

THE NAME OF ZALMOXIS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN THE DACIAN LANGUAGE AND RELIGION

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Abstract: In order to write about the significance of the name of Zalmoxis in the Dacian language and religion, I begin with the displaying of the sources. Afterwards, there are presented three debates, about: (1) the relation between Zalmoxis and Pythagoras, showing that the philosopher was definitely influenced by the Thraco-Dacian beliefs which were also present in Zamolxianism; (2) “immortalization” as an initiatic mystery cult, shamanic practices; (3) an exploration of the forms *Zalmoxis* and *Zamolxis*.

The first form, of *Zalmoxis*, attested in Herodotus, with witnesses in inscriptions, could be related with some terms and practices found in Siberian peoples, used for hunting and shamanism (cf. *seĭ*, at Ket and Yugh). These practices are connected to the *Dance of the Bear* and others in the Romanian folklore. The second part of the term Zalmoxis could have come from **mo(i)š* (skin, sack, i. e., shamanic mask), which could lead to the Romanian autochthonous word *moș* (old, elder, ancestor).

The second form, *Zamolxis*, was connected to the Indo-European satem **sem-* < PIE **dheghom-* (earth > man). The theonym could end up with two forms by a word game, due to the oppositions between the mystery cult and shamanism, and between the solar-uranian cult from Sarmizegetusa and a chthonian cult, supported mainly by the southern Thracians (Semele, Dionysos).

Keywords: Zalmoxis, Zamolxis, Dacian religion, Thraco-Dacian language, Romanian folklore, Bear Dance, Capra, Moșii.

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Introduction

Both forms of this Dacian name are present in the original ancient sources. To be more complicated, both forms find correspondences in the Dacian vocabulary extant today. Therefore, my purpose in this paper will not be to give a final verdict, but mainly to discuss the etymological possibilities of the two forms, in the historical context of the Zamolxian religion. I believe the religious ideas and practices of the Dacians and the religious reforms that took place in their realm have an important implication for the meaning of both surnames.

Source Texts

1. Herodotus

The fundamental text about Zámolxis is in the Histories of Herodotus (IV, 94-96). This passage, although insufficient, contains the main information about Zámolxis, the story that he was the slave of Pythagoras, some important references to the beliefs of the Getians (i. e., Dacians), and the *hapax legomena* with the theonym Gebelézis.

Herodotus, IV, 94-96:

- “[IV, 94] [1] ἀθανατίζουσι δὲ τόνδε τὸν τρόπον: οὔτε ἀποθνήσκειν ἑωυτοὺς νομίζουσι ἰέναι τε τὸν ἀπολλύμενον παρὰ Σάλμοξιν δαίμονα: οἱ δὲ αὐτῶν τὸν αὐτὸν τοῦτον ὀνομάζουσι Γεβελείζιν: [2] διὰ πεντετηρίδος τε τὸν πάλω λαχόντα αἰεὶ σφέων αὐτῶν ἀποπέμπουσι ἄγγελον παρὰ τὸν Σάλμοξιν, ἐντελλόμενοι τῶν ἂν ἐκάστοτε δέωνται, πέμπουσι δὲ ὧδε: οἱ μὲν αὐτῶν ταχθέντες ἀκόντια τρία ἔχουσι, ἄλλοι δὲ διαλαβόντες τοῦ ἀποπεμπομένου παρὰ τὸν Σάλμοξιν τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τοὺς πόδας, ἀνακινήσαντες αὐτὸν μετέωρον ρίπτουσι ἐς τὰς λόγχας. ἦν μὲν δὴ ἀποθάνη ἀναπαρεῖς, τοῖσι δὲ ἵλεος ὁ θεὸς δοκέει εἶναι: [3] ἦν δὲ μὴ ἀποθάνη, αἰτιῶνται αὐτὸν τὸν ἄγγελον, φάμενοί μιν ἄνδρα κακὸν εἶναι, αἰτιησάμενοι δὲ τοῦτον ἄλλον ἀποπέμπουσι: ἐντέλλονται δὲ ἔτι ζῶντι. [4] οὗτοι οἱ αὐτοὶ Θρήικες καὶ πρὸς βροντὴν τε καὶ ἀστραπὴν τοξεύοντες ἄνω πρὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀπειλεύουσι τῷ θεῷ, οὐδένα ἄλλον θεὸν νομίζοντες εἶναι εἰ μὴ τὸν σφέτερον.

[95] [1] ὥς δὲ ἐγὼ πυνθάνομαι τῶν τὸν Ἑλλήσποντον οἰκεόντων Ἑλλήνων καὶ Πόντον, τὸν Σάλμοξιν τοῦτον ἐόντα ἄνθρωπον δουλεύσαι ἐν Σάμῳ, δουλεύσαι δὲ Πυθαγόρῃ τῷ Μνησάρχῳ, [2] ἐνθεῦτεν δὲ αὐτὸν γενόμενον ἐλεύθερον χρήματα κτήσασθαι μεγάλα, κτησάμενον δὲ ἀπελθεῖν ἐς τὴν ἑωυτοῦ. ἅτε δὲ κακοβίων τε

έόντων τών Θρηίκων καί ύπαφρονεστέρων, τόν **Σάλμοξιν** τοῦτον έπιστάμενον δίαίτάν τε Ἰάδα καί ήθεα βαθύτερα ή κατά Θρηίκας, οία Ἑλλησι τε όμιλήσαντα καί Ἑλλήνων οὔ τῷ άσθενεστάτῳ σοφιστῇ Πυθαγόρῃ, [3] κατασκευάσασθαι άνδρεώνα, ές τόν πανδοκεύοντα τών άστών τοῦς πρώτους καί εύωχέοντα άναδιδάσκειν ώς οὔτε αὐτὸς οὔτε οί συμπόται αὐτοῦ οὔτε οί έκ τούτων αiei γινόμενοι άποθανέονται, άλλ' ήξουσιν ές χῶρον τοῦτον ίνα αiei περιόντες ήξουσιν τὰ πάντα αγαθά. [4] έν ᾧ δέ έποίηε τὰ καταλεχθέντα καί έλεγε ταῦτα, έν τούτῳ κατάγαιον οίκημα έποίηετο. ώς δέ οί παντελέως είχε τὸ οίκημα, εκ μὲν τών Θρηίκων ήφανίσθη, καταβάς δέ κάτω ές τὸ κατάγαιον οίκημα διαίτάτο έπ' έτεα τρία: [5] οί δέ μιν έπόθεόν τε καί επένθεον ώς τεθνεῶτα. τετάρτῳ δέ έτεϊ έφάνη τοίσι Θρηίξι, καί οὔτῳ πιθανά σφι έγένετο τὰ έλεγε ό **Σάλμοξις**. ταῦτα φασί μιν ποιῆσαι.

[96] [1] έγῶ δέ περι μὲν τούτου καί τοῦ καταγαίου οίκήματος οὔτε άπιστέω οὔτε ὦν πιστεύω τι λίην, δοκέω δέ πολλοίσι έτεσι πρότερον τόν **Σάλμοξιν** τοῦτον γενέσθαι Πυθαγόρεω. [2] είτε δέ έγένετό τις **Σάλμοξις** άνθρωπος, είτ' έστὶ δαίμων τις Γέτησι οὔτος έπιχώριος, χαιρέτω. οὔτοι μὲν δὴ τρόπῳ τοιούτῳ χρεώμενοι ώς έχειρώθησαν ὑπὸ Περσέων, είποντο τῷ άλλῳ στρατῷ.¹

An English translation of this text:

- "94. As to their claim to be immortal, this is how they show it : they believe that they do not die, but that he who perishes goes to the god Salmoxis, or Gebeleizis, as some of them call him. Once in every five years they choose by lot one of their people and send him as a messenger to Salmoxis, charged to tell of their needs; and this is their manner of sending: Three lances are held by men thereto appointed; others seize the messenger to Salmoxis by his hands and feet, and swing and hurl him aloft on to the spear-points. If he be killed by the cast, they believe that the god regards them with favour; but if he be not killed, they blame the messenger himself, deeming him a bad man, and send another messenger in place of him whom they blame. It is while the man yet lives that they charge him with the message. Moreover when there is thunder and lightning these same Thracians shoot arrows skyward as a threat to the god, believing in no other god but their own.

95. For myself, I have been told by the Greeks who dwell beside the Hellespont and Pontus that this Salmoxis was a man who was once a slave in Samos, his master being Pythagoras son of Mnesarchus; presently, after being freed and gaining great wealth, he returned to his own country. Now the Thracians were a meanly-living and simplewitted folk, but this Salmoxis knew

¹ Herodotus, IV, 94-96, ed. Godley, vol. 1, 1928, 294-299.

Ionian usages and a fuller way of life than the Thracian ; for he had consorted with Greeks, and moreover with one of the greatest Greek teachers, Pythagoras ; wherefore he made himself a hall, where he entertained and feasted the chief among his countrymen, and taught them that neither he nor his guests nor any of their descendants should ever die, but that they should go to a place where they would live for ever and have all good things. While he was doing as I have said and teaching this doctrine, he was all the while making him an underground chamber. When this was finished, he vanished from the sight of the Thracians, and descended into the underground chamber, where he lived for three years, the Thracians wishing him back and mourning him for dead; then in the fourth year he appeared to the Thracians, and thus they came to believe what Salmoxis had told them. Such is the Greek story about him.

96. For myself, I neither disbelieve nor fully believe the tale about Salmoxis and his underground chamber; but I think that he lived many years before Pythagoras; and whether there was a man called Salmoxis, or this be a name among the Getae for a god of their country, I have done with him.”²

And a Romanian translation:

- “[IV, 94] Iată cum se cred nemuritori geții: ei cred că nu mor și că acel care dispăre din lumea noastră se duce la zeul Zalmoxis. Unii din ei îi mai spun și Gebeleizis. Tot la al cincilea an ei trimit la Zalmoxis un sol, tras la sorți, cu poruncă să-i facă cunoscute lucrurile de care, de fiecare dată, au nevoie. Iată cum îl trimite pe sol. Unii din ei primesc poruncă să țină trei sulite [cu vârful în sus], iar alții, apucând de mâini și de picioare pe cel ce urmează să fie trimis la Zalmoxis și ridicându-l în sus, îl azvârle în sulite. Dacă – străpuns de sulite – acesta moare, geții socot că zeul le este binevoitor. Iar dacă nu moare, aduc învinuiri solului, zicând că e un om ticălos și, după învinuirile aduse, trimit un altul, căruia îi dau însărcinări încă fiind în viață, când tună și fulgeră, trag cu săgețile în sus, spre cer, și amenință divinitatea (care provoacă aceste fenomene), deoarece ei cred că nu există alt zeu în afară de al lor.

[95] Așa cum am aflat eu de la elenii care locuiesc pe țărmurile Hellespontului și ale Pontului Euxin, Zalmoxis despre care vorbesc – fiind doar un muritor – a fost rob în Samos, și anume al lui Pitagora, care era fiul lui Mnesarchos. După aceea, ajungând liber, strânse bogății mari și, după ce se îmbogăți, se întoarse în patria lui. Întrucât tracii erau foarte nevoiași și săraci cu duhul, Zalmoxis acesta – cunoscător al felului de viață ionian și al unor

² Herodotus, IV, 94-96, ed. Godley, vol. 1, 1928, 294-299.

deprinderi mai cumpănite decât cele trace, întrucât avusese legături cu grecii și cu Pitagora, un însemnat gânditor al acestora – a clădit o casă pentru adunările bărbaților, în care [se spune] îi primea și îi puneă să benchetuiască pe frunțașii țării, învățându-i că nici el, nici oaspeții săi și nici unul din urmașii acestora nu vor muri, ci vor merge într-un anume loc unde vor trăi pururi și vor avea parte de toate bunătățile. În vreme ce săvârșea cele amintite și spunea lucruri de felul acesta, el a poruncit să i se clădească olocuință subpământeană. Când a fost gata, [Zalmoxis] a dispărut din mijlocul tracilor și, coborând el în locuința lui de sub pământ, a trăit acolo vreme de trei ani. Tracii doreau mult să-l aibă, jelindu-l ca pe un mort. În al patrulea an, el le-a apărut, și, astfel, Zalmoxis făcu vrednice de crezare învățăturile lui. Iată ce se povestește despre înfăptuirile lui.

[96] În privința lui Zalmoxis și a locuinței sale subpământene eu nici nu resping cele spuse, dar nici nu le dau crezare prea mult; mi se pare, însă, că el a trăit cu mulți ani înainte de Pitagora. Fie Zalmoxis om ori vreo divinitate de-a băștinașilor, să ne mulțumim cu cele înfățișate.”³

The paragraphs with Zalmoxis in Herodotus do not appear in Papyrus Oxyrrhyncus (2nd – 3rd c. AD).⁴ The oldest well preserved manuscript for Herodotus is the Laurentianus 70.3 in Florence (10th c. AD), on which all the above editions are based.⁵

2. Related Text in Herodotus - Immortality as a Dacian Belief

Including the Getae (Getians, named mainly Dacians by the Romans) among the Thracians, Herodotus differentiates them in certain aspects of their behavior. He remarks in a passage the belief in immortality and two virtues of the Getae, justice and heroism. We find this text in Herodotus just above the previous cited by me.

Herodotus IV, 93:

- Greek: „Πρὶν δὲ ἀπικέσθαι ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰστρον, πρῶτους αἰρέει Γέτας τοὺς ἀθανατίζοντας. οἱ μὲν γὰρ τὸν Σαλμυδεσσὸν ἔχοντες Θρήικες καὶ ὑπὲρ Ἀπολλωνίης τε καὶ Μεσαμβρίας πόλιος οἰκημένοι καλεούμενοι δὲ Κυρμιάναι καὶ Νιψαῖοι ἀμαχητὶ σφέας αὐτοὺς παρέδοσαν Δαρεῖω· οἱ δὲ Γέται πρὸς ἀγνωμοσύνην τραπόμενοι αὐτίκα ἐδουλώθησαν Θρήικων ἔοντες ἀνδρηιότατοι καὶ δικαιοτάτοι.”⁶

³ Herodotus, IV, 94-95, apud Iliescu et alii, 1964, 48-51.

⁴ <http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/>

⁵ McNeal, 1983, 110-129.

⁶ Herodotus IV, 93, ed. Godley, 1928, 294-295.

