-tree, it is still decorated on certain occasions with green branches.

These spears follow a different evolution in Transylvania. We will recall that there the ritual tree might have been replaced by a "standard" — a tree trunk with a cross at the top. The similarity between the wood of the tree and the cross can also be noticed in the roof spires. The peasants venerated in equal measure the cross at the top of the "standard" and the wood out of which it was made, so that in Transylvania the metal crosses on the ridge of the houses, or those pargeted on to the pediment are decorated with leaves. The metal cross is sometimes preceded by a provisional cross with a wreath of green branches which is fixed to the framework of the roof as soon as it is raised.

Trees are frequently modelled in the pargeting on the walls of the houses: a simple tree, a tree with small birds and often a flower in a pot with two birds on each side. In the latter case the old meaning has been lost. The motif was taken from religious art or simply imitated the flower pots in the front windows of the house. This motif was transformed into a symbol of marriage, the two birds representing husband and wife.¹

¹ See: Ion N. Soare, *Satul Sălciile* (The Village of Sălciile), Ploiești, 1942

The porch pillars of peasant houses and also of the old wooden churches in Southern Romania imitated the trees which were fixed to them. The ends of the central part, the pillars, which are circular, hexagonal, or octogonal, had two swellings on the upper part. The shape of these swellings, called "apples," recalls a sphere or a cube. These are the "pillars with apples," which represent the tree with apples stuck in its branches. In Oltenia, the fir-tree placed on a grave usually carries two "apples," fashioned by bending its branches, which are then tied to the trunk and covered with paper. The pillar "with apple" is widespread, but we mostly see it in Oltenia, Wallachia, and Moldavia. It recalls the spears on a roof which are given the shape of the tree with apples and are designed to protect the house.

Another and much rarer form than the first, which is much more difficult to achieve, is the "twisted pillar," which suggests a tree with a serpent coiled round it. The middle part of the pillar is fluted horizontally, in an upward spiral. These pillars are to be seen in Northern Oltenia and in Maramureș, regions where peasant wood-carving is highly developed. These twisted pillars recall the tree of good and evil, though the fir-tree used at weddings and funerals has decorative motifs, including that of the coiled serpent, notched on its bark. The tree with a serpent carved in relief next to Adam and Eve, as on certain gates in Gorj and Vâlcea, is very rare.

The tree motif is widespread and is often found in carpets and wall-hangings. It is either used as a frieze or a single central motif. In the latter case it is usually accompanied by birds. The flower pot or even the tree planted in a pot, with two birds at the bottom, recall the models also used in other countries and show the link between Romanian hand-made rugs and the Oriental world. The motifs used in rug-making are also to be seen on embroidered shirts, napkins, and decorative fabrics. Among the fabrics woven in the old peasant households, the veil, entirely woven by the bride, is particularly important. During the wedding ceremony the bride and the bridegroom each hold one end of the veil, which is preserved until death. Each is buried with a piece of this veil so that they should be able to recognize each other in the Beyond. These veils are embroidered with motifs representing fir branches, or those of other trees, and birds, generally the cuckoo. As a very small number of these veils has survived, it has been difficult to study them more closely in order to give a more detailed description. However, we wish to stress that in folk tales these veils play a great part in the relations between lovers. Sometimes the fir branch motif is replaced by

another named the "garden"; we are inclined to believe that it is the Romanian version of the ancient "temenos," the garden of dendrolatry. Parts of the forests in the Dobruja were considered sacred, so that trees were never cut down there.¹ The garden motif in Romanian textiles has the aspect of a flower or leaf enclosed by a fence which is represented by a simple line. This motif also suggests the Garden of Eden, which in folklore or church murals appears like a garden surrounded by walls.

On the pottery made at Horez centre, the tree also appears as a fir-tree stuck into an apple. On the black pottery of Moldavia we see the same motif scratched on the surface by rubbing with a stone. It appears again on firwood chests. The handles of wooden cups in Transylvania are decorated with many traditional elements such as oak and beech leaves or acorns.

The Tree of Knowledge generally figures in peasant icons and religious engravings. Adam and Eve stand with their hands on the trunk of the tree round which the serpent is coiled. This scene also occasionally appears on painted eggs in Northern Moldavia. On the painted votive monuments in Vilcea, Adam alone appears among the saints, showing that he has become a familiar character in decorative art as well as in folklore.

A fir-tree is sometimes placed next to gravestones or wayside votive monuments, even when they are crosses.



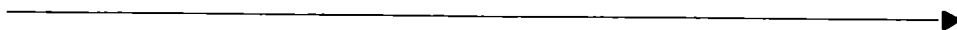
The above shows that two trees, the fir- and the apple-tree, are prevalent in the decoration of folk customs. The preference shown for the fir-tree is explained first of all by the fact that this evergreen grows in most parts of Romania, and even when cut has green leaves for a long time. The branches of its tall, straight trunk, easily bear the weight of suspended objects. We consider that the fir-tree is typical of the Romanian regions and is linked to the Romanian people from the beginning, as in earlier times was linked to the Dacians. As a matter of fact, the Romanian for fir — "brad" — is of Dacian origin and seems to have existed prior to the time when the Romanian people and language were formed. There is a strong resemblance between the Romanian and Roman forms connected with the pine-tree.

¹ See: Paul H. Stahl, *La dendrolâtrie chez les turcs et les tartares de la Dobrudja*, Academy Publishing House

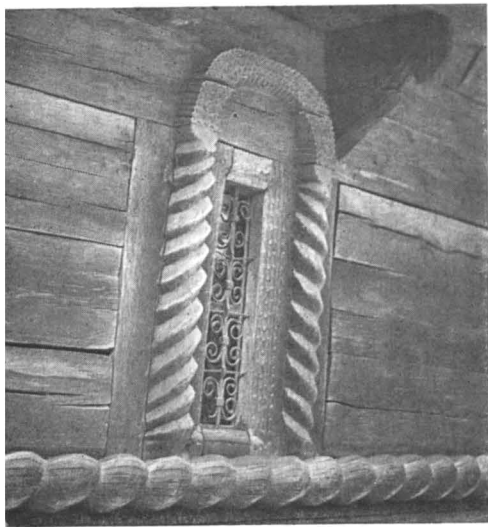
Beside the fir-tree, there are many different versions of the Tree of Life taken from the folk art of other peoples. The apple-tree also plays an important part as it recalls the tree in the Garden of Eden.

The survival of an ornamental motif in art is linked to its very survival in customs and folklore up to the 20th century and, under certain forms, to our own days. At the same time, due to the many different forms in which the tree appears in art, and its beauty, this motif continues to be used even after the accompanying folklore has vanished. Its presence in urban customs and art, as well as the versions, often very much alike, found in the art of the neighbouring peoples has helped us to grasp the significance and permanence of these motifs in folk art.

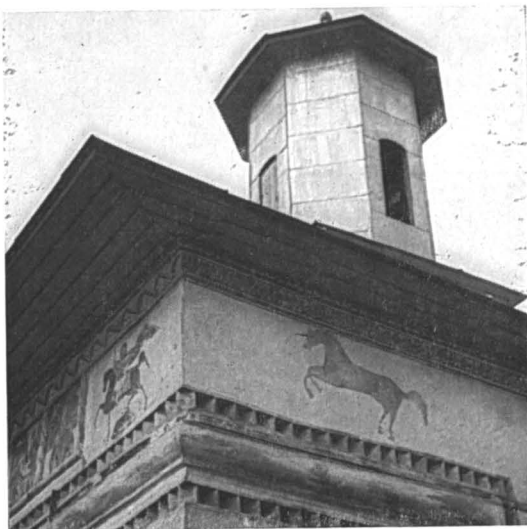
ILLUSTRATIONS







2

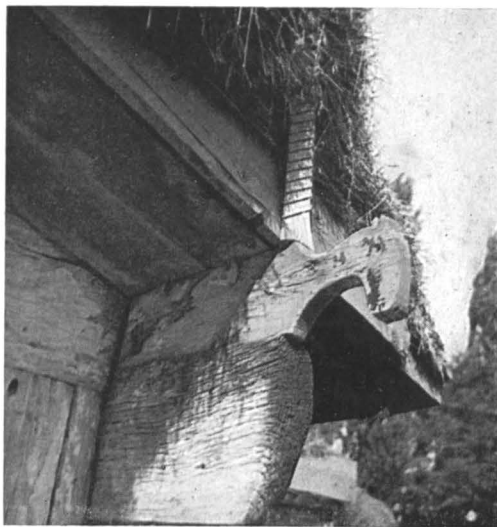


3

- 1 Horse heads carved on the exterior walls of the wooden church of Cloșani — Northern Oltenia (18th century).
- 2 Ornamental carvings of the church at Jupînești — Central Wallachia (17th century); carved horse head under the eaves.
- 3 Unicorn painted on the exterior wall of the church at Capul Dealului—Eastern Oltenia (18th century).

4 Carved horse head at the entrance door of a cottage at Drăghiceni — Southern Oltenia (Village Museum — Bucharest).

5 Wooden tub with handles ending in horse head motifs from the Land of Oaş (Village Museum).

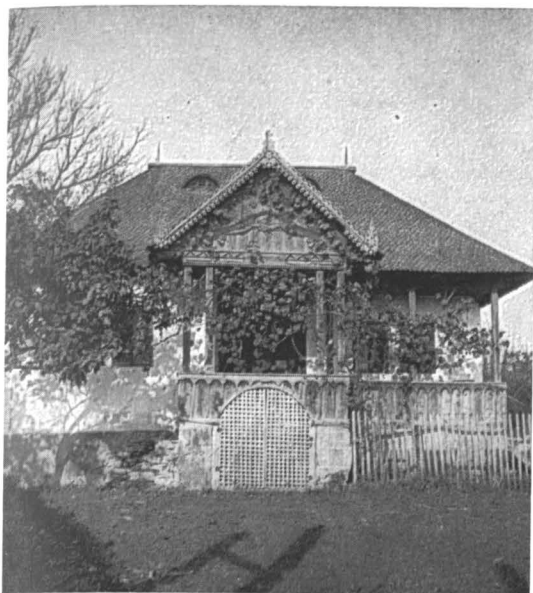


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6 Courtyard gate decorated with animals — Land of Oaş; the carved horse heads can be seen. (Folk Art Museum of the Socialist Republic of Romania — Bucharest).