- English: „But before he came to the Ister, he first subdued the **Getae**, who pretend to be immortal. The **Thracians** of Salmydessus and of the country above the towns of Apollonia and Mesambria, who are called **Cyrmianae** and **Nipsaci**, surrendered themselves unresisting to Darius, but the **Getae**, who are the bravest and most law-abiding of all **Thracians**, resisted with obstinacy, and were enslaved forthwith.”⁷

- Romanian: „Înainte de-a ajunge la Istru, birui mai întâi pe **geți**, care se cred nemuritori. Căci **tracii**, locuitorii din Salmydessos și cei ce ocupă ținutul așezat mai sus de orașele Apollonia și Mesembria – pe nume **scirmiazi** și **nipseeni** – s-au predat lui Darius fără luptă. **Geții**, însă, fiindcă s-au purtat nechibzuit, au fost îndată înrobiți, măcar că ei sunt cei mai viteji și cei mai dreپți dintre **traci**.”⁸

The English translation used is more nuanced than the Romanian translation used with respect to the accuracy of the proper names and the term ‘most law-abiding’ for ‘δικαιοτάτοι’. The Romanian translation uses ‘just’, but the Greek virtue of justice implies the respect for the social laws. The Romanian translation is, nevertheless, better when retains the reason of the defeat of the Getae: they were enslaved because they acted imprudent (‘nechibzuit’), even if they are “the bravest and the most law-abiding of all Thracians”.

3. Hellanicus, Photios, Suidas and Etymologicum Maximum

Zámolxis was also mentioned by other ancient Greek authors, most of such places repeating the information in Herodotus.

Hellanicus made a brief and a more blurred note about Zámolxis (with this spelling) in *Barbarika nomina*, preserved only as a fragmentary quote in Photios I, the Patriarch of Constantinople (c. 810-893 AD), Suidas Lexikon (10th century), and Etymologicum Magnum (c. 1150 AD), where called *Barbarikoi nomoi*, which “ex Herodoti et Damastis scriptis compilatum fuisse”, as the editor F. W. Sturz wrote.⁹ Here it is the Greek text, published in 1787:¹⁰

⁷ Herodotus IV, 93, ed. Godley, 1928, 294-295.

⁸ Herodotus IV, 93, apud Iliescu et alii, 1964, 46, 49.

⁹ Hellanici Lesbii, 1787, 63.

¹⁰ Hellanici Lesbii, 1787, 64. Cf. in *Auctores graeci minores*, 1796, 63, 64, 65 (same page arrangement). Hellanici Lesbii, 1787, 13, 64 – mentioned Herod. 4.95 (et sqq.)

Suidas et Etymol. M. Ζάμολξις. — Ἑλλάνικος ἐν ταῖς βαρβαρικοῖς νόμοις Φησὶν, ὅτι Ἑλληνικός τις (Etym. τε) γεγονώς τελευτὰς κατέδειξε Γέταις τοῖς ἐν Θρᾷκη· καὶ ἔλεγεν, ὅτι (Etym. οηιτιτ.) οὗτ' ἂν αὐτὸς ἀποθάνοι, οὐδ' οἱ μετὰ τούτου, ἀλλ' ἔξουσιν πάντα ἀγαθὰ (Etym. τὰ ἀγαθὰ). ἅμα δὲ ταῦτα λέγων ὑποδόμει οἶκημα καταγάμιον. ἔπειτα ἀφανισθεὶς αἰφνίδιον ἐκ Θρακῶν ἐν τούτῳ διητάτο. οἱ δὲ Γέται ἐπόθουν αὐτόν. τετάρτῳ δὲ ἔτε πάλιν φαίνεται, καὶ οἱ Θραῖκες αὐτῷ πάντα ἐπίστευσαν.

Our translation:

“Zámolxis – Hellanikos, in *Barbarbarikoi nomoi* (and *Etym.*, as well), said that, becoming completely as a Greek, he [Zámolxis] had shown himself to the Getians in Thrace. And he said (omitted in *Etym.*) that neither he, nor his followers, will die, but they will acquire all the good things (*Etym.* the good things). While he was saying these, he built himself an underground house. Then, suddenly disappearing from the [sight of the] Thracians, he lived in it [in the underground house]. And the Getians missed him. After four years, he showed himself again, and the Thracians belived in him completely.”¹¹

Friedrich Wilhelm Sturz, the publisher of *Hellanicus*, displayed further the *Herodotus* passage, for comparison (using the *Zámolxis* spelling).¹²

In the *Suidas Lexikon* the entry about Zamolxis says:¹³

¹¹ Translated from *Hellanici Lesbii*, 1787, 64.

¹² *Hellanici Lesbii*, 1787, 64-65.

¹³ *Suidae Lexicon*, 1705, 2,

<https://archive.org/stream/suidaelexicongr02suid#page/2/mode/2up/search/zamolxis>.

<p>ῥάμολξις. Πυθαγόρα δαλεῖσας, ὡς Ἡρόδοτος δ'. Σκυθῆς ὅς ἐπαλεθῶν, ἐδίδασκε παρὰ τοῦ ἀθανάτου εἶναι τὸ ψυχρὸν. Μνασῆας δὲ, παρὰ Γέτας τὸ Κρόνον πρῶτον, καὶ χαλεπῶς ῥάμολξιν. Ἑλλάνιος δὲ ἐν τοῖς Βαρβαρίκοις νόμοις Φησὶν, ὅτι Ἑλλανικός τις γενὴς πελῆας κατέδειξε Γέταις τοῖς ἐν Θράκῃ καὶ ἔλεγεν, ὅτι ἐπ' αὐτὸς ἐπιβάνη, ἐξ οἷ μὲν τούτου, ἀλλ' ἔξωσιν πάντα ἀγαθὰ. ἅμα δὲ ἔειπε λέγων ὁμοδμή οἴκημα καταΐων. ἔπειτα ἀφανισθεὶς αἰφνίδιον ἐν Θράκῃ ἐν τούτῳ διήλθετο. οἱ δὲ Γέται ἐπύθοντο αὐτὸν. πᾶρτω δὲ ἐπὶ πάλιν φαίνεται, καὶ οἱ Θράκες αὐτῷ πάντα ἐπέδωκαν. Λέγουσι δὲ πρὸς, ὡς ὁ ῥάμολξις ἐδούλευσε Πυθαγόρα, Μνησάρχην, Σαμίον, καὶ ἐλθὼν τρωαίους ἔπειτα ἐσφίξετο. Ἀλλὰ πολὺ παρῆται δόκει ὁ ῥάμολξις Πυθαγόρα γενέσθαι. Ἄθλα κατὰ δὲ καὶ Τέλειον, καὶ Κρόβιζον, καὶ τοὺς ἐπιθανόντας εἰς ῥάμολξιν φασὶν οἰχεῖσθαι. ἥξει δὲ αὐτοῖς. καὶ ἔπειτα αἰνοῦνται ἀληθέως. θύουσιν δὲ, καὶ εὐωχέοντο, ὡς αὐτοῖς ἥξει. ὅς ἐπιθανόντος.</p>	<p>ῥάμολξις. Zamolxis. Pythagoræ servus, ut ait Herodotus libro quarto, Scytha, qui reversus in patriam, docuit animam esse immortalem. Mnaseas vero dicit, apud Getas coli Saturnum, & vocari Zamolxin. Hellanicus vero in <i>Barbaricis Institutis</i> dicit, fuisse quendam Græcum, qui Getis in Thracia degentibus initia demonstravit, dixeritque, neque se moriturum, neque suos sectatores: sed omnia bona habituros. Cum autem hæc diceret, domicilium subterraneum exstruxit. Deinde ex Thracum oculis & conspectu se repente propiciens, in hoc degebat: Getæ vero ipsum defiderarunt. Quarto autem anno post rursus apparuit, & Thraces omnia ipsi crediderunt. Quidam vero dicunt, Zamolxin servisse Pythagoræ Samio, Mnecarchi filio, & libertate donatum, ista commentum esse. Sed Zamolxis Pythagora longe antiquior videtur fuisse. Terizi vero & Crobyzi credunt animarum immortalitatem, & mortuos ad Zamolxin ire tradunt; quem rediturum esse aiunt: idq; semper verum esse putant. Quamobrem sacrificant, & & convivantur, quasi defunctus sit rediturus.</p>
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The text is accompanied by this note:

ὁ ῥάμολξις.] Quæ hic de Zamolxide Suidas habet, eadem ipsissimis verbis leguntur etiam apud Etymologum. Uterque autem, & Suidas, & Etymologus, historiam hanc mutuatus est ab Herodoto, l. iv. c. 95.

On the following page, there is another entry with Zámolxis:¹⁴

“ῥάμολξις. θηλυκῶς. ὄνομα Θεᾶς.”, translated in Latin as:

“ῥάμολξις. Fœmineo genere dictum, est **Dæx nomen.**”

Dealing with this exact passage («Zamolxis: au féminin; nom de déesse»), Dan Dana observes and studies the question of the modern scholars regarding a feminine deity Zamolxis.¹⁵ Although many authors (with rare exception, as the skepticism of I. I. Russu) have considered the reality of the goddess Zamolxis as a fact, fitting her in a modern theory of Religion (about divine opposite pairs, Father Heaven and Mother Earth etc.),¹⁶ Dan Dana

¹⁴ Suidae Lexicon, 1705, 3.

¹⁵ Dana, 2004, 76-83.

¹⁶ See the main ideas of each theories in Dana, *op. cit.* – authors who speculated about the goddess Zamolxis: Rhousopoulos and Bessel - 19th cent.; Creuzer, Cless, Froehner;

seeks the original source of the above interpolation in *Suida* (*Souda*) in *Lexicon Ambrosianum* (9th cent.). This way, he concludes that the «goddess» appears either due to a feminine-like declination, or as a grammar note not understood in *Souda*:

“Il s’ensuit donc que dans le manuscrit de *l’Ambrosianum* utilisé par les rédacteurs de la *Souda*, soit ils se sont trompés en ce qui concerne les signes indiquant les genres, soit ils ont jugé le nom divin comme étant du genre féminin (à cause de la déclinaison en -ιδος). Il s’agit alors d’une simple notice grammaticale, tout-à-fait normale dans un tel ouvrage, qui a été mal comprise par les compilateurs de la *Souda*. Rien n’autorise l’existence d’une déesse Zamolxis, et prouve ainsi la faiblesse des théories, innombrables, sur le dieu gète.”;¹⁷ “C’est aussi le cas de l’énigmatique «déesse» Zamolxis, qui n’est, en fin de compte, qu’une confusion byzantine exploitée par les préjugés des Modernes.”¹⁸

And on the penultimate page of the second volume there is this occurrence:¹⁹

Ὀχός, Φιλόσοφος ὡς Φοίνις. Ζάμολξις
ὡς Θραξίν. Ἀτλας ὡς Λίβυσιν.
Ὀχός. Ochus, Philosophus apud Phoeni-
ces: ut Zamolxis apud Thraces, & Atlas
apud Afros.

Etymologicum Magnum, quoting *Photios* and *Suidas*, mentions on the subject:²⁰

Tomaschek, Khazarow; Tocilescu, C. Daicoviciu, A. Bodor, N. Gostar, I. H. Crișan, J. Coman, M. Eliade, D. Popov.

¹⁷ Dana, 2004, 81.

¹⁸ Dana, 2004, 83.

¹⁹ *Suidae Lexicon*, 1705, 774.

²⁰ Hellanicos, *Obiceiuri barbare*, fr. 73 in Phot. Suid, Et. M., 407,45, in Iliescu et alii, 1964, 20.

Fr. 73. PHOT. SUID. s. Ζάμολξις (ET. M. 407, 45). Πυθαγόραι δουλεύσας, ὡς Ἡρόδοτος τετάρτηι (95), Σκύθης, ὃς ἐπανελθὼν ἐδίδασκε περὶ τοῦ ἀθάνατον εἶναι τὴν ψυχὴν. Μνασέας(ν) δὲ παρὰ Γέταις τὸν Κρόνον τιμᾶσθαι καὶ καλεῖσθαι Ζάμολξιν. Ἑλλάνικος ἐν τοῖς Βαρβαρικοῖς Νομίμοις φησὶν ὅτι Ἑλληνικός τε γεγονὼς τελετὰς κατέδειξε Γέταις τοῖς ἐν Θράικῃ, καὶ ἔλεγεν ὅτι οὐτ' αὖν αὐτὸς ἀποθάνοι οὐθ' οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ, ἀλλ' ἔξουσιν πάντα τὰ ἀγαθὰ· ἅμα δὲ ταῦτα λέγων οἰκοδόμει οἴκημα κατάγειον. ἔπειτα ἀφανισθεὶς αἰφνίδιον ἐκ Θραϊκῶν ἐν τούτῳ διηιτᾶτο. οἱ δὲ Γέται ἐπόθουν αὐτόν. τετάρτῳ δὲ ἔτει πάλιν φαίνεται, καὶ οἱ Θραϊκες αὐτῷ πάντα ἐπιστευσαν. λέγουσι δὲ τινες ὡς ὁ Ζάμολξις ἐδούλευσε Πυθαγόραι Μνησάρχου Σαμίου καὶ ἐλευθερωθεὶς ταῦτα ἐσοφίζετο. ἀλλὰ πολὺ πρότερός μοι δοκεῖ ὁ Ζάμολξις Πυθαγόρου γενέσθαι. ἀθανατίζουσι δὲ καὶ Τέριζοι καὶ Κρόβυζοι, καὶ τοὺς ἀποθανόντας ὡς Ζάμολξιν φασιν οἴχεσθαι, ἥξειν δὲ αὖθις· καὶ ταῦτα αἰ νομίζουσιν ἀληθεύειν. θύουσι δὲ καὶ εὐωχοῦνται ὡς αὖθις ἥξοντος τοῦ ἀποθανόντος.

Meaning: “at *Zamolxis*. The Scythian, being the slave of Pythagoras – as Herodotus told us in his fourth book (95) – coming back in his country, he gave some teachings to the people, regarding the immortality of the soul. Mnaseas said that at the Getians there is worshipped Kronos and it bares the name of *Zamolxis*. // Hellanikos, in *Barbaricis institutis*, said that he [*Zamolxis*] was a Greek who had shown the religious fulfillment to the Getians in Thrace. And he said that neither he, nor his followers will not die, but they will acquire all the goods. While he was saying these, he built himself an underground house. Then, suddenly disappearing from the Thracians, he lived there. The Getians missed him. After four years, he showed himself again, and the Thracians belived in him a lot. // Some say that *Zamolxis* was the slave of Pythagoras, the son of Mnesarchos, of Samos. Freed, he invented these things. But I think that *Zamolxis* lived long before Pythagoras. They also belive in the immortality the *Térizoi* and the *Króbzyoi*, and they say that those gone to *Zamolxis* will return. And they had always belived these things to be true. Thus, they make sacrifices and feast as the dead will return.”

Which is, in Romanian translation:²¹

²¹ Phot. Suid, Et. M., 407,45, in Iliescu et alii, 1964, 21.

Fr. 73. PHOT. SUID., la Zalmoxis (ET. M. 407, 45). Scitul fiind robul lui Pitagora — cum ne povestește Herodot în cartea a IV-a (95) —, înapoiindu-se la el în țară a dat învățături oamenilor cu privire la nemurirea sufletului. Mnaseas spune că la geți este cinstit Cronos și că el poartă numele Zalmoxis²¹.

Hellanicos în *Obiceiuri barbare* zice că [Zalmoxis] a fost un grec care a arătat geților din Tracia ritul inițierii religioase. El le spunea că nici el și nici cei din tovărășia lui nu vor muri, ci vor avea parte de toate bunurile. În vreme ce spunea acestea, și-a construit o casă sub pământ, apoi — dispărînd pe neașteptate din ochii tracilor — a trăit într-însa. Iar geții îi duceau dorul. În al patrulea an, a reapărut și tracii credeau tot ce le spunea.

Povestesc unii că Zalmoxis a fost rob la Pitagora, fiul lui Mnesarchos, din Samos. Eliberat, a născocit aceste lucruri. Dar mi se pare că Zalmoxis a trăit cu mult înaintea lui Pitagora. Cred în nemurire și terizii și crobizii. Ei spun că cei morți pleacă la Zalmoxis și că se vor reîntoarce. Din totdeauna ei au crezut că aceste lucruri sînt adevărate. Aduc jertfe și benchetuiesc ca și cum mortul se va reîntoarce.

4. Plato

Plato (427-347 BC) refers to Zámolxis in *Charmides* (156d-157b), in connection with the medicine. He appreciates that the Thracian medicine is superior because, along with the drug treatment, it seeks the spiritual causes of the diseases, as the Thracians were taught by Zámolxis, their ancient king and god:

Plato, *Charmides*, 156d-157b:²²

156d... Τοιοῦτον τοίνυν ἐστίν, ὃ Χαρμίδη, καὶ τὸ ταύτης τῆς ἐπι-
δῆς. Ἐμαθὼν δ' αὐτὴν ἐγὼ ἐκεῖ ἐπὶ στρατιᾷς παρὰ τινος τῶν Θρακῶν
τῶν Ζαλμόξιδος ἰατρῶν, οἱ λέγονται καὶ ἀπαθανατίζειν. Ἐλεγεν δὲ ὁ
Θράξ οὗτος ὅτι ταῦτα μὲν [ἰατροὶ] οἱ Ἕλληνες, ἀ νυνδὴ ἐγὼ ἔλεγον,
καλῶς λέγουσιν· ἀλλὰ Ζάλμοξις, ἔφη, λέγει ὁ ἡμέτερος βασιλεὺς, θεὸς
ὢν, 156e. ὅτι ὥσπερ ὀφθαλμοὺς ἄνευ κεφαλῆς οὐ δεῖ ἐπιχειρεῖν
ἰᾶσθαι οὐδὲ κεφαλὴν ἄνευ σώματος, οὕτως οὐδὲ σῶμα ἄνευ ψυχῆς,
ἀλλὰ τοῦτο καὶ αἴτιον εἶη τοῦ διαφεύγειν τοὺς παρὰ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν
ἰατροὺς τὰ πολλὰ νοσήματα, ὅτι τὸ ὅλον ἀγνοοῖεν οὐ δέοι τὴν
ἐπιμέλειαν ποιεῖσθαι, οὐ μὴ καλῶς ἔχοντος ἀδύνατον εἶη τὸ μέρος
εὖ ἔχειν. Πάντα γὰρ ἔφη ἐκ τῆς ψυχῆς ὠρμῆσθαι καὶ τὰ κακὰ καὶ
τὰ ἀγαθὰ τῷ σώματι καὶ παντὶ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, καὶ ἐκεῖθεν ἐπιρρεῖν
ὥσπερ ἐκ τῆς κεφαλῆς ἐπὶ τὰ ὅρματα· 157a. δεῖν οὖν ἐκεῖνο καὶ
πρῶτον καὶ μάλιστα θεραπεύειν, εἰ μέλλει καὶ τὰ τῆς κεφαλῆς καὶ
τὰ τοῦ ἄλλου σώματος καλῶς ἔχειν. Θεραπεύεσθαι δὲ τὴν ψυχὴν
ἔφη, ὃ μακάριε, ἐπωδαῖς τισιν· τὰς δ' ἐπωδὰς ταύτας τοὺς λόγους
εἶναι τοὺς καλοὺς· ἐκ δὲ τῶν τοιούτων λόγων ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς σωφρο-
σύνην ἐγγίνεσθαι, ἧς ἐγγενομένης καὶ παρούσης ῥάδιον ἤδη εἶναι
τὴν ὑγίειαν καὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ καὶ τῷ ἄλλῳ σώματι πορίζειν. 157b.
Διδάσκων οὖν με τὸ τε φάρμακον καὶ τὰς ἐπωδὰς, ὅπως, ἔφη,
τῷ φαρμάκῳ τούτῳ μηδεὶς σε πείσει τὴν αὐτοῦ κεφαλὴν
θεραπεύειν, δὲ ἂν μὴ τὴν ψυχὴν πρῶτον παράσχη τῇ ἐπωδῇ ὑπὸ σου
θεραπευθῆναι. Καὶ γὰρ νῦν, ἔφη, τοῦτ' ἐστίν τὸ ἀμάρτημα περὶ τοὺς

²² Iliescu et alii, 1964, 100-103; Platon, 1920-1956.

ἀνθρώπους, ὅτι χωρὶς ἑκατέρον [σωφροσύνης τε καὶ ὑγείας] ἰατροὶ τινες ἐπιχειροῦσιν εἶναι· καὶ μοι πάνυ σφόδρα ἐνετέλλετο μήτε πλούσιον οὕτω μηδένα εἶναι μήτε γενναῖον μήτε καλόν, ὃς ἐμὲ πείσει ἄλλως ποιεῖν. Ἐγὼ οὖν 157 c. — ὁμώμοκα γὰρ αὐτῷ, καὶ μοι ἀνάγκη πείθεσθαι — πείσομαι οὖν, καὶ σοί, ἐάν μὴ βούλῃ κατὰ τὰς τοῦ ξένου ἐντολὰς τὴν ψυχὴν πρῶτον παρασχεῖν ἐπᾶσαι ταῖς τοῦ Θρακῆος ἐπωδαῖς, προσοίσω τὸ φάρμακον τῇ κεφαλῇ· εἰ δὲ μή, οὐκ ἂν ἔχοιεν ὃ τι ποιοῦμέν σοι, ὦ φίλε Χαρμίδη.

An English translation:²³

"His approving answers reassured me, and I began by degrees to regain confidence, and the vital heat returned. Such, Charmides, I said, is the nature of the charm, which I learned when serving with the army from one of the physicians of the Thracian king **Zamolxis**, who are to be so skilful that they can even **give immortality**. This Thracian told me that in these notions of theirs, which I was just now mentioning, the Greek physicians are quite right as far as they go; but **Zamolxis**, he added, our king, who is also a god, says further, "that as you ought not to attempt to cure the eyes without the head, or the head without the body, so neither ought you to attempt to cure the body without the soul; and this," he said, "is the reason why the cure of many diseases is unknown to the physicians of Hellas, because they are ignorant of the whole, which ought to be studied also; for the part can never be well unless the whole is well." For all good and evil, whether in the body or in human nature, originates, as he declared, in the soul, and overflows from thence, as if from the head into the eyes. And therefore if the head and body are to be well, you must begin by curing the soul; that is the first thing. And the cure, my dear youth, has to be effected by the use of certain charms, and these charms are fair words; and by them temperance is implanted in the soul, and where temperance is, there health is speedily imparted, not only to the head, but to the whole body. And he who taught me the cure and the charm at the same time added a special direction: "Let no one," he said, "persuade you to cure the head, until he has first given you his soul to be cured by the charm. For this," he said, "is the great error of our day in the treatment of the human body, that physicians separate the soul from the body." And he added with emphasis, at the same time making me swear to his words, "Let no one, however rich, or noble, or fair, persuade you to give him the cure, without the charm." Now I have sworn, and I must keep my oath, and therefore if you will allow me to apply the Thracian charm first to your soul, as the stranger directed, I will

²³ Plato, 1871 (and further editions).

afterwards proceed to apply the cure to your head. But if not, I do not know what I am to do with you, my dear Charmides.”

In Romanian translation:²⁴

156d. . . Tot așa stau lucrurile, Carmide, și cu acest descîntec. Eu [Socrate] l-am învățat acolo în oaste, de la un medic trac, unul din ucenicii¹ lui Zalmoxis, despre care se zice că îți fac pe oameni nemuritori. Spunea tracul acesta că [medicii] greci aveau dreptate să cîvințeze așa cum v-am arătat adineaori. Dar Zalmoxis, adăuga el, regele nostru, care este un zeu, ne spune 156e că după cum nu trebuie să încercăm a îngriji ochii fără să ținem seama de cap, nici capul nu poate fi îngrijit neținîndu-se seamă de corp, tot astfel trebuie să-i dăm îngrijire trupului dimpreună cu sufletul și iată pentru ce medicii greci nu se pricep la cele mai multe boli: [anume] pentru că ei nu cunosc întregul pe care-l au de îngrijit. Dacă acest întreg este bolnav, partea nu poate fi sănătoasă. Căci, zicea el, toate lucrurile bune și rele — pentru corp și pentru om în întregul său — vin de la suflet și de acolo curg [ca dintr-un izvor] ca de la cap la ochi; 157a. Trebuie deci — mai ales și în primul rînd — să tămăduim izvorul răului, ca să se poată bucura de sănătate capul și tot restul trupului. Prietene, zicea el, sufletul se vindecă cu descîntece. Aceste descîntece sînt vorbele frumoase, care fac să se nască în suflete înțelepciunea. Odată ivită aceasta și dacă stăruie, este ușor să se bucure de sănătate și capul și trupul. 157b. Cînd mă învăța leacul și descîntecele, spunea: Să nu te înduplece nimeni să-i tămăduiești capul cu acest leac, dacă nu-ți încredințează mai întîi sufletul, ca să i-l tămăduiești cu ajutorul descîntecului. Iar acum — zicea el — aceasta e cea mai mare greșeală a oamenilor: ca unii medici să caute în chip deosebit o vindecare sau cealaltă [a sufletului și a trupului]. Și mă povățuia foarte stăruitor să nu mă las înduplecat de nimeni — oricît de bogat, dintr-un neam ales sau oricît de frumos ar fi — să fac altfel. Deci eu, 157 c pentru că i-am jurat și sînt nevoit să-i dau ascultare, îi voi da într-adevăr ascultare. Și dacă vrei — potrivit poveștelor străinului — să-mi încredințezi mai întîi sufletul tău, pentru a -l vrăji cu descîntecele tracului, îți voi da și leacul pentru cap. Dacă nu, nu-ți pot ajuta cu nimic, scumpe Carmide.

Other Romanian translation:²⁵

“[156d] ...Tot așa e, Charmides, și cu descîntecul nostru. L-am deprins acolo în tabără de la un trac (20), unul dintre medicii lui **Zalmoxis** (21), despre care se zice că stăpînesc **meșteșugul de a te face nemuritor** (22). Și spunea tracul acesta, că medicii greci pe bună dreptate iau seama la cele pe care tocmai le pomeneam; numai că "**Zalmoxis**, adăugi el, regele nostru, care e zeu (23), arată că, după cum nu trebuie să încercăm a vindeca ochii fără să vindecăm capul, ori capul fără să ținem seama de trup, tot astfel nici trupul nu poate fi [a] însănătoșit fără suflet. Aceasta și e pricina pentru care medicii greci nu izbutesc să vindece cele mai multe boli: ei nu se ridică pînă la întregul de care ar trebui să se îngrijească, iar dacă acestuia nu-i merge bine, nici partea nu se poate însănătoși. Și toate de aci pornesc, îmi lămurea el, de la suflet: atît cele rele cît și cele bune ale trupului ori ale făpturii noastre depline, și de aci se

²⁴ Iliescu et alii, 1964, 100-103; Platon, 1920-1956.

²⁵ Platon, 1967, 183-184.

revarsă ele, așa cum de la cap totul se resfrînge asupra ochilor (24). Prin urmare [157a], mai ales sufletul se cade îngrijit, dacă avem de gînd să aducem la o bună stare atît capul cît și restul trupului (25). Iar sufletul, arăta el, dragul meu, se îngrijește cu anume descîntece și descîntecele acestea nu sînt altceva decît rostirile frumoase (26). Din asemenea rostiri se iscă în suflete înțelepciunea; iar odată ce aceasta iese la iveală și stăruie în noi, îi e lesne să deschidă cale sănătății și [b] către cap și către trupul tot" (27). Învățîndu-mă așadar asemenea leac și asemenea descîntece, mă îndemna totodată să nu mă las înduplecat: de nimeni să-i îngrijesc capul cu leacul acesta, pînă nu-mi va fi înfățișat mai întîi sufletul (28) spre a fi îngrijit prin descîntec. Și tocmai aceasta e greșala pe care o fac astăzi oamenii, urmă el, că încearcă să fie medici ai unei părți numai, fără cealaltă; și mă îndemna cu toată tăria să nu mă las înduplecat de nimeni să fac astfel, fie el bogat, frumos, ori de neam ales. Eu, așadar, [c] am să-i dau ascultare, căci i-am jurat-o și sînt dator să-i dau ascultare; iar ție, dacă vei vrea, după îndemnurile străinului, să-ți înfățișezi întîi sufletul spre a fi descîntat (29) cu acele descîntece trace, îți voi da leacul pentru cap; dacă nu, n-aș prea avea ce să fac pentru tine, Charmides, dragule."

5. Strabo

Zamolxis is also mentioned in Strabo (64/63 BC – c. AD 24). As we can see, there is mentioned this time Kogaionon, the name of the mountain where Zamolxis entered the cave.