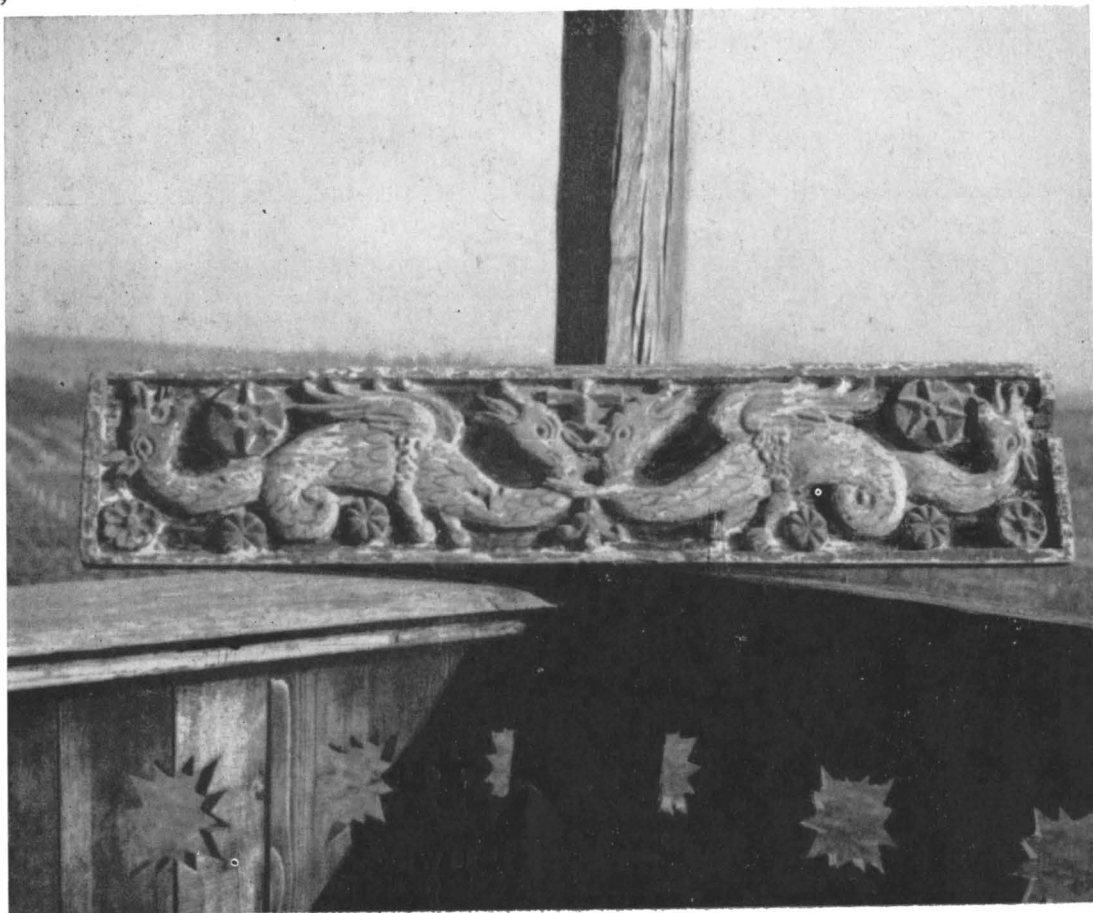
7 House with turret at Dragna de Sus — Central Wallachia (early-20th century). Two fretted horses on the frontispiece.

8 Wooden church of Drăganu—Wallachia (18th century). The carved horse heads can be seen under the eaves.

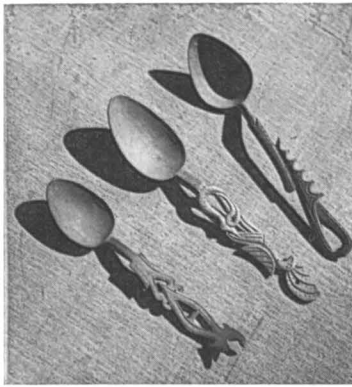
9 Dragons, wood-carving from a former peasant church in Gorj.

10 Detail of the same carving — the head of the dragon is surrounded by stars. ▶

9







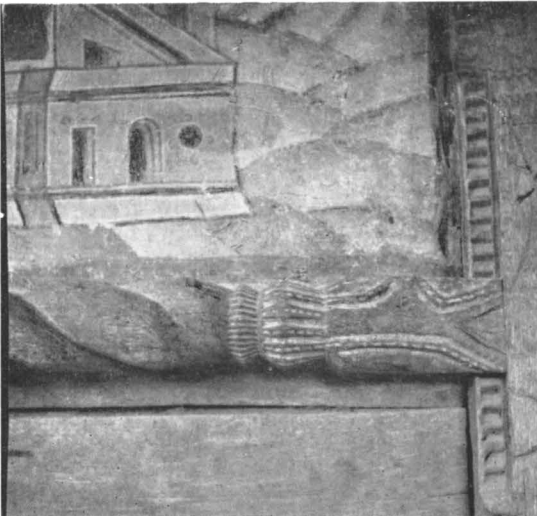
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11 Transylvanian wooden spoons; fantastic animals are carved on the handle.

12 Decorative moulding, ending in a dragon's head, on the church at Jupinești – Central Wallachia (17th century).

13 Dragon (details of a Transylvanian painting on glass).

12



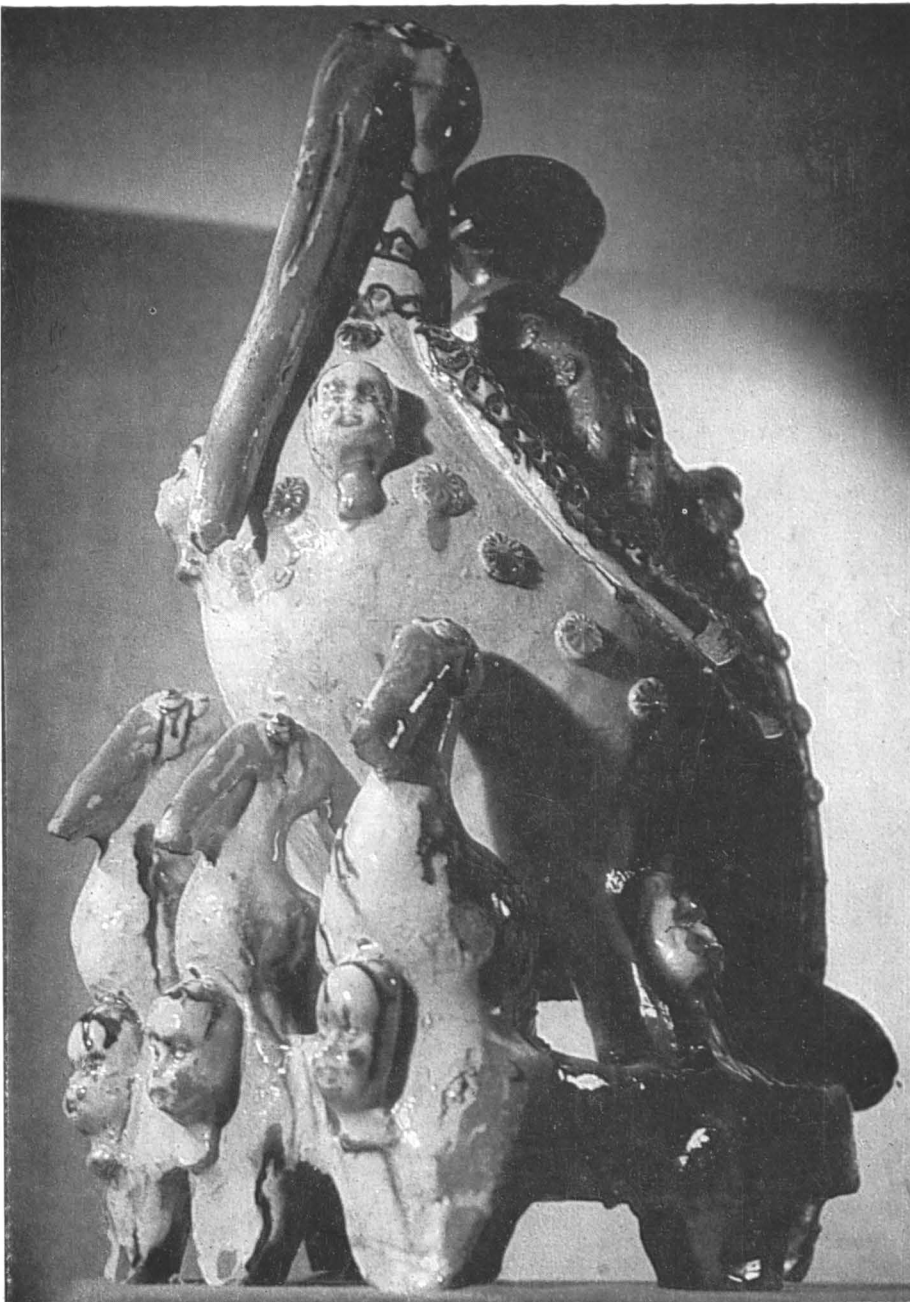
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14 Wedding pitcher (Curtea de Argeş).