Strabo, in *Geography*, 7.3.5:²⁶ "λέγεται γάρ τινα τῶν Γετῶν ὄνομα Ζάμολξιν δουλεύσαι Πυθθαγόρα καὶ τινα τῶν οὐρανίων παρ' ἐκείνου μαθεῖν, τὰ δὲ καὶ παρ' Αἰγυπτίων πλανηθέντα καὶ μέχρι δεῦρο· ἐπανελθόντα δ' εἰς τὴν οἰκείαν σπουδασθῆναι παρὰ τοῖς ἡγεμόσι καὶ τὸ ἔθνη προλέγοντα τὰς ἐπισημασίας, τελευτῶντα δὲ πείσαι τὸν βασιλέα κοινωνὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς αὐτὸν λαβεῖν ὡς τὰ παρὰ τῶν θεῶν ἐξαγγέλλειν ἱκανόν· καὶ κατ' ἀρχὰς μὲν ἱερέα κατασταθῆναι τοῦ μάλιστα τιμωμένου παρ' αὐτοῖς θεοῦ, μετὰ ταῦτα δὲ καὶ θεὸν προσαγορευθῆναι, καὶ καταλαμβάνοντα ἀντρῶδές τι χωρίον ἄβατον τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐνταῦθα διαιτᾶσθαι, σπάνιον ἐντυγχάνοντα τοῖς ἐκτὸς πλὴν τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ τῶν θεραπόντων· συμπράττειν δὲ τὸν βασιλέα ὁρῶντα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους προσέχοντας ἑαυτὸ πολὺ πλέον ἢ πρότερον, ὡς ἐκφέροντι τὰ προστάγματα κατὰ συμβουλὴν θεῶν. τοῦτ' ἐστὶν τὸ ἔθος διέτεινεν ἄχρι καὶ εἰς ἡμᾶς, αἰεὶ τινος εὐρισκομένου τοιοῦτου τοῦ ἥθους, ὃς τὸ μὲν βασιλεῖ

²⁶ Strabon, *Geographica*, 1877. Id., 1969.

σύμβουλος ὑπῆρχε, παρὰ δὲ τοῖς Γέταις ὠνομάζετο θεός· καὶ τὸ ὄρος ὑπελήφθη ἱερόν, καὶ προσαγορεύουσιν οὕτως· ὄνομα δ' αὐτὸ Κωγαίονον ὁμώνυμον τὸ παραρρέοντι ποταμὸ. καὶ δὴ ὅτε **Βυρεβίστας** ἦρχε τῶν Γετῶν, ἐφ' ὃν ἤδη παρεσκευάσατο Καῖσαρ ὁ θεὸς στρατεῦναι, **Δεκαίνεος** εἶχε ταύτην τὴν τιμὴν, καὶ πῶς τὸ τῶν ἐμγύχων ἀπέχεσθαι **Πυθαγόρειον** τοῦ **Ζαμόλξιος** ἔμεινε παραδοθέν.// Γέταις· ἤδη δὲ καὶ **Ῥωμαίοις** φοβερὸς ἦν, διαβαίνων ἀδεῶς τὸν Ἰστρον καὶ τὴν **Θράκην** λεηλατῶν μέχρι **Μακεδονίας** καὶ τῆς **Ἠλυρίδος**, τοὺς τε **Κελτοὺς** τοὺς ἀναμειγμένους τοῖς τε **Θραξί** καὶ τοῖς **Ἰλλυριοῖς** ἐξεπόρθησε, **Βοίους** δὲ καὶ ἄρδην ἠφάνισε τοὺς ὑπὸ **Κριτασίρῳ** καὶ **Ταυρίσκους**. πρὸς δὲ τὴν εὐπείθειαν τοῦ ἔθνους συναγωνιστὴν ἔσχε **Δεκαίνεον** ἄνδρα γόητα, πεπλανημένον κατὰ τὴν **Αἴγυπτον** καὶ προσημασίας ἐκμεμαθηκότα τινάς, δι' ὧν ὑπεκρίνετο τὰ θεῖα· καὶ δι' ὀλίγου καθίστατο θεός, καθάπερ ἔφαμεν περὶ τοῦ **Ζαμόλξεως** διηγούμενοι. τῆς δ' εὐπειθείας σημεῖον· ἐπείσθησαν γὰρ ἐκκόγειν τὴν ἄμπελον καὶ ζῆν οἶνον χωρὶς. ὁ μὲν οὖν **Βοιρεβίστας** ἔφθη καταλυθεὶς ἐπαναστάντων αὐτὸ τινων πρὶν ἢ **Ῥωμαίους** στείλαι στρατεῖαν ἐπ' αὐτόν· οἱ δὲ διαδεξάμενοι τὴν ἀρχὴν εἰς πλείω μέρη διέστησαν. καὶ δὴ καὶ νῦν, ἡνίκα ἔπεμγεν ἐπ' αὐτοὺς στρατεῖαν ὁ Σεβαστὸς Καῖσαρ, εἰς πέντε μερίδας, τότε δὲ εἰς τέτταρας διεστώτες ἐτύγγανον· οἱ μὲν οὖν τοιοῦτοι μερισμοὶ πρόσκαιροι καὶ ἄλλοι.”

An English translation:

- “In fact, it is said that a certain man of the Getae, Zalmoxis by name, had been a slave to Pythagoras, and had learned some things about the heavenly bodies from him,(73) as also certain other things from the Egyptians, for in his wanderings he had gone even as far as Egypt; and when he came on back to his home-land he was eagerly courted by the rulers and the people of the tribe, because he could make predictions from the celestial signs; and at last he persuaded the king to take him as a partner in the government, on the ground that he was competent to report the will of the gods; and although at the outset he was only made a priest of the god who was most honoured in their country, [298] yet afterwards he was even addressed as [p. 187] god, and having taken possession of a certain cavernous place that was inaccessible to anyone else he spent his life there, only rarely meeting with any people outside except the king and his own attendants; and the king cooperated with him, because he saw that the people paid much more attention to himself than before, in the belief that the decrees which he promulgated were in accordance with the counsel of the gods. This custom persisted even down to our own time, because some man of that character was always to be found, who, though in fact only a counsellor to the king, was called god among the Getae. And the

people took up the notion that the mountain⁽⁷⁴⁾ was sacred and they so call it, but its name is Cogaeonum,⁽⁷⁵⁾ like that of the river which flows past it. So, too, at the time when Byrebistas,⁽⁷⁶⁾ against whom already⁽⁷⁷⁾ the Deified Caesar had prepared to make an expedition, was reigning over the Getae, the office in question was held by Decaeneus, and somehow or other the Pythagorean doctrine of abstention from eating any living thing still survived as taught by Zalmoxis.”²⁷

About this late occurrence, Eliade wrote: “At the beginning of the Christian era Strabo (*Geography* 7.3.5) provides a new version of the myth of Zalmoxis, chiefly drawing on the documentation collected by Posidonius (ca. 135 - ca. 50 B.C.). According to this, Zalmoxis was Pythagoras’ slave; however, it was not the doctrine of immortality that he learned from his master but “certain things about the heavenly bodies,” that is, the art of predicting future events in accordance with celestial signs. To this Strabo adds a journey to Egypt, supremely the land of magic. It is by virtue of his astronomical knowledge and his magical and prophetic powers that Zalmoxis persuaded the king to associate him with the government. High priest and prophet of “the most honored god in their country,” Zalmoxis retired to a cave at the summit of the sacred mountain Kogaionon, where he received no one but the king and his own servants, and later he “was called a god.” Strabo adds that “when Boerebista ruled over the Getae, this office was held by Decaeneus,” and that “in one way or another, the Pythagorean command to abstain from eating living beings still existed as it had been taught by Zalmoxis.” [91] // In the new stage of Geto-Dacian religion concerning which we are informed by Posidonius and Strabo, the character of Zalmoxis proves to be decidedly modified. First of all, there is the identification of the god Zalmoxis with his high priest, who ends by being deified under the same name. What is more, there is no reference to a cult with a structure resembling that of the Mysteries, such as Herodotus presented. In short, the cult of Zalmoxis is dominated by a high priest who lives alone at the top of a mountain, though being at the same time the king’s associate and chief councilor; and this cult is “Pythagorean” because it excludes flesh food. We do not know to what extent the initiatory and eschatological structure of the “Mystery” of Zalmoxis survived in Strabo’s time. But the ancient authors speak of certain hermits and holy men, and it is

²⁷ Strabo, 1924, 185-187. See

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Strabo/7C*.html.

possible that these “specialists in the sacred” carried on the “Mystery” tradition of the cult of Zalmoxis. [92]²⁸

6. Iamblichus of Chalcis

The story of *Zámolxis* as a slave of *Pythagoras* being well known, since Herodotus, the Getian religious figure appears as such in *De vita Pythagorica* of *Iamblichus* of Chalcis (c. 283-333 AD). His first mention (23: 104) is a passing one, among other disciples of *Pythagoras*. We find the more meaningful passage (30: 173) in a further chapter:²⁹

XXX (173)... Ζαμόλξις γὰρ Θρᾷξ ὢν καὶ Πυθαγόρου δοῦλος γενόμενος καὶ τῶν λόγων τοῦ Πυθαγόρου διακούσας, ἀφεθείς ἐλεύθερος καὶ παραγενόμενος πρὸς τοὺς Γέτας, τοὺς τε νόμους αὐτοῖς ἐθήκε, καθάπερ καὶ ἐν ἀρχῇ δεδηλώκαμεν, καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἀνδρείαν τοὺς πολίτας παρεκάλεσε, τὴν ψυχὴν ἀθάνατον εἶναι πείσας· ἔτι καὶ νῦν οἱ Γαλάται πάντες καὶ οἱ Τράλλεις καὶ οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν βαρβάρων τοὺς αὐτῶν υἱοὺς πείθουσιν, ὥς οὐκ ἔστι φοβηθῆναι τὴν ψυχὴν, ἀλλὰ διαμένειν τῶν ἀποθανόντων, καὶ ὅτι τὸν θάνατον οὐ φοβητέον, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τοὺς κινδύνους εὐρώστως ἐκτέον. καὶ ταῦτα παιδεύσας τοὺς Γέτας καὶ γράψας αὐτοῖς τοὺς νόμους μέγιστος τῶν θεῶν ἔστι παρ' αὐτοῖς.

An English translation:

“Zamolxis, being Thracian in origin, a former slave and disciple of Pythagoras, after he was freed, he returned to the Getians, he established laws for them, as I said before, and urged his countrymen to courage, convincing them that the soul is immortal. Even now, all the Galatians and the Tralles,

²⁸ Mircea Eliade, 1982, ch. 21, & 179. [Note 91: In another passage (7. 3. 11), in which he gives an account of the career of Boerebista (70–44), Strabo describes Decaeneus as “a magician (*goēs*), a man who not only had traveled in Egypt but also had thoroughly learned certain signs through which he claimed to know the divine will; and in a short time he had come to be considered a god.” // Note 92: See *Zalmoxis*, pp. 61 ff. Another detail seems equally important for Strabo: that Zalmoxis—like Decaeneus more recently—had managed to have so prodigious a career above all because of his astronomical and mantic knowledge. In the sixth century of our era, but relying on earlier sources, Jordanes described in extravagant terms the Dacian priests’ interest in astronomy and the natural sciences (*Getica* 11. 69–71). The insistence on knowledge of the heavenly bodies may reflect correct information. Indeed, the temples of Sarmizegetuza and Costești, whose urano-solar symbolism is obvious, seem to have a calendrical function. See Hadrian Daicoviciu, “Il Tempio-Calendario dacico di Sarmizegetuza” and also his *Dacii*, pp. 194 ff., 210 ff.]

²⁹ Iamblichus, *De vita Pythagorica*, XXX (173), in Mihăescu et alii, 1970, 18-19. Cf. Iamblichi, 1937, 1975.

and many of the barbarians teach their children that the soul is indestructible, but it continues to exist after the death; and that the death isn't fiercesome, but they should mightily confront the inflictions. And because he taught those the Getians and he wrote their laws, he is considered by them as the greatest among the gods."

And a Romanian translation:³⁰

XXX (173). . . Căci Zamolxis, de origine trac, fost sclav și discipol al lui Pitagora, după ce a fost eliberat s-a întors la geți, le-a întocmit legile cum am arătat la început și a îndemnat la bărbăție pe concetățenii săi, convingându-i că sufletul este nemuritor. Chiar și acum galatii toți și tralii și mulți dintre barbari învață pe copiii lor că nu este cu putință ca sufletul să piară, ci că el continuă să existe; și că nu trebuie să se teamă de moarte, ci să înfrunte cu vitejie primejdiile. Și pentru că a învățat pe geți aceste lucruri și le-a scris legile este socotit la ei drept cel mai mare dintre zei¹.

Discussions

1. Zalmoxis and Pythagoras

F. W. Sturz expressed his doubts about the history of Zalmoxis as a slave of Pythagoras:³¹

Cur totum locum adscripserim, quisque intelliget
e §. 5. Eadem historia extat ap. *Strabon*, 7, p. 298.
A. et similem de Pythagora. ex *Hermippo* narrat
Diogenes Laert. 8, 41. et *Schol. Sophocl.* ad *Electr.*
62. quam tamen recte fictam putat *Cel. Meiners in*
Gesch. der Wissenschaften. Th. I. p. 239. ut ipse
Herodotus l. 1. dubitare se ostendit de Zamolxidis
historia, quem Pythagora putat antiquiorem fuisse.
Ceterum nomen huius legislatoris rectius *Zalmoxis*
scribi, demonstrarunt viri docti multi, inprimis e
loco *Porphirii* in vita Pythag. c. 14. vbi nominis
origo deducitur ex vocabulo *ζαλμός*, quo Thracæ
appellabant pellem ursinam, qualis Zalmoxidi re-
cens natæ injecta fuisse dicitur. Alii tamen aliter.
vid. quos laudat *Cel. Chr. Gottl. Richter* in speci-
mine animadversionum de veterib. legum latorib.
ad *Fabric. biblioth. græc.* (Lips. 1786. 4.) p.
XXIII. sq.

³⁰ Mihăescu et alii, 1970, 18-19.

³¹ F. W. Sturz, in *Hellanici Lesbii*, 1787, 65.

Herodotus already noted that the story about Zálmoxis as a slave of Pythagoras was an unreliable legend, and added his opinion, about Zálmoxis as a (much) earlier thinker than Pythagoras: “I think that he lived many years before Pythagoras” (see IV, 96, above). In fact, the doubts were already in Herodotus,³² as Sturz mentions, but other ancient authors skip it. It is in the best interest of the Greek pride and propaganda that the story stays that way, even if Herodotus himself made a very convincing critique of such a story as he heard it from the Greeks in the cities at the western shore of Pontus Euxinus (Black Sea). “Pride in Greek culture and Greek cleverness are obvious in the account the colonists gave to Herodotus. They are far above Thracian barbarism; A slave among Greeks can be a god among Thracians and make them believe anything he chooses.”³³ About Zálmoxis as a supposed former slave of Pythagoras, as Pârvan concluded, “The entire story shows a Greek rationalist naivety.”³⁴

However, Photios, Suidas, and *Etymologicum Magnum* (see above) made clear that Herodotus’ final opinion, that **Zálmoxis** lived many years before Pythagoras, is the reliable one. These sources also allude to some Thracian population that have had similar beliefs in the immortality with Zalmoxianism, the **Térizoi** and the **Króbzyoi**, as well as they believe that Zálmoxis “will return”, making “sacrifices and feasts as the dead will return”.