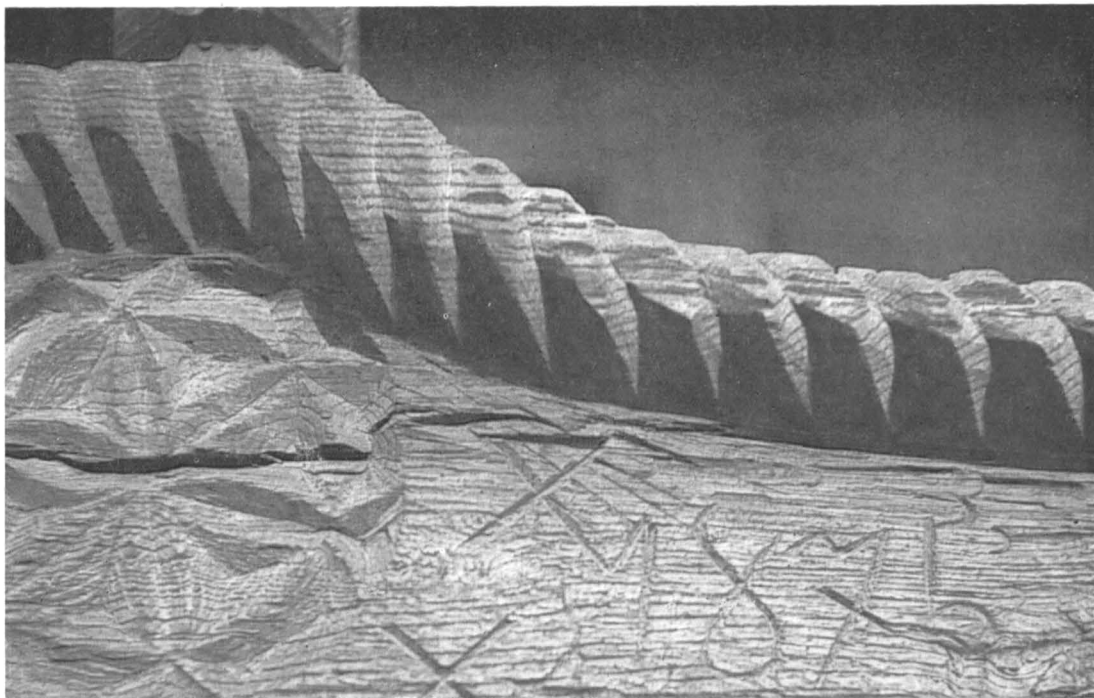
15 Wedding pitcher (Curtea de Argeş).



- 16 Wooden carving of the sun on a 19th-century votive monument in Northern Wallachia (Folk Art Museum of the Socialist Republic of Romania).

13





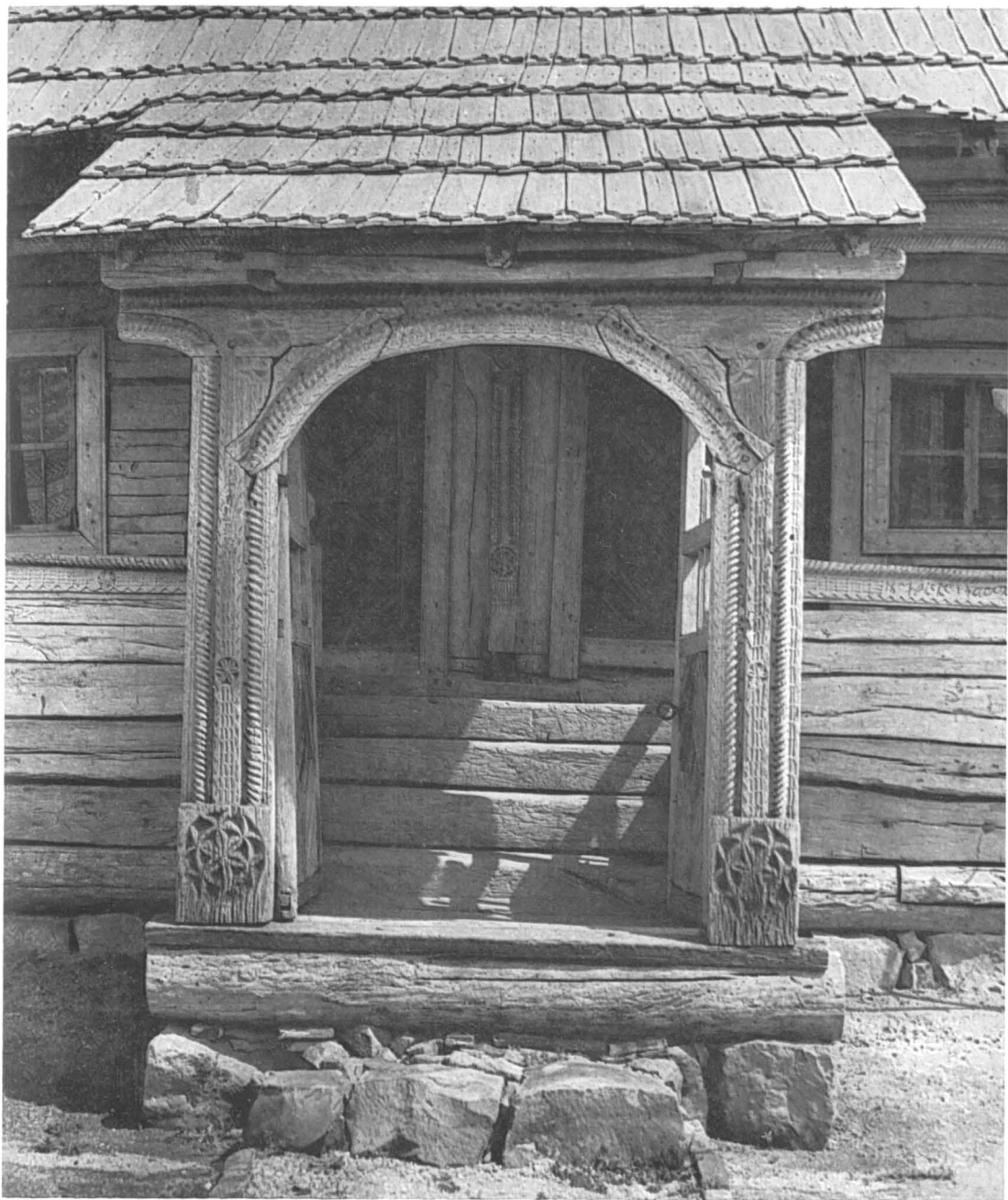
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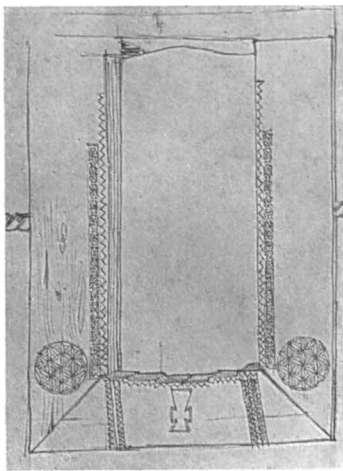


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21

17 Detail of the porch of a house at Ceauru-Gorj, Northern Oltenia (19th century).

18 Small gate at Tilișca – Sibiu, Southern Transylvania (19th century).

19 Bell tower at Surdești – Northern Transylvania. The lower part is decorated with two large rosettes.

20 Rosettes decorating the entrance of a house, Ceauru-Gorj.

21 Door of a wooden church, in the Urloi Valley – Prahova, Central Wallachia. The church no longer exists today. It was rebuilt by Architect A. Zagoritz at the beginning of the 20th century.

22 Gate of a house at Ceauru Gorj, Northern Oltenia (19th century): three large rosettes can be seen at the bottom of the gate-posts (Village Museum).

22



23 Decorative detail of a house built thirty years ago at Drajna de Sus. The rosette motif can be seen on it.

24 Detail on the door of a 19th-century house, Dobrița-Gorj, Northern Oltenia.

25 Detail of a rosette on the inner door of the wooden church at Chiraleș — Northern Transylvania (17th century).

26 Entrance of the wooden church at Ciumirna — Northern Transylvania (18th century); at the bottom, two symbols of the sun in motion.



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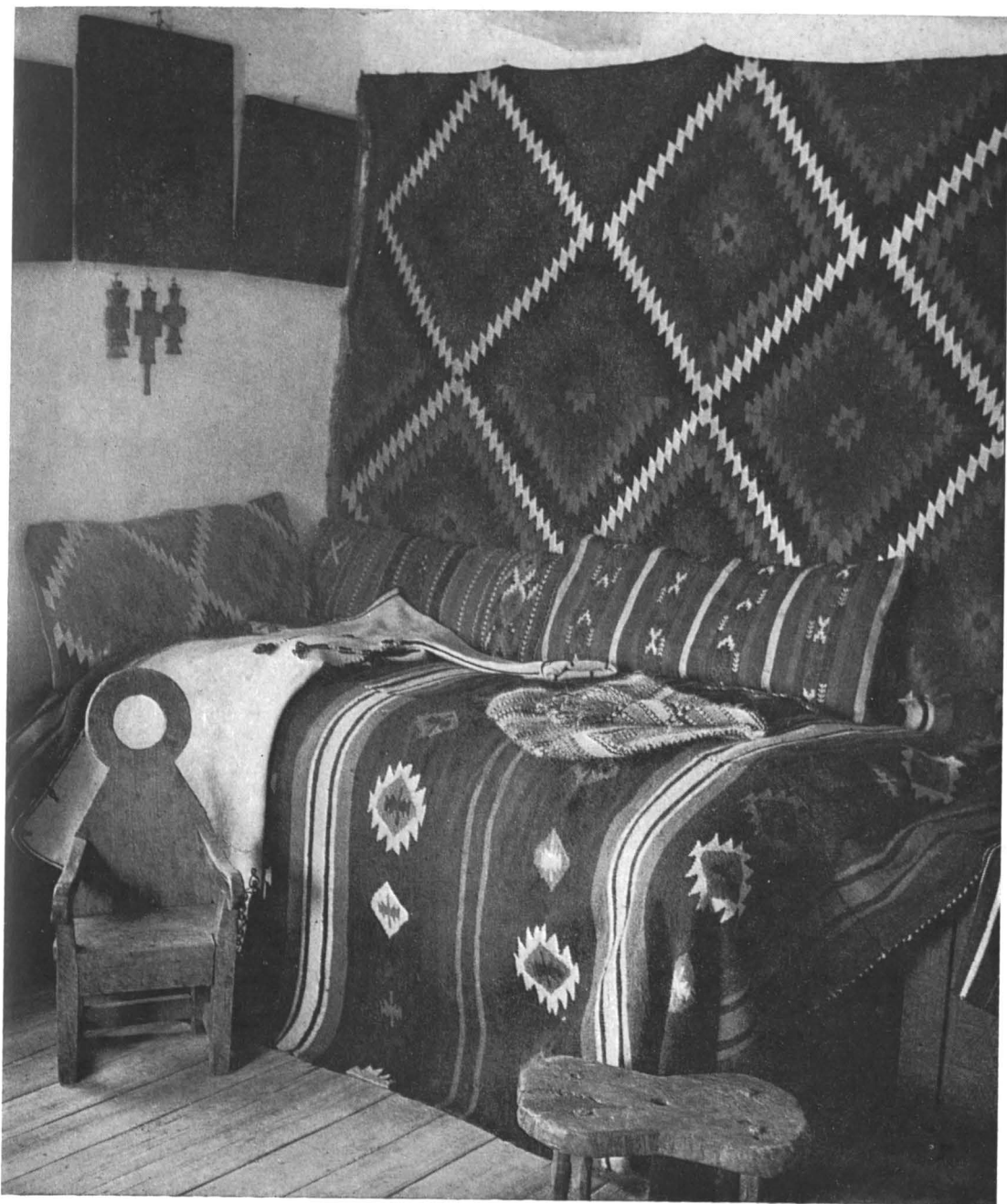