We know also that Pythagoras and his followers took an important influence with respect to the spiritual knowledge from the Orphism, a mystery doctrine with a clearly Thracian origin: “About the dependence of the Getian religious teaching on the Pythagoreic one, an honest Greek overthrow the issue, saying, about 200 AD, that Pythagoras was that *Θρακῶν δόξας μιμούμενος* [who imitated the teachings of the Thracians] (Hermippus Callimachius, FHG, III, 41) – which, again, is nothing but true, because the Orphism had, of course, Thracian roots, and the Pythagorism was deeply influenced by the Orphic doctrine. But wherever the Greek saw a too strong underlining of the life after death, he gave an inspirational role to the Egyptian: for the Greek Pythagoras, as well as for the barbarians Zalmoxis and Decaeneus.”³⁵

³² Cf., as well, Constantiniu, 1999, 28.

³³ Burkert, 1972, 157. Cf. Alexandrescu, *Călătoriile lui Herodot în Marea Neagră*, 1978, 27-34.

³⁴ Pârvan, 1982 (pages: 1982 edition, followed by princeps edition in parantheses), 92 (157).

³⁵ Pârvan, 1982, 93 (159).

The Orphism had an important contribution to the beliefs about the immortality of the soul, the life after death etc.³⁶ Therefore, the relationship between the Pythagorism and the Zalmoxianism is quite the opposite from what the Greek legends told. Pythagoras and his followers acquired a big deal of information from the Thracian spiritual doctrines, mainly from the Orphism, and the initiator of the *Zalmoxianism*, who would have been an ancient reformer of such beliefs, maybe a precursor of the *Hyperborean Abaris*.³⁷ While “The Getians in the time of Herodotus didn’t speak about Pythagoras, but the Greeks, not understanding them, compared their cult with Pythagoras.”³⁸ As shown by K. Meuli, “The legends of Pythagoras and Empedocles, and the very idea of a soul was formed under this influence”,³⁹ of the north-pontic ‘Scythian’ (in a broad trans-ethnic sense) shamanism.⁴⁰ There is no surprise that some authors (W. K. C. Guthrie, E. R. Dodds, W. Burkert) saw a link between the shamanism and *Zálmoxis*, while Eliade deciphered in his connection with the retreat in the cave and a ritually induced immortality a complex Mystery religion.⁴¹

2. Immortality, *Zálmoxis* and *Gebelézis*

Pârvan’s opinion about the difference between the Geto-Dacian and the Thracian religion, implying the *henotheistic* or even *monotheistic* superiority of the first, has, no doubt, an obvious subjective mark, as Lucian Blaga noticed. However, the emphasis of Pârvan cannot be so easily dismissed.

³⁶ Eliade, 1982, ch. 22, & 180-184.

³⁷ Grec, 2013, 289. See <http://www.upm.ro/ldmd/?pag=LDMD-01/vol01-Lit>; <http://www.upm.ro/ldmd/LDMD-01/Lit/Lit%2001%2035.pdf>.

³⁸ Alexandru Vulpe, in Ciprian Plăiașu, *Interviu cu Alexandru Vulpe, directorul Institutului de Arheologie „Vasile Pârvan”*, www.historia.ro: “Există un comportament religios al dacilor, comparat pe de o parte de Flavius Iosephus cu cel al esenienienilor și, pe de altă parte, de Herodot cu cultul pitagoreic. Geții din vremea lui Herodot nu vorbeau de Pitagora, dar grecii, neînțelegându-i, au comparat cultul lor cu Pitagora.” (http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv_web/general/articol/sintagma-str-mo-ii-no-tri-daci-ar-trebuie-discutat). Cf. Burkert, 1972, 158. Berzovan, 2009.

³⁹ Alexandrescu, *Zálmoxis și cercetările lui Mircea Eliade*, 1978, 55: “Legende despre Pitagora și Empedacle, și ideea însăși de suflet s-au format sub acțiunea acestei influențe.”

⁴⁰ See also Eliade, 1975.

⁴¹ Alexandrescu, *Zálmoxis și cercetările lui Mircea Eliade*, 1978, 56.

He had a point,⁴² for there can be seen a clear difference between the Dacian and the south Thracian religion. We could say, along with Constantiniu, that the supreme Dacian god “became from a chthonian (underground) divinity an uuranian-solar one, being at the top of a very small pantheon”.⁴³ Taking also to account the social stratification of the Dacian society and the importance of its religious cast, we may suppose that the perception was more *monotheistic* or *henotheistic* on the higher steps of that society, against a more lax attitude towards other divinities on the lower steps. We cannot dismiss that the old Thraco-Dacian deities continued to be worshiped, in a smaller measure, north of Danube, but we cannot either deny the singular character of the Dacian religion, due to its generalized abstract, puritan and aniconic form.⁴⁴ Pârvan pointed out the striking *celestial (uranian)* features of *Zálmoxis*, deriving also from the passage of Herodotus, cited above: “Moreover when there is thunder and lightning these same Thracians shoot arrows skyward as a threat to the god, believing in no other god but their own” (VI, 94). The clear *uranian* attributes of *Zálmoxis* cannot just be dismissed, either if we would interpret the passage in a negative (against *Zálmoxis*) or positive interpretation (aiding him against the negative spirits in the clouds).⁴⁵ As Pârvan noticed, the Dacians did not keep the orgiastic dionysian cult, as their Thracian brothers at the south of Danube did.⁴⁶ And opposed to the vast majority of the world religions, which are full with representations of gods, the Dacian religion is so scarced in such representations as the Judaism, or even more, because to them God demanded they sculpt and embroider cherubim (Exodus 26:1 sqq.; 36: 1, 8, 35; 37, 1-9; 1 Kings 6:23-29; 7, 27-30; 8, 7-11).

⁴² Alexandrescu, *Zalmoxis și cercetările lui Mircea Eliade*, 1978, 51-52: “Religia geto-dacilor echivalează în interpretarea lui Vasile Pârvan cu un fel de proiecție subiectivă a unui suflet preocupat de cele moi sublimе probleme” [L. Blaga]. Pârvan vedea o deosebire structurală a religiei getodace în raport cu aceea o tracilor din Sud. Aceștia din urmă părăsiseră structura indo-europeană originară a credințelor lor de caracter ceresc (uranian), atunci când, ajungând în contact cu civilizația mediteraneană, au acceptat străvechi culte ale fecundității de caracter “chthonian” (de la cuvântul grec *chthōn* “pământ”), de origină preindo-europeană. Vasile Pârvan credea de asemenea că, spre deosebire de tracii din Sud. Geții nu erau politeiști, ci “henoteiști”: “Ca zeu atotcuprinzător al cerului, Zalmoxis, ca și Zeus, este stăpînul fulgerului ... Nu cu noiștem la geți nici zei locali și nici zeițe, ca la tracii. Nu există decît un singur zeu”.

⁴³ Constantiniu, 1999, 28.

⁴⁴ Paliga, 2007, 326-327.

⁴⁵ Alexandrescu, *Zalmoxis și cercetările lui Mircea Eliade*, 1978, 54.

⁴⁶ Pârvan, 1982, 93 (158-159).

The Dacian religion manifested itself, materially, in the monumental sacred area and sanctuary of Sarmizegetusa, in the funerary rites with cremation and in some ritual pits also involving cremation.⁴⁷ As the idols were accidental in Judaism, blamed and banished by the prophets, so were the idol-like artifacts on the Dacian territory, also accidental and not proper to the religious mainstream. And this mainstream was clearly imposed from above, while the scarce “heretic” slips to religious material symbolism were not representative. Such extreme aniconism exceeded even the Jewish practice of avoiding idolatry.

This extreme aniconic religious behavior of the Dacians was clearly connected with specific features, also singular, in their theology. This material evidence of a religious reform imposed from above, which led to the aniconic feature of their religion, is connected with the literary echo in *Zálmoxis*, about the Dacian reform in religion, aiming the immortality.

On this ground, it is not surprising that Herodotus could state (in IV, 94) that the Getians were those Thracians “believing in no other god but their own”, which was “*Zálmoxis, or Gebelézis*”. Following the reforms that occurred in the Dacian religion, that they put *almost* all the divine into one god, *Zálmoxis*, named *Gebelézis*, as well, to which they overlapped the figure of some religious reformer. On one hand, how much of a real religious reformer we find in his mythological projection is hard to say. On the other hand, to answer to the question if *Zálmoxis* was a real person or not is, up to me, of little importance, for at least two considerations. First, the literary echoes and the archaeological witnesses converge to indicate us that a significant and irreversible religious reform took place in the Dacian realm before the life of Herodotus (5th century BC) and before Pythagoras (6th century BC). Secondly, the saying “there is no smoke without a fire” is always a correct law in history and in the history of religions, in particular. A huge event, or an important religious reform, as the appearance of the Mosaic or the Zamolxian religions, and later the Christianity, does not “just happen”, by mere *popular* processing of the older belief systems. On the contrary, such changes have an important degree of un-popularity. This is a clear proof that such developments were started by one / some personalities (Moses / Aaron and the priests; *Zálmoxis* / his priests; Jesus Christ / his Apostles), and they got support and guidance *from above*, from an instituted perene priesthood

⁴⁷ Cf. Berzovan et alii, 2014, 11-32.

(prophets, wonder makers, priests), sometimes supported even by the state (Jewish Kingdom, Dacian Kingdom, Roman Empire after Constantine etc.). Regarding the personality that started the reform, it is, again, clear that one must have had the leadership. The figure of Jesus Christ is clear in this respect for the historians, but if we look to others, like Moses, or Zámolxis, or Buddha, echoes of the work of the religious reformers also marked the history.

The polarization of the religious beliefs between feminine and masculine is present in human even from the Neolithic, and documented in symbols like “The Great Mother” and “The Bull”, spread throughout Europe, and also in the Carpathian-Danubian area.⁴⁸ The Bronze Age witnesses some profound changes, among which the increase of the masculine contribution in leadership, a clearer hierarchical organization, the specialization of different occupation, and the importance of the organized army. On the spiritual level, to the cults of fertility, inherited from the Neolithic, they are added also chthonian practices charged with sexual symbolism, connected with mining and metallurgy.⁴⁹ Preserving and enriching the inherited chthonian cult, the Dacian population also developed a solar-uranian cult, which “is well documented in the first Iron Age, by little wheels or fragments of votive wagons of clay or by votive wagons of bronze, as the One of Orăștie (...). The waterbirds, as the swan, also represents one of the solar symbols. Besides *magic* (...), it appears that in the end of the first Iron Age they begin to crystalize the two fundamental components of the religion of the Geto-Dacians, which are the *uranian-solar* and the *chthonian*, aspect that results from a report of Herodotus (*Histories*, IV, 94).”⁵⁰ The portrait of Zálmoxis in Herodotus oscillated from a real person (reformer) to that of a daimon and that of a supreme god.⁵¹

Zálmoxis was a prominent figure of the religious beliefs and practices of the Getians (*Getae*), overlapped on a religious reformer, specially connected with their beliefs in immortality. This is clearly revealed in the metaphor of the resurrection, which has, apparently, a real *mis en scene*, by the Zálmoxis himself, who descended in his cave residence for three years.

M. Bărbulescu, for instance, thinks that *Zálmoxis* was at first a religious reformer (to whom the Dacians might owe the doctrine of

⁴⁸ Pop et alii, 2003, 35.

⁴⁹ Pop et alii, 40-50.

⁵⁰ Pop et alii, 66.

⁵¹ Pop et alii, 119.

immortality and the sacrificial rituals) and a priest “of the supreme god of the Dacians (Gebeleizis or Nebeleizis?), who was afterwards deified or overlapped (confused) on the great god”.⁵² As I shall gradually argument below, I think that the deeds and the legendary figure of a religious reformer did overlap on the icon of the supreme god, but the name of the supreme god, not only as *Gebeléizis*, but also as *Zálmoxis*, is a lot older, while the other name, *Zálmoxis* appeared later.

For the term ἀθανατίζοντας, it is clear the reference to the immortality, but, according to some scholars, it also sends to the rituals through which the Getae thought they reach immortality. The same verb appears in Plato, strengthened with the prefix *ap-*: “The verb ἀθανατίζειν appears for the first time in Herodotus, in the passage with the Getians (IV, 93, 94): “the Getians that live in the belief of the immortality” [...]. Plato seems to use the verb in a similar context, under the influence of Herodotus. Although strengthening it with the prefix ἀπ-, he gave an active character to the verb.”⁵³

Eliade used the term “immortalization”, pleading for a mystery (and not shamanic) cult of *Zálmoxis*.⁵⁴ Thus, the Greek word should be understood as the action of becoming immortal through ritual practice.

In the light of the text in Plato, we see that a mystery cult of *Zálmoxis* does not exclude shamanic practices. Although the philosophy of the immortality and the actually staged metaphor with the descending into the cave gives a right to Eliade to consider a clear mystery ritual, without accepting the interpretation of *Zálmoxis* as a shaman: “Bien que plusieurs auteurs aient reconnu en *Zálmoxis* un «chaman» (1), nous ne voyons aucune raison pour accepter cette interprétation. La députation d'un messenger » à *Zálmoxis*, qui avait lieu tous les quatre ans (Hérodote, IV, 94), aussi bien que la «demeure souterraine» où il disparut et vécut trois ans, pour reparaltre ensuite et démontrer aux Gètes l'immortalité de l'homme (*ibid.*, 95), n'ont rien de chamanique.”⁵⁵

⁵² Bărbulescu, 1998, 37.

⁵³ Simina Noica, Note 22, in Platon, 1967, 215: “Verbul ἀθανατίζειν apare pentru prima oară la Herodot în excursul cu geții (IV, 93, 94): “geții care trăiesc în credința nemuririi”, trad. M. Nasta, din vol. *Proză istorică greacă*, 1970, 92. Platon pare să folosească verbul, într-un context asemănător, sub influența lui Herodot. Întărindu-l însă, prin prefixul ἀπ-, el dă verbului un caracter activ.”

⁵⁴ Eliade, 1982, ch. 21 (& 178, 179), ch. 22 (& 180-184). Eliade; Culianu, 1995, & 32, 265-268.

⁵⁵ Eliade, 1975, 307.

However, Eliade admitted the obvious persistence of the shamanism among the (southern) Thracians, as well as at the Zalmoxian Dacians, especially, the means mentioned by the documents being the use of the hallucinogen properties of the smoke of hemp: “Un seul élément semble indiquer l'existence d'un chamanisme gète: c'est l'information de Strabon (VII, 3, 3; C, 296) sur les *kapnobdtai* mysiens, nom que l'on a traduit (2) par «ceux qui marchent dans les nuées», par analogie avec les *áerobátes* d'Aristophane (*Les Nuées*, v. 225, 1503), mais qu'il faut traduire par «ceux qui marchent dans la fume» (3). Il s'agit vraisemblablement de la fumée de chanvre, moyen rudimentaire d'extase connu aussi bien des Thraces (4) que des Scythes. Les *kapnobátai* seraient des danseurs et des sorciers gètes ayant utilisé la fumée de chanvre pour les transes extatiques.”⁵⁶

After admitting “only one” shamanic element in the Geto-Dacian practices, Eliade, in his scientific scrupulosity is forced to give others, too, mainly the ascendance on a stair to Heavens: “Il est certain que d'autres éléments «chamaniques» persistaient dans la religion thrace, mais ce n'est pas toujours facile de les identifier. Citons toutefois un exemple qui prouve l'existence de l'idéologie et du rituel de l'ascension céleste par le truchement d'un escalier. D'après Polyaeus (*Stratagematon*, VII, 22), Kosingas, prêtre roi des Kebrenoi et des Sykaiboai (tribus thraces), menaçait ses sujets de monter chez la déesse Héra par une échelle de bois pour porter plainte à la déesse contre leur conduite. Or, comme nous l'avons déjà vu plusieurs fois, l'ascension symbolique au Ciel par un escalier est typiquement chamanique. Le symbolisme de l'escalier, nous le montrerons plus tard, est attesté également dan, d'autres religions du Proche-Orient antique et de la Méditerranée.”⁵⁷

Further analyses show that the mystery cult of Zamolxis co-existed with shamanic practices. Thus, although the Zalmoxianism is based, originally, on a mystery cult, it grew to embrace also shamanic practices. The religious rituals concerning the immortality are connected with a “total medicine”, as reflected in Plato: “There is a certain tradition concerning an *iatros* Zalmoxis. Plato, however, transmitted here some very valuable details, showing how the Dacian Zalmoxian cult was perceived through his eyes. He reveals both the importance granted to the soul by Zalmoxis, who is god, king and healer in the same time, and the functional relationship between the health, preserved a “total method” (in which the soul plays the decisive role), and the obtaining of

⁵⁶ Eliade, 1975, 307.

⁵⁷ Eliade, 1975, 307.

the immortality. These details confirm and also complete the witnesses of Herodotus (Histories, IV, 93-95).⁵⁸

Plato appealed to *Zálmoxis* to support the virtue of *sophrosyne*, which comprises in fact more qualities, the more important being temperance, wisdom and the psychological equilibrium. Obviously Plato saw in *Zalmoxis* links with his master, Socrates, even in biography, and also as a means of further revealing his philosophical principles: “Practicing an almost philosophical version of the therapy, which aims at the whole, *Zalmoxis* sees in *sophrosyne* (as Socrates) a form of healing through the care for the mastering part in it [the soul]. It is also interesting that another similarity with Socrates, which is put into value by B. Witteshowing that, just as *Zalmoxis* returned from the ground, from his simulated grave, to bring wisdom to the Thraco-Getians, the same Socrates came from Potideea, from the battlefield, to educate the Athenians.”⁵⁹

The parallel with the mystery cult given to the Thracian king, priest, “and god” *Rhesos* (in Eurypides), as pointed out by Simina Noica, shows us that both mystery cult and shamanism are, however, possible,⁶⁰ and a personality, who’s mythical aura grew in time, as *Zálmoxis*, could, more than anyone, catalyze both these directions. If the mystery cult was the superior form which sustained the superior theology and philosophy of the immortality, the shamanism combined with the psychotropic and naturist medicine came to support the believers on their worldly path towards the

⁵⁸ Simina Noica, Note 21, in Platon, 1967, 215: “Există o anumită tradiție privind un *Zalmoxis iatros*. Platon însă comunică aici câteva detalii de mare valoare. El arată atât importanța acordată sufletului de către *Zalmoxis*, care e deopotrivă zeu, rege și terapeut, cât și relația funcțională între sănătatea conservată printr-o „metodă totală” (în care sufletul joacă rolul decisiv) și obținerea nemuririi (see Eliade, 1970, 62). Aceste detalii confirmă și întregesc totodată mărturiile lui Herodot (Istorie, IV, cap. 93-95).”

⁵⁹ “Profesând o teorie aproape filosofică a terapeuticii care se îndreaptă asupra Intregului, *Zalmoxis* vede în *sophrosyne* (ca și Socrate) o formă de însănătoșire prin îngrijirea părții stăpânitoare din el. E interesantă și o altă apropiere cu Socrate pe care o pune în valoare B. Witte, arătând că, după cum *Zalmoxis* s-a întors din pământ din mormântul lui simulat ca să aducă înțelepciune traco-geților, la fel Socrate vine de la Potideea din câmpul morții, ca să-i educe pe atenieni.” Eliade, 1970, 216 (Note 27).

⁶⁰ Eliade, 1970, 216, Note 23: “*Zalmoxis* is, in the same time, god and king. This new element, introduced by Plato, is in fact attested in the Thracian tradition: *Rhesos*, king and priest, was worshiped as a god in the mysteries of the initiated. The verses 970-973 in the play *Rhesos* of Eurypides were interpreted by some researchers as referring to *Zalmoxis* (cf. Eliade, 1970, 63).”

sought immortality. The Romanian folklore, preserving *The Dance of the Bear*, *The She-Goat rituals*, and other rituals with masks, to which I will refer again below, are projections of the old Dacian shamanic practices, connected, as we shall see, with the names given to Zalmoxis.

*Gebelëizis*⁶¹ appeared only in Herodotus IV, 94, 1, in the ancient literature, as a source. I think that Eliade pertinently differentiated him of Zalmoxis. *Gebelëizis* was as a celestial god of thunder, while *Zalmoxis* a god overlapped on a religious reformer, to the human having been transferred the image of a god associated with the mysteries of the “immortalization” (altogether with the anecdote about the underground dwelling) that he taught to the Daco-Getian people.⁶²

Eliade also mentioned the efforts of some scholars to try to understand the etymology and the original context of *Gebeleizis* in Thraco-Getian religion: “Tomaschek had already recognized in this divine name a parallel to the Thracian god Zbelsurdos, Zbeltiurdos [“Die alten Thraker,” p. 62]. Like Zbelsurdos, *Gebeleizis* would be a storm god or, rather, an ancient celestial god, if we follow Walde-Pokorny and Dečev, who derive his name from the Indo-European (= IE) root **guer*, “to shine.” [A. Walde and J. Pokorny, *Vergleichendes Wörterbuch der indogermanischen Sprachen*, vol. 1, p. 643; D. Dečev, *Charakteristik der thrakischen Sprache*, pp. 73, 81. But see also C. Poghirc, “Considérations philologiques et linguistiques sur *Gebeleizis*”, p. 359.] // Despite Herodotus’ testimony (expressed, it is true, with astonishing carelessness, both grammatically and stylistically), it is difficult to regard Zalmoxis and *Gebeleizis* as one and the same god. Their structures are different, their cults are not at all alike. As we shall see further on, Zalmoxis has none of the characteristics of a storm god. As for the shooting of arrows, we may wonder if Herodotus had rightly grasped the meaning of the ritual. In all probability, it was not the god (*Gebeleizis*) who was threatened but the demonic powers manifested in the clouds. In other words, it was a positive cult act: it imitated, and indirectly helped, the god of lightning by shooting arrows at the demons of darkness. However this may be, we must resign ourselves: we cannot reconstruct the function and “history” of *Gebeleizis* on the basis of a single document. The fact that *Gebeleizis* is not mentioned again after Herodotus does not necessarily imply his disappearance from the cult. We can

⁶¹ For the forms *Beleizis*, *Beleixis*, *Zbeltiurdos* etc. (out of our present subject), see Paliga, 2007, 319, 322-323.

⁶² Cf. Daicoviciu, 1969, 18-21.

imagine either his coalescence with another divinity or his survival under a different name.”⁶³ Holding the information from Eliade, we go back to our subject, because a discussion about *Gebelézis* would be a subject for another paper.

3. Zálmoxis

The theonym appears as: "Der Name des Hauptgottes bei den Geten und Dakern *Zalmoxis* ist belegt unter den Formen: *Zálμοξεις*, Gen. *Ζαλμόξιδος* (Var. *ζάμολξις*, Plat., 427 - 347 v. Chr.; Diodor, 1. Jh v. Chr.; Porph., 3. Jh n. Chr.; Hesych.), *Zalmoxen* (Akk., Iord.), *παρά Σάλμοξιν δαίμονα* (Hdt.), *Ζάμολξιν* (Strab.) u. a. Nach Kretschmer (1935, 45) ist die Ausgangsform *Ζαμολ-ξις* 'König, Herr der Menschen', mit Vorderglied zu phryg. *ζεμελω-* und Hinterglied *-ξις* zu awest. *xšayas*. Detschew (1957, 175) faßt den Namen ebenfalls als Kompositum auf, indem er den ersten Teil mit der Glosse *ζαλμός* 'Fell' gleichsetzt und den zweiten Teil zu awest. *xšaya-* 'Herrscher, König' stellt. Als Synonym erscheint einmal bei Herodot (IV 94) *Γεβελείζις*, Akk. *Γεβελείζιν*, Var. *Βελείζιν* in drei Manuskripten. Nach Poghirc (1974b, 357 - 360) dürfte die ursprüngliche Form **Nebeleizis* gelautet haben. (...)“⁶⁴

Sálmoxis is the first form that appeared in Herodotus.⁶⁵ A beginning of the theonym in *s* is the most likely representing the oldest or the real form. Dealing with the problem of the alternation *s* / *z* in Thracian, Dimitrov came to these appreciations: "In Indo-European there is originally no /*z*/, and thus this phoneme is an allophone of the original /*s*/. (...) In the categories of Thracian sounds, the interrelationships between various classes have been proposed and later perceived as theoretical entities that may change according to «sound laws» (...); the shift of *s*>*z* is a later development or a feature that is not marked by any specific conditions or the shift was conditioned according to its word-initial or intervocalic position. It is true that the intervocalic *S* normally changes to *Z*, however in our example we observe the same opposition between /*s*/ and /*z*/. If we take its chronology into consideration, *S* and *Z* are synchronic (as they appear in our Evidence) and therefore this opposition is irrelevant as to their morphophonemic involvement. There is a piece missing in this easy-to-solve puzzle. And it is namely that we are not

⁶³ Eliade, 1982, ch. 21, & 179.

⁶⁴ Duridanov, 1995, 836. Cf. id., 1985, 14. Id. 1969, 85.

⁶⁵ Dana, 2008, 31.

dealing with sounds but with ‘unreal sounds’ or abstractions. (...) We now may come to the subsequent conclusion: First, there is no /z/ in Thracian as a continuant of PIE */z/ as the latter simply does not exist. Second, /z/ in synchrony is just an allophone, a variant of the phoneme /s/.⁶⁶

F. W. Sturz, above (Discussions, 1), quoted the etymology for ζάλμος from *Vita Pythagoras* of Porphyros, although he used the spelling *Zámolxis* in his edition. According to *Vita Pythag.* c. 14, ζάλμος would mean “bear skin”, the material in which the recently born *Zálmoxis* was swaddled. I think it’s worth mentioning the shamanic practice (very probable with a totemic connotation) of wearing *bear masks* and fur (or of other animals), as traditional costumes among other pre-Christian ones, preserved in the Romanian folklore. The costume appears, for instance in the rich Romanian Christmas – New Year folklore tradition: *Capra* (*The She-Goat*), *Jocul Ursului* (*The Dance of the Bear*) etc. As a side note: the name and later complex theological concept of ‘*persona*’ comes from the Etruscan concept of the (ritual) *mask* (*phersu*) that gives to one a symbolic (shamanic, magic) *role*.⁶⁷

The Romanian carol traditions emerged from a very intricate synergy between the pre-Christian and Christian traditions. Among these traditions there is the costume of the carols with masks, comprising *Ursul* (*The Bear*) or *Jocul Ursului* (*The Dance of / with the Bear*) and *Capra* (*The Dance of the She-Goat* or *of the Deer*). These ritual dances merged with the complex Romanian carol traditions, which take place between Christmas (Winter Solstice) and the Baptism of the Lord (after the New Year). These ritual dances with masks involve a lot of magic (by resemblance, by contact etc.), showing their shamanic origins. The way the folklorists recorded these traditions show a clear intersection of them with our subject. For instance, at O. Bîrlea: “An ancient, primaeval form, of welcoming the New Year is, with no doubt, the cortege with animal mask. This time, the animal represented by the mask is a noumenal being, with sacred attributes, and, more than anything, with special efficiency in promoting the vegetation, the health, and the well being in general. The representations connected to this animal come from the

⁶⁶ Dimitrov, 2010, 4-6.

⁶⁷ Cf. Penney, 2009, (pp. 88-94), 92. The Etruscan *phersu* is considered a borrowing from the Greek πρόσωπον. Although, I would pay attention to forms like IE *per-1 (to spray, splash) > *preus* > Lithuanian *prūsnos*, Latvian *prusnas* (lips, mouth), Old Prusian Acc. Sg. *prusnan* (face) – Julius Pokorny, Band 3, 1959, 809-810.

prehistorical treasure, which was much anterior to the anthropomorphic gods. By evolution, some of those were replaced in festive sacrifices by some animal substitutes, usually that under which stood the god itself before his partial or complete anthropomorphization. (...) It was only the sacrifice of the animal that lent to it [to the god, n.n.] new powers, it reactivated the entire nature, and the mankind was saved by the spectrum of its destruction.”⁶⁸ The *Dance of the Bear*, attested only on Moldavia (in the Sub-Carpathian hills), “points to a relic from an ancient cult of the bear, which was still present in the past century at some Siberian populations in the Extreme Orient. Traces of this cult are attested among our people [Romanians, n.n.] through the celebration of the *Day of the Bear* – usually the 1st of August – kept with greater strictness in the Sub-Carpathian villages. (...) The circumstances that this costume was solely attested in Moldavia, thus in the area less exposed to Romanization, would indicate a Thraco-Dacian origin, with obvious prehistoric roots. According to some interpretations, Zalmoxis himself was not initially anything else than an ursuline [bear-like, n.n.] divinity, later evolving to the forms attested by Herodotus”⁶⁹ etc.