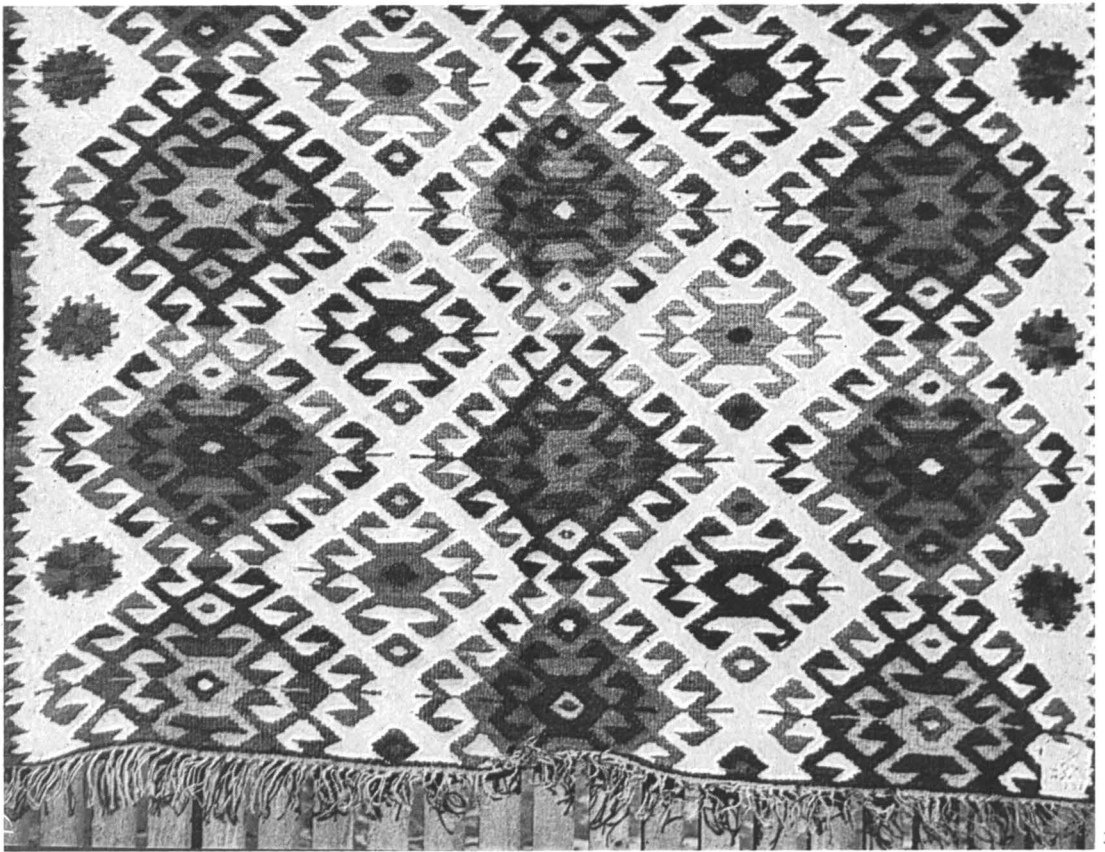
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- 27 Stone carving representing the sun (exterior of the church at Dragomirna—Northern Moldavia) (16th century).
- 28 Rosettes on twin funeral monuments at Pietroasele — North-Eastern Wallachia (19th century).
- 29 Rug ornamented with the “wheel” motif which appears in the form of a lozenge — Northern Oltenia.

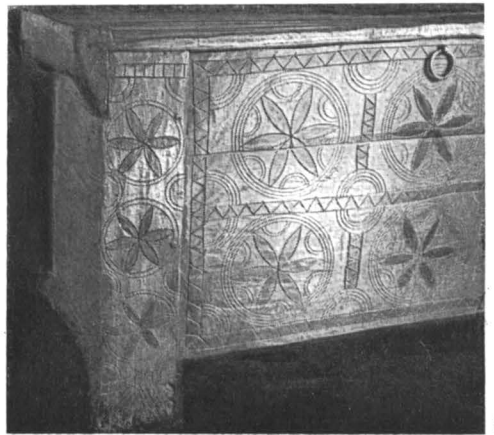




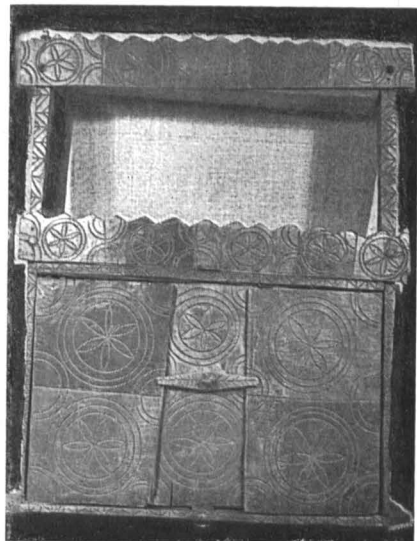
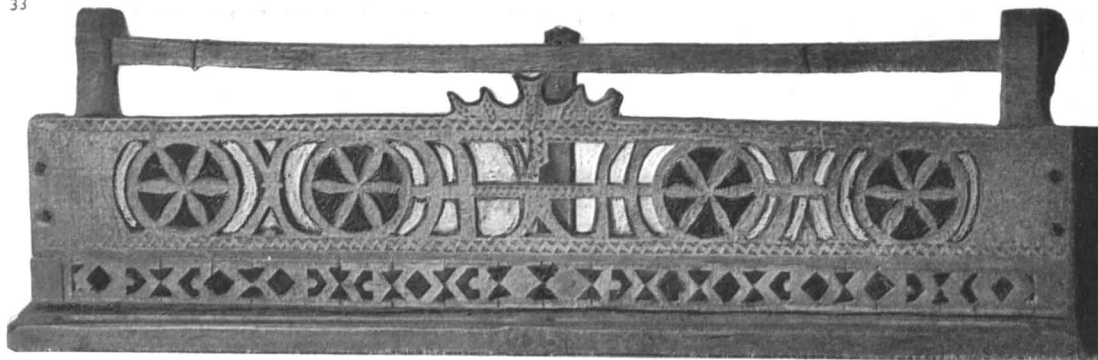
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30 Fragment of a Wallachian rug ornamented with a revolving "wheel" in the shape of a lozenge.

34

31 Wooden chest — Northern Moldavia: the rosette in the centre dominates the decorative pattern.

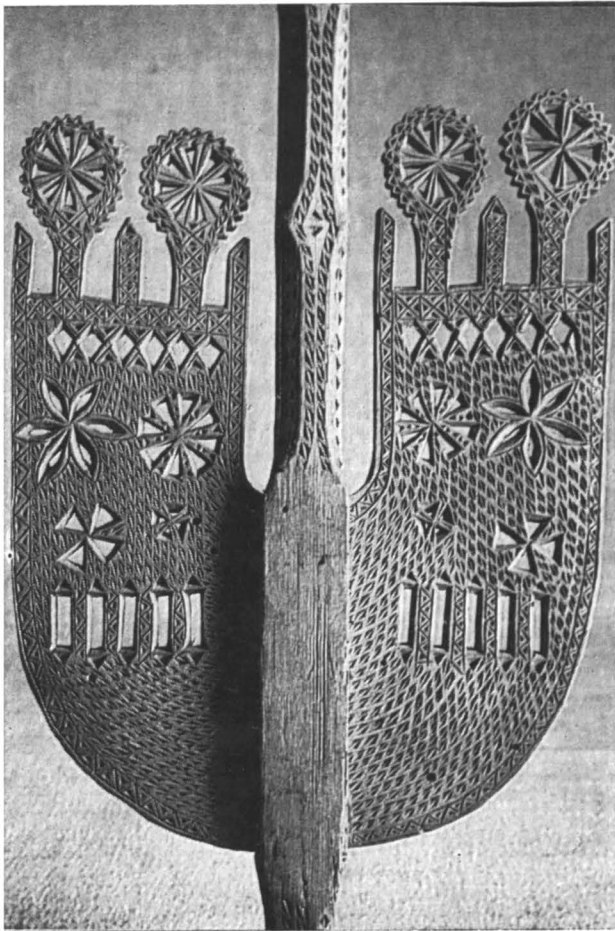
32 Detail of dowry chest decorated with rosettes.