However, another *Day or Celebration of the Bear* is mentioned in the entire Romanian space, on another date, at Candlemas (2nd of February, “Întâmpinarea Domnului”). Folk beliefs say that in this day the bear interrupts his hibernation, gets out of his den (*vizuină*, *bârlog* – v. supra), and dances. His behavior in this day fortells the length of the winter (with different and even opposite interpretation in the local costumes).⁷⁰ Not by mere coincidence, around the Candlemas there is the folk celebration “(Sf) Martinii de iarnă”, three days for a so called St. Martin – in reality a fantastic character charged with mythico-magical meaning. The first of these “Martins” is in the day of St. Tryphon, in the eve of the Candlemas, the second is on Candlemas, and the third in the next day, of St. Simon. This celebration has a pastoral aspect, being kept against the wolves and the bears. Especially on “Martinul cel mare” (*The Big Martin*), which coincides with the Day of the Bear, on Candlemas, there is involved a Dance of the Bear. A person (*ursar* – the bear tamer) leads the bear, names it Martin, sings chants to it under this name and make it dance.⁷¹ The shamanic origin of this practice is obvious and it involves the magic by

⁶⁸ Birlea, vol. I, 1981, 271.

⁶⁹ Birlea, vol. I, 1981, 273.

⁷⁰ Marian, vol. I, 2001, 183-184.

⁷¹ Marian, vol. I, 2001, 184-185.

resemblance: performing the ritual, a tamed beast (bear) casts out its untamed relatives, to protect the flocks.

The folkloric rituals with the masks of a deer (*Cerbul*), of a (she) goat (*Capra* – with alternative names as: *brezaia*, *turca*, *țurca*, *bo/u/rița*, *vaca*), or with other related animals, has – contrary to *Ursul* – a large dissemination throughout the Romanian ethnographic area. The earliest attestations of the deer cortege, for instance in Hunedoara county, appear due to the ecclesiastical interdictions of the Catholic Church in the early Middle Ages, and the one masked as a deer is assisted by an old man, called *bloj* or *vătaf* ("leader").⁷² Mainly in Transylvania, at the end of the representation, the "deer" (or the "she-goat", *turca*) is shot, while the *bloj* / *vătaf* gives a comic mimic of the dirge, and the entire assembly participates somehow to this parody of sacrifice, on the New Year's Eve, to showing the end of a cosmic cycle and the beginning of another.⁷³ The mask "signifies the divinity which, through its death, should ensure the prosperity of the vegetation, in concordance with the ancient ritual scenario attested to s many peoples in Antiquity. Thus, the cortege with the animal mask of this type continues an ancient practice, with prehistorical roots at the Indo-Europeans, and among us [Romanians, n.n.] coming from the Dionysiac cult practiced by the Thracians."⁷⁴

Dan Dana dismissed, as quoted above, the note about the "goddess" *Zámolxis*, which should be better understood as an erroneous construction upon a grammatical derivation. He defended the form *Zálmoxis* as the oldest for the theonym, and its subsequent etymology.⁷⁵

The theonym could have had a connection with the etymology of Porphyros, with *ζῆλος* meaning "bear skin".⁷⁶ Ivan Duridanov mentions about this word: "zalmós "a hide" (Porphyr.). It is related to the Old-Pruss. *salmis* "helm", the Lith. *sálmas*".⁷⁷

⁷² Bîrlea, vol. I, 1981, 273-274. Cf. Pamfile, 1997, 368-397.

⁷³ Bîrlea, vol. I, 1981, 275. Pamfile, 1997, 375.

⁷⁴ Bîrlea, vol. I, 1981, 275.

⁷⁵ Dana, 2004, 77: "Russu est l'auteur d'une théorie assez influente en Roumanie (partiellement élaborée contre la théorie spiritualisée de Pârvan): Zamolxis serait un dieu chthonien, de la terre et de la végétation; ses arguments étymologiques ne sont pas valides, comme la forme du nom par ailleurs (car les premières mentions sont *Salmoxis* et *Zalmoxis*)."
Also, see Dana, 2008.

⁷⁶ Cf. Porphyrius, 1963, 17-52.

⁷⁷ Duridanov, 1985, ch. III, *The Thracian Words*, 10-16.

Even if the form *Zálmoxis* is equally present in the sources, as *Zámolxis*, and it was also applied to the supreme Dacian divinity, the etymology of *Zálmoxis* is far more difficult to be established. If ζάλμος is retained by Porphyrus from the Dacian language as an explanation for *Zálmoxis*, this means that maybe a semantic connection between the meaning of ζάλμος, "bear skin", and the Dacian god was possible. The mind of a Dacian could relate the form *Zálmoxis* with the "bear skin", probably due to the shamanic rituals involving bear masks and skins, as I have already suggested. Maybe the name *Zálmoxis*, a permutation from *Zámolxis*, meant just to point out such rituals, reaching to the doctrine of the immortal soul and the cult of the ancestors. Then ζάλμος could be considered as an etymology for *Zálmoxis*. The ending *-xis* might have had a variable spelling, like *-čis* or *-šis*.

The name *Zálmoxis* was the original form of the Dacian god, "grace to the analogies in anthroponyms and toponyms".⁷⁸

Not all the Thraco-Dacian names that have a similar beginning also have a common explanation. For instance, an occurrence of *s/zal-m-* is in Salmydésos (τὸν Σαλμυδεσσόν), a place name, a Thracian city, north of Apollonia and Mesembria, who's inhabitants surrendered to the Persian king Darius during his invasion described by Herodotus (IV, 93 – see above, at *Source texts*, 2).⁷⁹ But this name means "salty water", the etymology accepted

⁷⁸ Pop et alii, 119.

⁷⁹ Smith, 1854,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0064:entry=salmydessus-geo>: "SALMYDESSUS (Ἀλμυδισσός ἤτοι Σαιμυδησσός, Ptol. 3.11.4; Halmydessos, Plin. Nat. 4.11. s. 18; Mela, 2.2.5), a coast-town or district of Thrace, on the Euxine, about 60 miles NW. from the entrance of the Bosphorus, probably somewhere in the neighbourhood of the modern Midjeh. The eastern offshoots of the Haemus here come very close to the shore, which they divide from the valley of the Hebrus. The people of Salmydessus were thus cut off from communication with the less barbarous portions of Thrace, and became notorious for their savage and inhuman character, which harmonised well with that of their country, the coast of which was extremely dangerous. Aeschylus (Prom. 726)¹ describes Salmydessus as "the rugged jaw of the sea, hostile to sailors, step-mother of ships;" and Xenophon (Xen. Anab. 7.5.12, seq.) informs us, that in his time its people carried on the business of wreckers in a very systematic manner, the coast being marked out into portions by means of posts erected along it, and those to whom each portion was assigned having the exclusive right to plunder all vessels and persons cast upon it. This plan, he says, was adopted to prevent the bloodshed which had frequently been occasioned among themselves by their previous practice of indiscriminate plunder. Strabo, (vii. p. 319) describes this portion of the coast of the Euxine as "desert, rocky, destitute of harbours, and completely exposed to the north winds;" while Xenophon (l.c.) characterises the sea adjoining it as "full of shoals." The earlier writers appear

for it being very pertinent: Indo-European **salm-udes*, "salty water", with Greek cognates *álmē*, "sea water, brine", and *ýdos*, "water".⁸⁰

The form *Zálmoxis* is, besides the attestation in Herodotus, plainly present, for example, in the Thraco-Getian name *Zalmodégikos*, a Thracian anthroponym, appeared in a Greek inscription at Histria, 3rd century BC.⁸¹ The king *Zalmodégikos* bears the version *Zálmoxis* in his name, showing that it already existed in Thraco-Getian, in connection with the Dacian myths and rituals of the Zalmoxian religion.⁸²

If we seek the etymology for "bear skin" (*ζάλμος* ?), the Proto-Indo-European root for the 'bear' was **H₁rtkō-* (the original PIE word for 'bear').⁸³ Other frequent derivation is from **bher-5* (brown)⁸⁴. The root **H₁rtkō-* gave: Greek *ἄρκος* ('bear', Iliad) and *ἄρκτος* (*arktos*, 'bear'), Lat. *ursus*, Skr. *ṛkṣa*, Pers. *xers*, Arm. *arj* / *arč*, Gaul. *artioni*, Alb. *ari*, Kamviri *ic*, Osset. *ærs*, Welsh *arth*, Av. *aršam*, Hitt. *ḫartagga*. The root **bher-5* ('brown') gave: 'bear' in Skr. *bhalla-h*, *bhallaka-h*, *bhallūka-h* (-*ll*- from -*rl*-), Old High German *bero*, Old Gottish *bera*, Old Isl. *biørn* and *bersi*, as well as Lithuanian *béras*, Latvian *bērs* 'brown' (about horses) etc.

to speak of Salmydessus as a district only, but in later authors, as Apollodorus, Pliny, and Mela, it is mentioned as a town. // Little is known respecting the history of this place. Herodotus (4.93) states that its inhabitants, with some neighbouring Thracian tribes, submitted without resistance to Darius when he was marching through their country towards the Danube. When the remnant of the Greeks who had followed Cyrus the Younger entered the service of Seuthes, one of the expeditions in which they were employed under Xenophon was to reduce the people of Salmydessus to obedience; a task which they seem to have accomplished without much difficulty. (Anab. I.c.)" Peck, 1898: "Salmydessus (*Σαλμυδησσός*), called Halmydessus (*Ἀλμυδησσός*), also in later times Midja or Midjeh. A town of Thrace, on the coast of the Euxine, south of the promontory Thynias. The name was originally applied to the whole coast from this promontory to the entrance of the Bosphorus; and it was from this coast that the Black Sea obtained the name of Pontus Axinos, or inhospitable."

⁸⁰ Cf. Chantraine, Tome I (A-Δ), 1968, 65 (*ἄλς*). Frisk, Band I (A-Ko), 1960, 78-79 (*ἄλς*). Stronk, 1986-1987, 63-75. Radoslav Katičić, 1976, 147.

⁸¹ D. M. Pippidi, Em. Popescu, 1959, 235-238. D. M. Pippidi, 1967, 165-187. D. M. Pippidi (coord.), 1983 (1980-1987), 68-72. Todd, 1979, (pp. 3-15), p. 10. Amon, 2008, 162-167. Temporini, 1979, 77.

⁸² Burkert, 1972, 157 (citing D. M. Pippidi, *Studii clasice*, 3, 1961, 53-66; *SEG*, 18, 1962, no. 288).

⁸³ Mallory; Adams, 1997, 30, 55-56. Pokorny, Band 3, 1959, 875: *rkpo-s*. Chantraine, Tome I (A-Δ), 1968, 110. Frisk, Band I (A-Ko), 1960, 141-142. D'Hauterive, 1994, 84: **orks*. <http://www.palaeolexicon.com/>.

⁸⁴ Mallory; Adams, 1997, 30, 55-56. Pokorny, Band 1, 1959, 136-137. D'Hauterive, 1994, 25.

The *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture* notes about the bear [originally from **h₂tkōs*] and the rituals involving the *bear skin costumes*: “Perhaps originally a nominalized adjective, **h₂tkōs* 'destroying' (nominalized by a shift of stress), itself from **h₂rétkēs* seen in Av *raśah-* 'destruction', OInd *rākṣas-* 'destruction'. Widespread and old in IE. It may be significant that in the northern tier of IE languages (Slavic, Baltic, Germanic, and [partly] Celtic) this inherited word for 'bear', originally itself surely a descriptive substitute for a term now completely vanished, was replaced by newer words, all apparently "taboo" substitutes. Thus in Germanic the bear is 'the brown' one (cf. ON *björn*, OE *bera* [>NE *bear*], OHG *bero*), in Baltic 'the ice-fisher' (cf. Lith *lokys* and *luōkyti* 'break the ice in order to fish'), in Slavic (and Old Indic) the 'honey-eater' (thus OCS *medvědī* 'bear', OInd *madhv-ād-* 'honey-eater'). It has also been suggested that under the same taboo pressure, some Uralic tribes adopted the Indo-Iranian word for 'bear' which emerges in Finnish as *karhu* (< Indo-Iranian *h₂rkšas*).” And then: “As this territory also includes the use of bear teeth in pendants or burial with bear claws [...] it is clear that bears may have also exercised some ritual-symbolic function in prehistoric society. How this role may have applied to specifically PIE society is difficult to determine as the bear is widely imbued with certain cultic significance in many cultures, cf. Greek Artemis whose name is derived from that of the 'bear' and served as "Mistress of Animals" and the hunt. Bear-skin dress can be observed in a Hittite ritual where one of the dancers, the *whartagga-*, member of the 'bear people', is apparently dressed in a bear skin while the term in Old Norse for a warrior, operating out of control in battle-frenzy, is *berserkr* (> NE *berserk*), which many take to be literally 'bear-shirted', indicating one either dressed in the manner of a bear or having taken on the characteristics of a bear. The bear, in particular the she-bear, is a widespread symbol of fertility and child-bearing.”⁸⁵ The last quote is a powerful argument for my thesis that the connection between the form *Zálmoxis*, the word *ζάλμος* and the meaning "bear skin" of given to the last word came from a Dacian shamanic practice involving wearing a bear skin costumption, rituals echoed by some Romanian folklore customs, as I argued above.

Knowing all these, we find ourselves in the frustrating situation of not having any usual IE name of the *bear* in the term *ζάλμος*, although the ancient

⁸⁵ Mallory; Adams, 1997, 55-56.

source of Porphyros says it meant "bear skin". Porphyrus was not a modern etymologist, but ζάλμος must have had a neighboring meaning in Thraco-Dacian. The name of the bear might have suffered a "taboo" substitution, as demonstrated in the above quotations for other situations when the name of this animal was connected with some magic power.

An observation of A. D. Xenopol seems to be correct and useful when talking about Dacian composed words, as ζάλμος obviously is. He wrote about Germisara: "Γερμίζερα [Germizera]. Known and localized amidst the ruins, on Mureș: cf. CIL III 1395. The Daco-Romans named it *Germi-sara*, like *Deu-sara* (in Apuseni Mountains, the golden region: CIL III tab. cer. III and XIII). The name, composed of two well known (cf. Tom., s.v.) Thraco-Getian words, meaning «water» (*sara*) and «warm» (*germe*). *For the spirit of the language is to be noted the preposition of the adjective to the noun*, contrary to the Latin «Aquae Calidae», «Frigidae», «Vivae» etc. (Cf. the respective toponyms in Miller, Itin. Rom., ind. p. 963; cf. for the comparisons in Armenian and other Indo-Germanic languages Tom. II 2, 88)."⁸⁶ I put in bold the principle that interests us further. The preposition of the determinative to the determined word can be found also in other Thraco-Dacian words, as *Salmydessos* ("salty water", above), all the *davae* and *parae* (*Buridava*, *Sucidava*..., *Bessapara*, *Drusipara* ...) or other city names etc.

An initial *s*- in IE words might be caused by its presence in the original PIE stem, but also by many other processes. An example that already occurred in this article is the parallel between Thraco-Dacian **sal-* and Greek **hal-* 'salt'. In this case, an original *s* was changed into an *h*. The same for PIE **suh₁nús* 'son' > Greek *υἱός* (> *υῖός*). If the initial sibilant in the Thraco-Dacian *zalmos* would have been a continuation of a PIE stem, we should look for a radical **sal(m)-*. Although, as I don't find any satisfactory connection among such PIE radicals, I think that the initial sibilant of the Thraco-Dacian is not present in the PIE stem from which this word came.