33 Crockery stand, Maramureş.

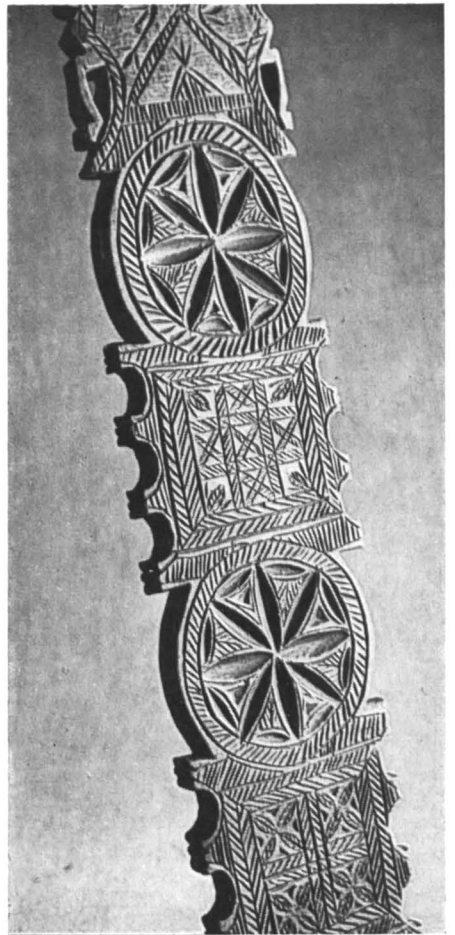
34 Peasant table decorated with rosettes, Northern Moldavia.

35 Crockery stand — the Land of Oaş.

35



36



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38

36 The wings of a distaff — Sibiu area.

37 Detail of a distaff — Transylvania

38 Painted eggs decorated with the "reel" motif which has several arms (Folk Art Museum of the Socialist Republic of Romania).

39 Detail of a powder horn: in the centre, rosette combined with "reel" — Hunedoara

40 Clay gourds — Oltenia. The gourd on the right is decorated with a motif usually called "reel."

41 Powder horns — Moldavia

39



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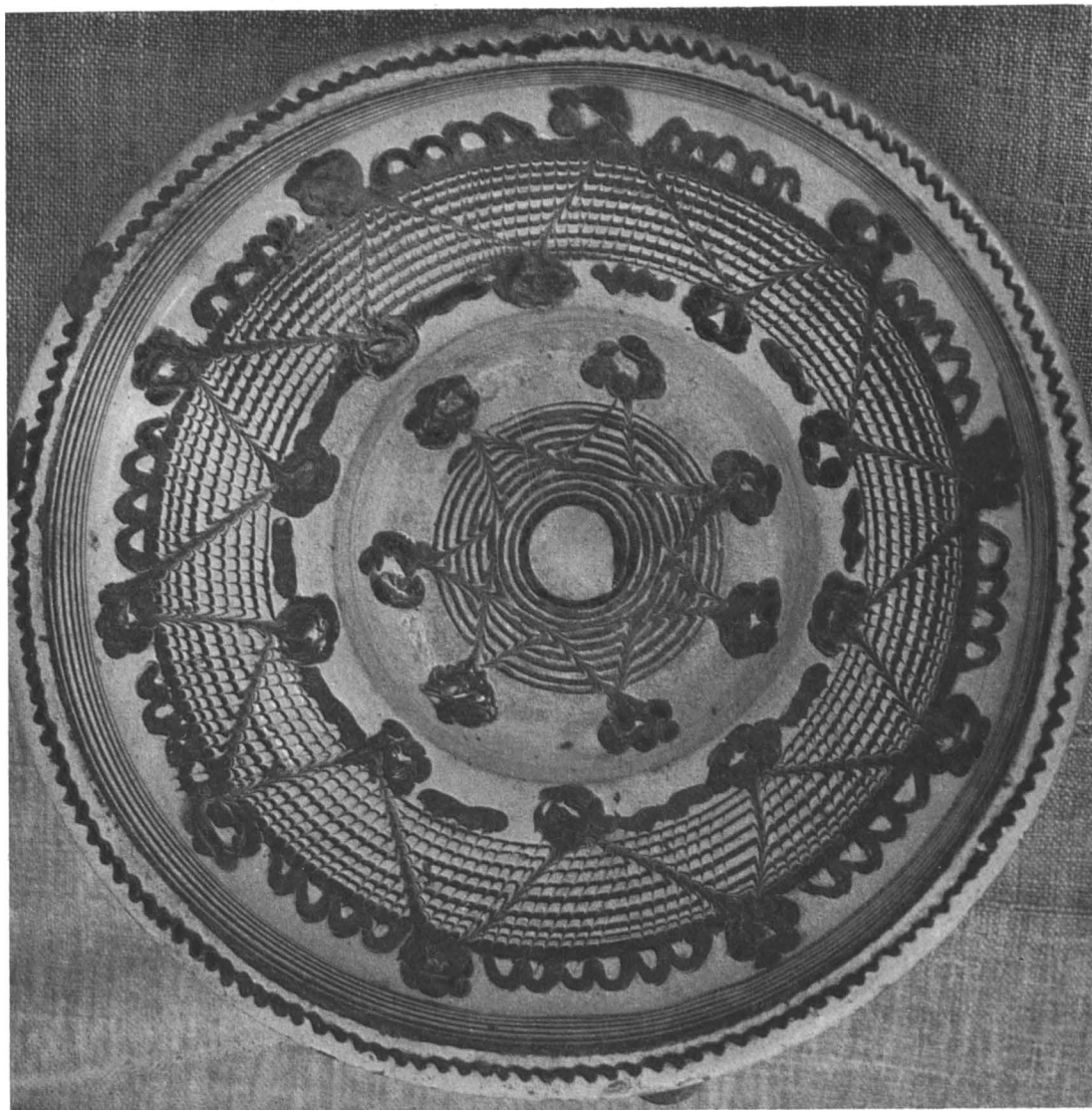


*Inscripția românească în limba
română: "Căminul gloriei și speranței
noastre"*



44

- 42 Transylvanian painting on glass; the sun and the moon with human features are represented on either side.
- 43 Transylvanian painting on glass; the sun and the moon with human features are represented on either side.
- 44 Moldavia's emblem on a tombstone — Jassy (17th century): the sun and the moon have human features.





46

45 Porringer decorated with a star pattern — Horezu.

46 Crock decorated with the Milky Way motif — Leicești, North-Western Wallachia.

47 Oltenian jug with stars applied on its surface.



47



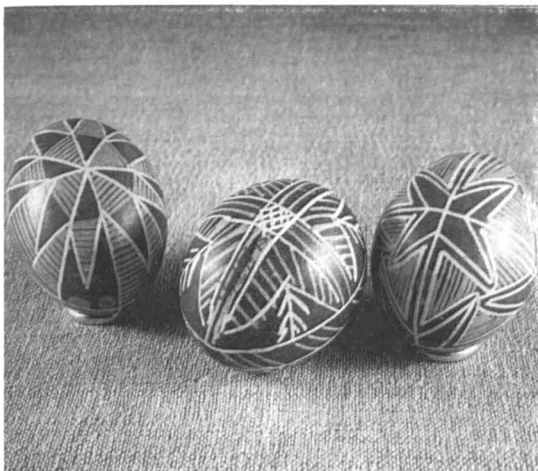
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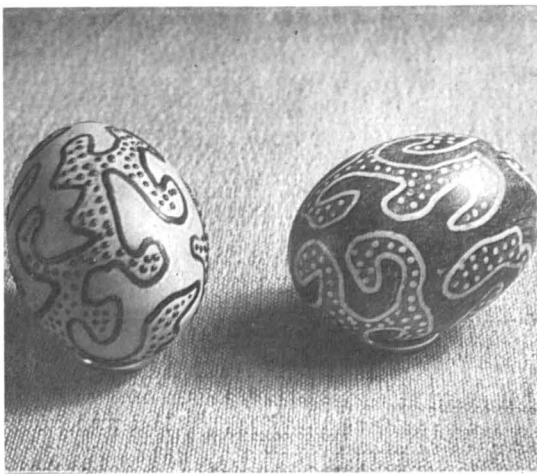


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48 Detail of church door decorated with rosettes and stars — the Urloi Valley, Central Wallachia, salvaged by Architect A. Zagoritz at the beginning of the 20th century.

49 Transylvanian painting on glass: the Virgin has a star painted on her shoulder and her breast.

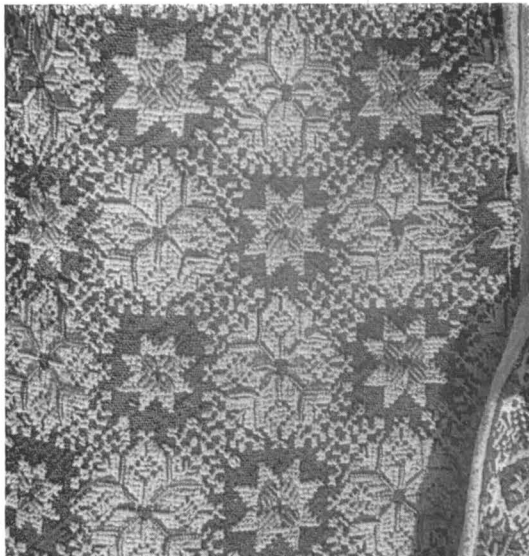
50 Painted funeral monument with the sky and stars represented at the base — Drăghiceni, Southern Oltenia.

51 Painted eggs with the star motif (Folk Art Museum of the Socialist Republic of Romania).

52 Painted eggs decorated with the Milky Way motif.

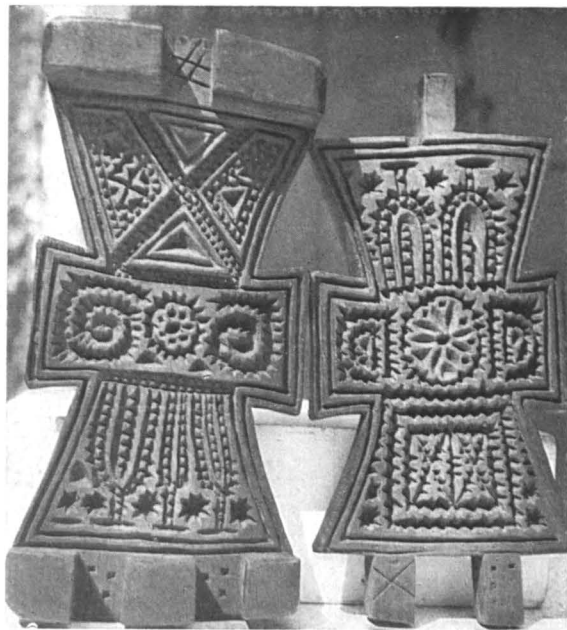
53 Detail of a skirt — Izvorul Rece, North-Western Wallachia. The star motif predominates.

53

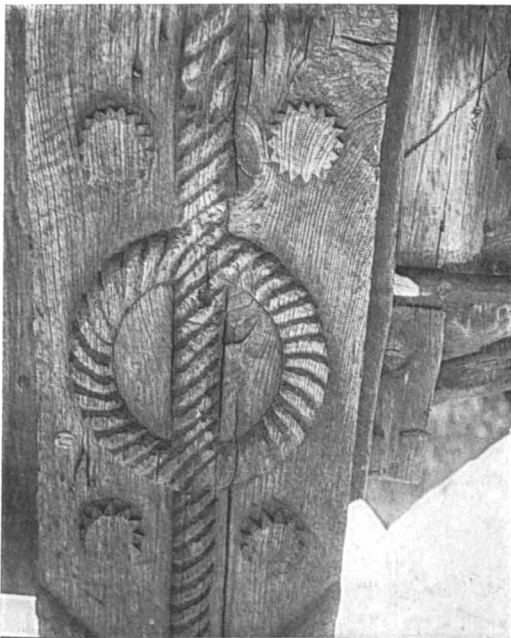




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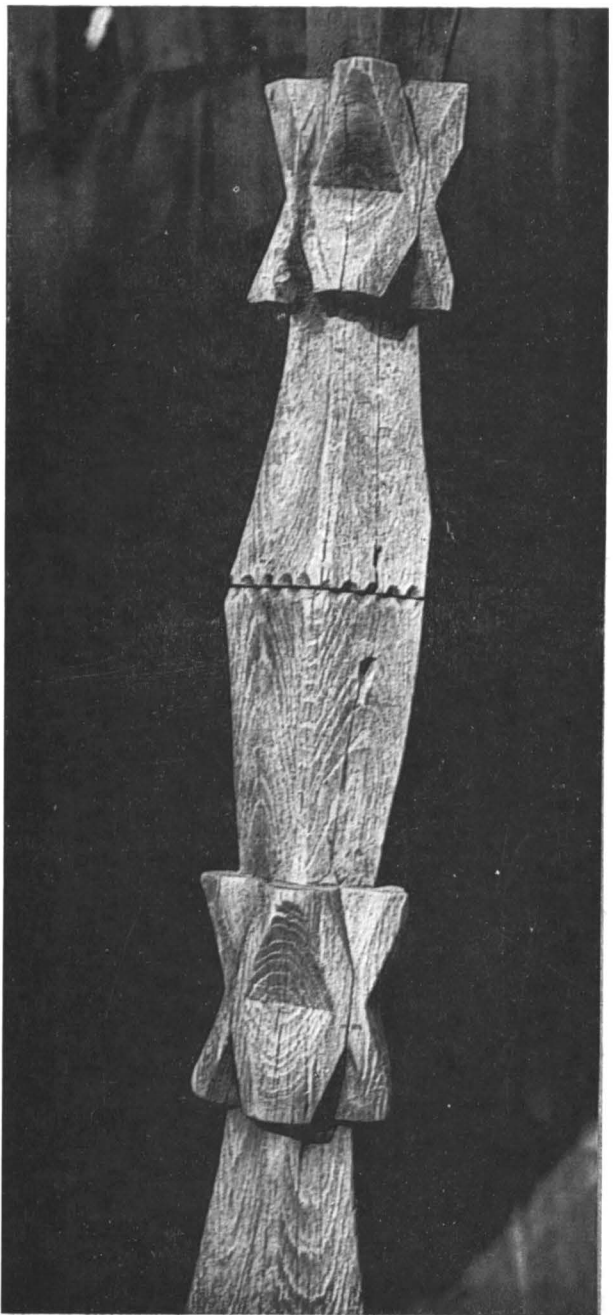
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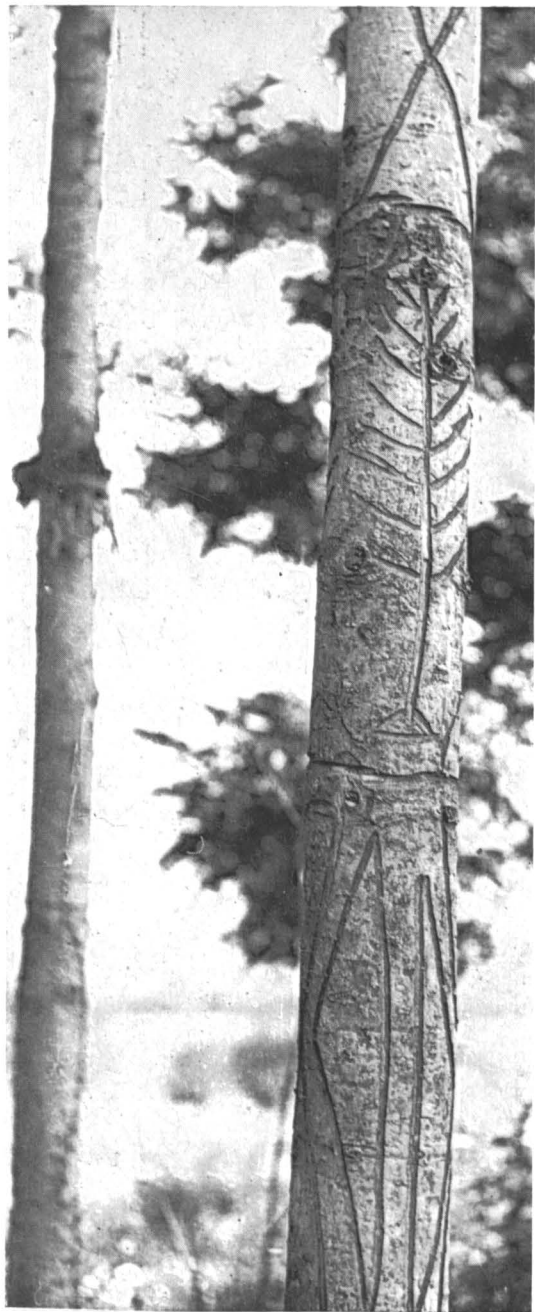
54 Church decorated with stars — Dragomirna, Northern Moldavia (16th century).

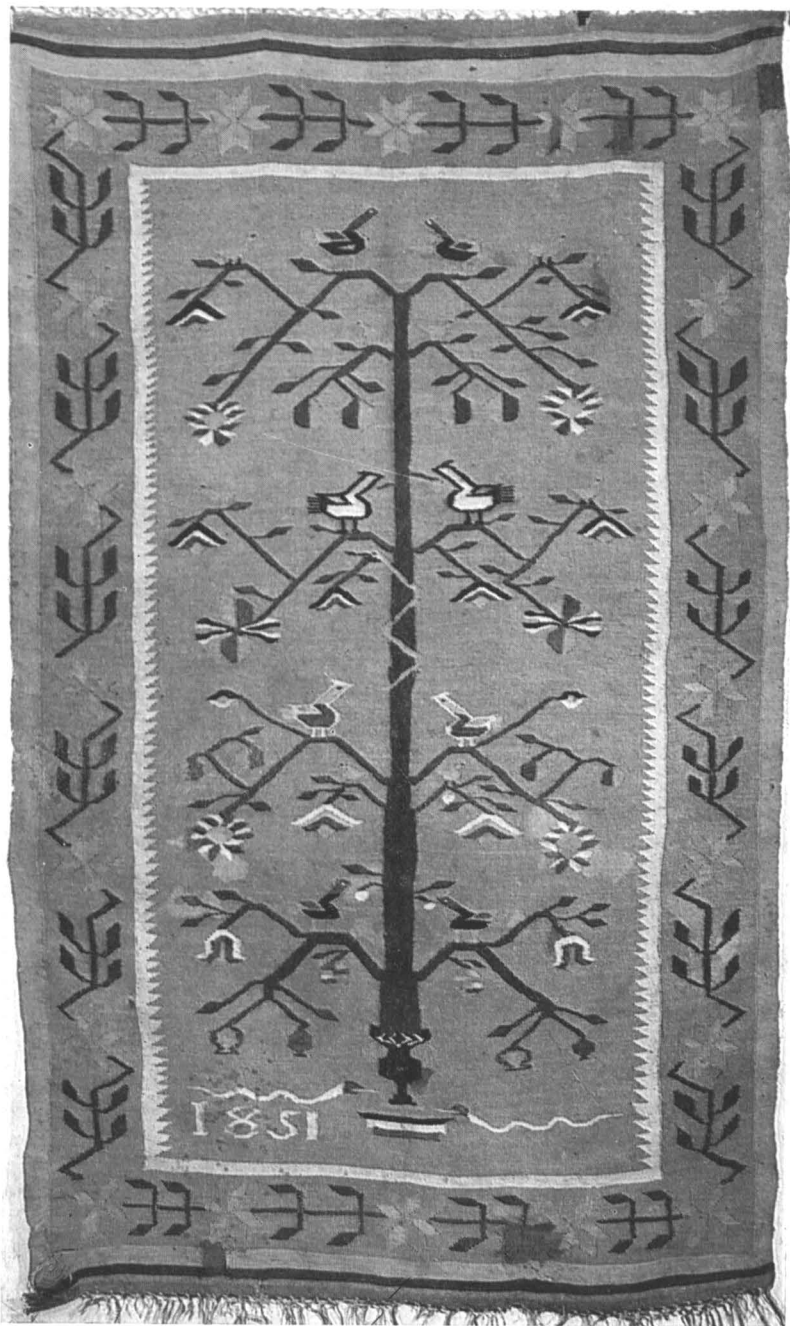
55 Cheese moulder ornamented with stars — Vrancea.

56 Detail of wooden gate decorated with notched stars — Berbești, Maramureș.

57 Pillar decorated with "apples" — Gorj.

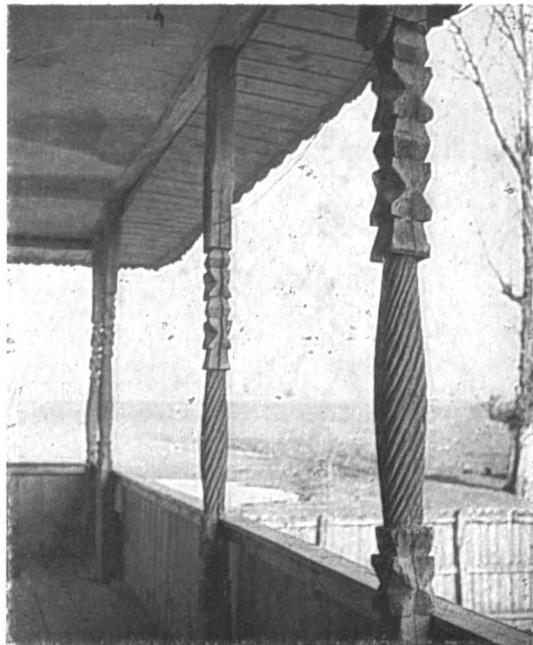








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58 Fir planted on a young man's grave — Gorj, Northern Moldavia: a motif suggesting twisted pillars is notched in the bark at the bottom.

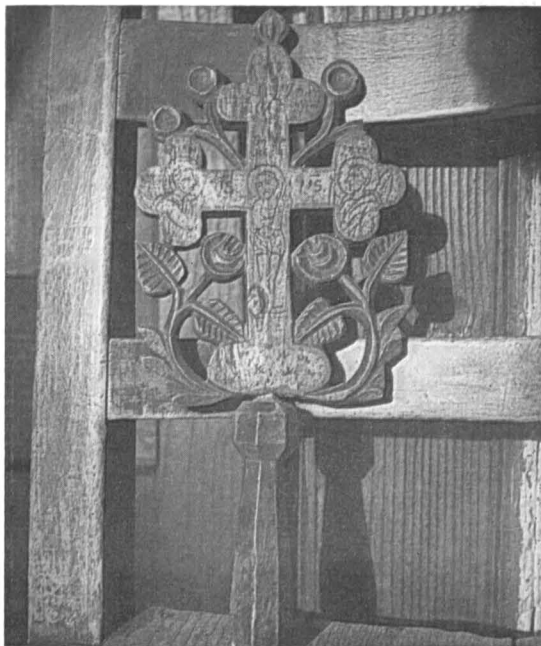
59 Detail of a tree placed on a young man's grave — Gorj, Northern Oltenia; the outline of a fir is notched in the bark.

60 Rug decorated with a tree and birds — Cotnari, Moldavia.

61 The twisted pillars of a house in Maramureș.

62 The twisted pillars of a house in Gorj.

63 Wooden cross with leaves and flowers — Lușța, the Arieș Valley.

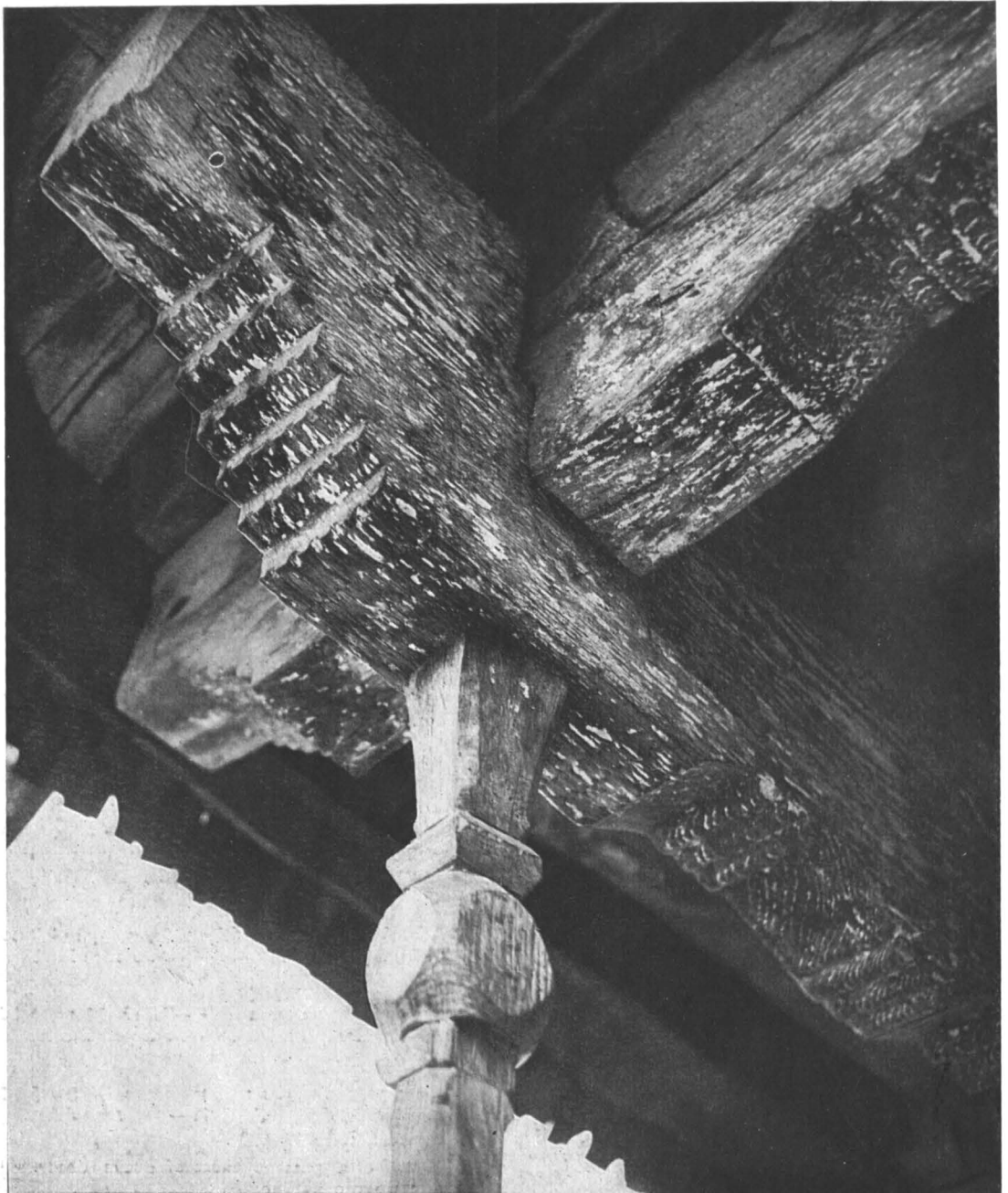


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64 Detail of a peasant chest of Buzău decorated with a fir-tree outline.

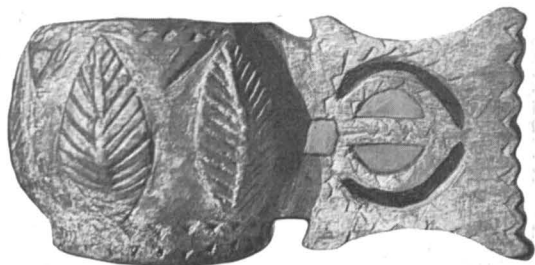


65 Decorative detail of a house, the top part of a pillar with "apples" — Gorj.

66 Drinking mug decorated with beech leaves — the county of Pădureni, Southern Transylvania.

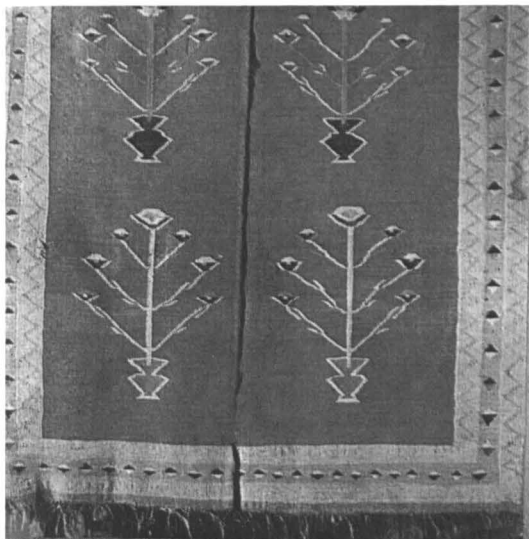
67 Moldavian rug decorated with the "Tree of Life."

68 Detail of an embroidery representing a cock (bottom) and a cuckoo in a tree (top) — Cosești, North-Western Wallachia.

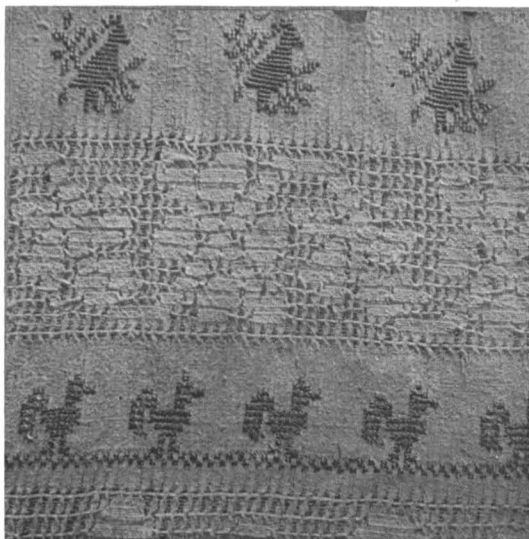


66

67



68





69

69 The Garden of Eden, represented as an orchard enclosed by walls—porch of the church at Horez (early-18th century).

70

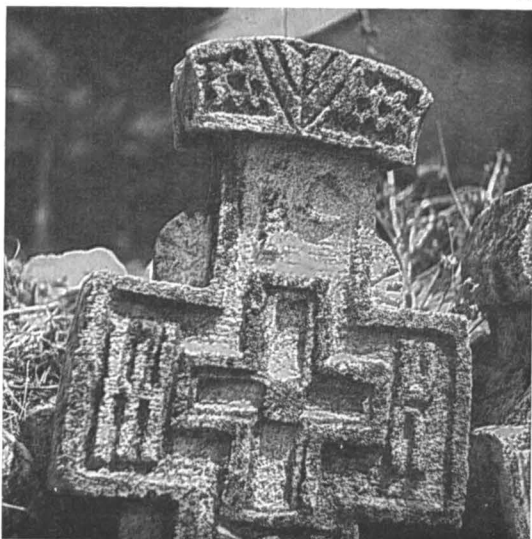
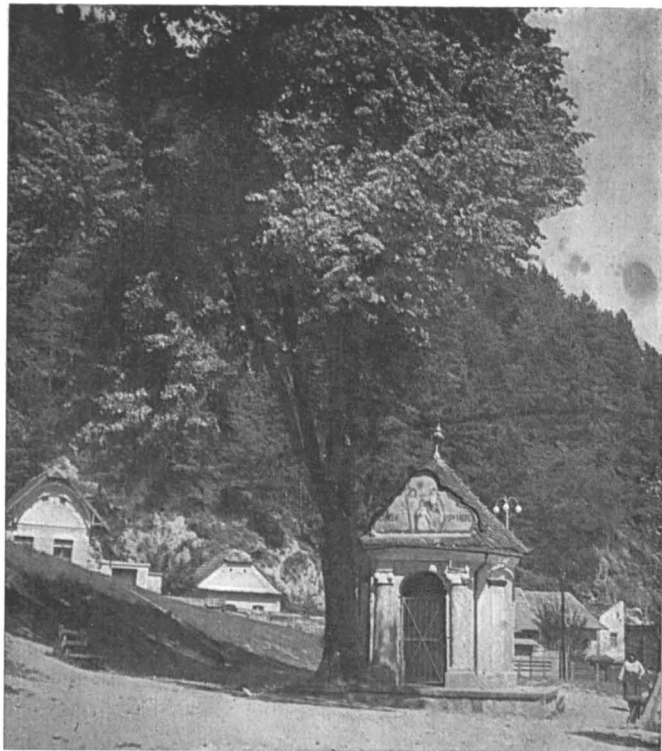
70 Painting on glass with the Tree of Good and Evil in the centre — Northern Transylvania.

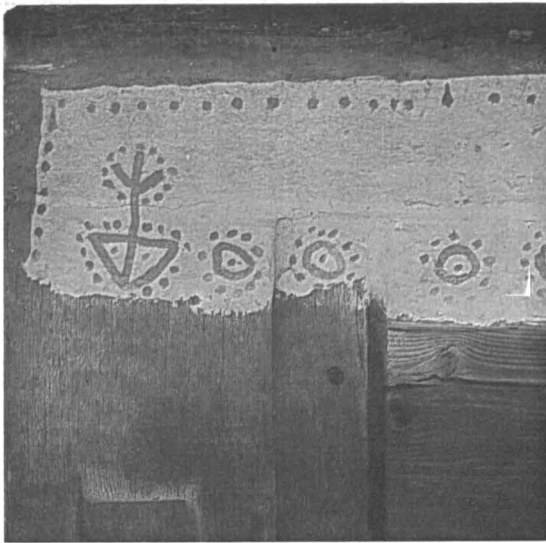
71 Chapel in Șchei — Brașov, Southern Transylvania; an oak-tree has been planted near the entrance.

72 Detail of a tombstone: two birds near a tree (19th century) — Fintești, Northern Wallachia.

73 Tombstone decorated with the fir-tree motif (19th century) — Istrița, Northern Wallachia.







74



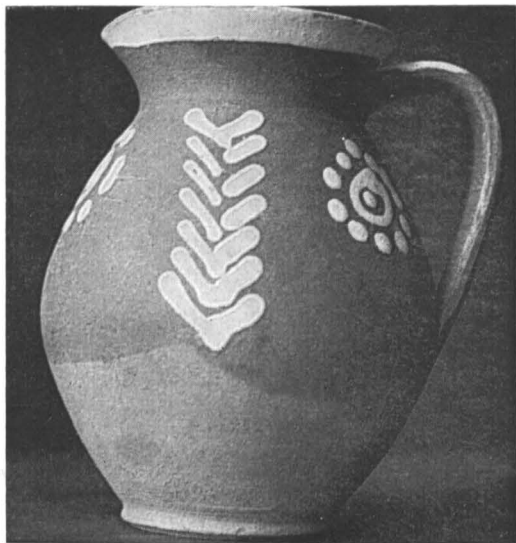
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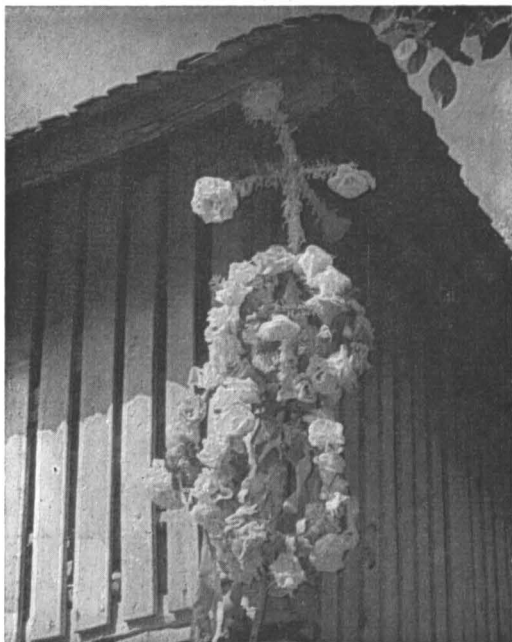
74 Painting above the entrance door of the wooden church at Hărnicești, Maramureș; the composition represents a tree in a tub and stars.

75 Tree placed in a plaster tub fixed to the front of a house — Alimpești-Gorj.

76 Flower in a vase, exterior decoration of a church at Fundenii Doamnei, Southern Wallachia (18th century).

★ **77** Plate with an anthropomorphic representation of the sun in the centre and fir branches round the edge — Horez.

78 Crock decorated with firs and stars — North-Western Wallachia.



79



80



81

79 Fir-tree, decorated for a wedding, fixed to a house — Vilcea, Northern Oltenia.

80 Fir-tree decorated with ribbons, placed on a young man's grave — Gorj (bands of wool in alternating colours are placed underneath).

81 Decorated fir placed on a young man's grave — Oteşani, North-Eastern Moldavia (three branches have been left at the top; below, the "apple").

82 Roof spear shaped like a fir-tree — Northern Moldavia.

83 Roof spear shaped like a tree with three branches and birds and, underneath, "an apple" — Argeş.



82

83



LIST OF COLOUR PLATES

- 1 Painting on glass representing Saint Elijah driving through the clouds in a chariot drawn by winged horses.
- 2 Painting on glass featuring Saint Elijah driving a chariot drawn by two winged horses.
- 3 Alexander the Great riding a unicorn (reproduction from a Romanian 17th-century manuscript).
- 4 Transylvanian painting on glass representing St. George slaying the dragon.
- 5 Wedding pitcher from Oboga, Southern Oltenia.
- 6 Knapsack with a revolving "wheel" embroidered in the centre — Maramureş (Folk Art Museum of the Socialist Republic of Romania).
- 7 Napkin embroidered with the revolving "wheel" motif (Folk Art Museum of the Socialist Republic of Romania).
- 8 Sheepskin coat of Hunedoara ornamented with a rosette (Folk Art Museum of the Socialist Republic of Romania).
- 9 Detail of a sheepskin coat: stars dot one of the ornamental bands — Central Moldavia (Folk Art Museum of the Socialist Republic of Romania).
- 10 Transylvanian painting on glass representing The Nativity: the star is placed at the top and dominates the scene.
- 11 Plates decorated with a star in the centre — Vama, Northern Transylvania (Folk Art Museum of the Socialist Republic of Romania).
- 12 Plate with a star in the centre (19th century) — Horez (Folk Art Museum of the Socialist Republic of Romania).
- 13 Bowl with a star in the centre (19th century) — Maramureş (Folk Art Museum of the Socialist Republic of Romania).
- 14 Detail of a sheepskin coat of Hunedoara ornamented with a "wheel" with bent spokes (Folk Art Museum of the Socialist Republic of Romania).
- 15 Detail of a napkin embroidered with fir-tree motifs — Buzău (Folk Art Museum of the Socialist Republic of Romania).
- 16 Painted eggs decorated with star motifs (Folk Art Museum of the Socialist Republic of Romania).





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МСТАЯ. ВОЛОЧЕНЪ.



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Волоч
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PRINTED IN ROMANIA

“Arta Grafică” Printing Works
Bucharest, 1969

Meridiane Publishing House