The sibilant in the beginning of the Thraco-Dacian word *s/z-almos* might not be found in the original PIE word for many well explainable reasons. Like in the form *Zámolxis*, in *Zálmoxis* also the original form must have had the voiceless fricative *s-*. The voiceless fricative *s-* apparently evolved in the Thraco-Dacian language context towards a voiced *z*-like sound. This

⁸⁶ Pârvan, *Getica*, 153 (260).

gave the ambiguity in written sources, as, for instance, in the case of Germisara/Germizera, above.

The addition of a starting sibilant might occur on a (Proto-)Indo-European stem for various reasons, as for instance:

(1) *An s-mobile*.⁸⁷ The starting *s-* in PIE and IE languages in general is very volatile. It is either present or absent before other consonants even in the oldest forms of the roots, as in **(s)kēgo-* 'sheep/goat' above, or **(s)kel-*, **(s)ker-* 'cut', **(s)neubh-* 'to marry', **(s)ner-* 'rattle' and so many. The possibility to add an initial *s-* to many words was very productive in Proto- Indo-European and in daughter Indo-European languages. The initial sibilant added like this is called *s-mobile*.

(2) *A satem feature*. Thraco-Dacian had also *satem* features, where the non-sibilant affricates and fricatives became sibilants.

Thus, the term for the wild animal given in Thraco-Dacian by ζάλ- might appear very well with a guttural, an affricate or a fricative in Proto-Indo-European form, as well as in other languages. Such a possible radical is **h₁el-*. It referred initially to the colour *red – brown*, but it was rapidly extended to plants and animals characterized by such colors, like the *alder*, the *elm*, or the *deer*.⁸⁸ In the wild animal names the radical was used as such or with suffixes as **-k^h* or **-h₁(e)n*. With **-k^h* it gives: Old German *ēlho*, *ēlaho* 'elk, moose'; Lat. *alcēs*; Gk. *ἄλκη* etc. With **-h₁(e)n* it gives mainly words for 'deer': Arm. *eln* 'deer', Gk. *ἐλαφος* 'deer', Lith. *ellenis* and *elnis* 'elk, moos, red deer', Latv. *al'nis* 'elk, moos, red deer', OCS *(j)eleni* 'red deer', Toch.AB *yal* 'gazelle' etc. Other development of the radical, **h₁elh₁nih₃*, produced words with the meanings like 'hind/cow-elk': Wels *elain* 'hind', OPrus *alne* 'animal', Lith. *alne – elne* 'hind', OCS *lani – alni* 'hind', Rus. *lani* 'hind' etc., while „the initial **a-* of the Baltic and Slavic words is probably an internal development in those stocks”.⁸⁹ It seems to me that the origin of the Dacian **(s/z)al(m)-* in this way is very possible, maybe with the same oscillation as seen in the Baltic languages between the wild animals in the forests in general, and the restricting of the meaning to one specific such animal, as the deer, or even the bear. Such a word would have been very recommended when the taboo required to conceal the name of the bear with a more ambiguous one, when it was used in magic rituals. The vowel *a* present in the Thraco-Dacian might be explained through

⁸⁷ Cf. Shields, 1996. Mallory; Adams, 1997, 469, 587.

⁸⁸ Pokorny, Band 1, 1959, 302-304, especially, 303.

⁸⁹ Mallory & Adams, 1997, 155.

the closeness of the Thraco-Dacian with the Baltic languages, inside the *satem* group of the Indo-European languages,⁹⁰ but the adnotation with Greek and Latin alphabets is also very approximative when dealing with barbarian languages. Therefore, the vowel *a* in *Sálmos* (i. e., Zálmoxis) could produce a sort of *e*, most probable a (very) open *e*, since it was written as *a*. The final sound, written *s* or *x*, would stand most likely for a *š*.

A recent article of Heinrich Werner brings to us a shocking perspective on our subject. The article is about the importance of the deer and reindeer (*Cervidae*) in the shamanic practices of the peoples near Yenisei river, especially the Ket and Yugh peoples: “an apparent riding of a reindeer, in the trance state of a shaman, into an apparent travel”;⁹¹ “it was said in this case, presumably, that the reindeer husbandry of the peoples of Yenisei came from the old times, as these peoples were still living in southern Siberia.”⁹² The author shows that even the name of the shaman comes from that of the (rein)deer, and the words used for this type of animals are based on the stem *seł*, the same that gave the words for the red-brown type of colours!⁹³ The word for the (rein)deer has a multitude of combinations and derivatives, being very productive in the languages of these peoples. Among many forms, there is one which combines the idea of wild, the celestial/divine, and the name of the reindeer: “ket. *asseł* (Pl. *assen*), jug. *atčē:r* (Pl. *atčen*) ‘Wild’, ‘wildes Jagdtier’ (wörtl. ‘wildes Rentier’ < ‘göttliches/himmlisches Rentier’) < *es* ‘Gott’, ‘Himmel’ + ket. *seł* (nordket. *se:li*), jug. *se h :r* ‘Rentier’”⁹⁴

Other explanation in the same article gives us the connection between the (rein)deer and the coordinate chthonian-uranian: “Es ist deshalb auch kein Zufall, dass eben das Rentier bei den Jenissejern seit jeher als Opfertier galt; so opferte man an bestimmten Stellen dem obersten Himmels-gott Es nur weisse (ket. *taɣim qɔkssən*) und der Mutter Erde (ket. *Baɣam* < *baɣη* ‘Erde’ + *a·m* ‘Mutter’) nur schwarze Rentiere (ket. *tu·m qɔkssən*) < *qɔks* ‘Opfer’ + *seɣn* ‘Rentiere’. Und eben die Bezeichnungen der wichtigsten Jagdtiere, des Rentiers und des Elches, wurden bei den Jenissejern wie bei anderen Völkern Eurasiens auf Sternbilder übertragen, z.B. ket. *Qaj* ‘Grosser Bär’ (< *qaj* ‘Elch’),

⁹⁰ Cf. Duridanov, 1969, 103 sqq.

⁹¹ Werner, 2011, 142.

⁹² Werner, 2011, 142.

⁹³ Cf. Werner, 2011, 143-145.

⁹⁴ Werner, 2011, 144.

Sel̥j ‘Orion’ (< *sel̥* ‘Rentier’).⁹⁵ The name *Qaj* (Moose) for the constellation named by us Great Bear shows the closeness between such animals in the conscience of the ancient peoples, as wild animals in general.

And other reference to the shamanic rituals, involving the mantle and other costumations (bird-like): “So wird der Schamanenmantel, der Hauptteil der Schamanentracht (ket. *senda qaʔt*), während der schamanistischen Zeremonien als Rentierkuh (Hinde) wahrgenommen und in der Sprache der Schamanen mit dem Wort *elén* bezeichnet. Die Rückenseite des Schamanenmantels spitzt sich nach unten zu, und der Schoß erinnert dadurch an einen Vogelschwanz, eine Form, die als ‘Vogeltyp’ gedeutet werden kann; vermutlich geht dieser Archismus auf den alten Adlerkult zurück, denn der Adler (ket. jug. *diʔ*, pl. ket. *díyin / di:n*, jug. *dínun̄*; kot. *tagé / take*, pl. *tak̄n* ‘Adler’) galt als einer der wichtigsten Schutzgeister des jenissejischen Schamanen. Jedoch allmählich wurde der Adlerkult durch den Rentierkult verdrängt, und die meisten Attribute der jenissejischen Schamanentracht stellen den Cervidentyp dar. Hier ist z.B. neben der Schamanenkrone (ket. *senda diʔ sel̥j q̄ŋas*, wörtl. ‘Mütze des Schamanen mit einem Rentiergeweih’) besonders die Schamanentrommel zu erwähnen. Die Trommel wird in der Schamanensprache als *Bājsel̥j* bezeichnet (wörtl. ‘irdisches Rentier’ < ket. *baʔŋ* ‘Erde’ + *sel̥* ‘Rentier’) und dient dem Schamanen während der schamanistischen Zeremonien als ‘Reittier’.”⁹⁶

The very word for the shaman comes from that of the reindeer: “Die bestimmende Rolle des cervidenartigen Schutzgeistes im jenissejischen Schamanismus lässt sich eindeutig an dem Wort für ‘Schamane’ (jenis. **senəŋ*, ket. *senəŋ*, jug. *senin̄*, kot. *šēnaŋ hit*) beobachten, das sich meines Erachtens mit dem Wort *seʔn* ‘Rentiere’ (...) verbinden last.”⁹⁷ And ‘shaman’ is a loan into the European languages from these Siberian languages.

In those languages, the words for wild and magic have the same etymological explanation from the reindeer: “Im Kottischen entspricht etymologisch dem ket. *sel̥*, nordket. *se:li*, jug. *seh:t* ‘Rentier’ das Wort *šele / šeli* (Pl. *šetn*) ‘Wild’, und kot. *šēnaŋ* bedeutet eigentlich ‘Zauber’ oder ‘zaubern (schamanieren)’ wie ket. *senəŋbet*, jug. *senəŋbetj* ‘zaubern (schamanieren)’; deshalb heisst ‘Schamane’ im Kottischen *šēnaŋ hit*, wörtl. ‘schamanisierender Mensch’ (kot. *hit* ‘Mensch’). Es besteht kaum ein Zweifel, dass alle diese

⁹⁵ Werner, 2011, 145.

⁹⁶ Werner, 2011, 145.

⁹⁷ Werner, 2011, 146.

Wörter miteinander verbunden sind und auf eine und dieselbe Quelle zurückgehen.”⁹⁸

Finally, Heinrich Werner clearly connected the words of the Ket and Yugh for the Cervidae with words for the shaman in other Siberian (*elén*) and even Turkic languages (*elen*), and with the IE radical for the same concept: “Eher handelt es sich hier um eine einheitliche Urquelle, wodurch auch der uralte Hirsch- bzw. Rentierkult zu erklären ist. Auf die Verbreitung dieses Kultes bei der einheimischen Bevölkerung Sibiriens oder ganz Nordeuroasiens weist z.B. das bereits erwähnte Wort aus der Sprache der jenissejischen Schamanen *elén* ‘Rentierkuh (Hinde)’ hin, welches völlig identisch mit dem türk. *Elen* ‘himmlischer Hirsch (Rentier)’ bei den südsibirischen türkischen Völkern ist und als uralte sakrale Wanderbezeichnung auch weitgehende indogermanische Parallelen aufweist: idg. **el-en-* / **el-η-*: griech. *ἐλαφος*, arm. *eln* ‘Hirsch’, air. *elit* ‘Damhirsch’, lit. *elnis* ‘Hirsch, Elch’, let. *alnis* ‘Elch’, preuss. *alne* ‘Hirsch (Männchen)’, aslav. *jelen’i*, bulg. *elén*, maked. *elen*, serb. *jélen*, sorb. *jelení*, russ. *olénj* ‘Hirsch’, dt. *Elen* ‘Elch’ usw. (Gamkrelidze/Ivanov 1984/II: 517-518).”⁹⁹

The form in Thracο-Dacian used in the first part of the word ζάλμος is practically the same with that used for the reindeer in Ket and Yugh languages. These Siberian peoples must have had taken the word *sel* (species of *Cervidae*) from satem speaking populations in the Eurasian silvostepes (maybe Iranian). The origin of *sel* / *sal* is clearly Indo-European, while the sibilation in the Siberian languages is the proof that the same phenomenon took place in Thracο-Dacian. The striking similar form in two very different linguistic areas shows that the form sibilated form **sel-* had a very large Eurasian spread, comparable with the forms without sibilation. Based on the Siberian form Ket *sel̥* (and all other alike forms), the etymology of the first part of ζάλμος becomes clear up to details: Pre-Indo-European **h₁el(h₁n)-* (species of *Cervidae*, wild animal) > **sel(N)-* > Proto-Thracο-Dacian **sel(N)-* > Thracο-Dacian **sal(m)-* > [after 6th cent. BC] Thracο-Dacian **s/z-al(m)-*.

If the rule of the preposition of the determinative is respected, the second part of the word ζάλμος should express the meaning for "skin", while the first part might refer to the bear or, largely, to some wild animal. An Indo-European word for the animal skin is **moisos*: “**moisos* ‘ram, sheep; fleece,

⁹⁸ Werner, 2011, 147.

⁹⁹ Werner, 2011, 147-148. For the Ket and Yugh peoples, see also: Janhunen, 2012, 73-74, Sala; Vintilă-Rădulescu, 1981, 80, 133, Frawley, 2003, 402,.

skin'... OPrus *moasis* 'bellows', Lith *maištas* 'bag, sack', Latv *māiss* 'sack', OCS *měchŭ* ' (leather) sack', Rus *mekh* 'skin, sack', Av *mačša-* 'ram', *mačši* 'ewe', OInd *męśá* 'ram, sheep; fleece, skin', *męśī* 'ewe; fleece, skin'. Compare the derivative **mois-to-* in Hit *maista-* '± bale of wool'. Widespread and old in IE. Cf. another derivative **móisos* in ON *meiss* 'basket' and OHG *meis(s)a* 'baggage.';¹⁰⁰ "Further terms associated with sheep are **moisós* ..., found in the center and east, and *?(s)kēgo-* 'sheep/goat' which is known on the peripheries."¹⁰¹ Pokorny gave the following explanation for this entry: "*moiso-*s oder *maiso-*s "Schaf; Fell, daraus gefertigte Schläuche, Säcke". Ai. *měšá-* m. "Widder", *męśī-* "Schaffell", av. *mačša-* "Widder, Schaf"; aisl. *meiss* m. "Korb", ahd. *meis(s)a* "Gepäck", mnd. *mēse* "Tonne". abg. *měchъ* "Schlauch", russ. *měch* "Fell, Schlauch; Sack" *męśī-* (usw.); lit. *máišas*, *máišė* "Heunetz u. dgl.", lett. *máiss*, *máikss* "Sack", apr. *moasis* "Blasebalg"¹⁰².

Other akin Indo-European root is *mokš-*: "*mokš*, arisch *mokšū* (Lokativ Plur. ?) "bald". Ai. Adv. *maḁśū* "rasch, bald, früh", *maḁśūmaḁsu* "recht bald"; Instr. PL *maḁśūbhīh*, Superl. *maksūtama-*; mit Nasal: ai. *maḁḁksu* "bald"; av. *mošu* "alsbald, sogleich"; lat. *mox* "bald" = mcymr. *moch* "bald" (daraus mir. *moch* ds.), air. *mó* "bald", als Präverb *mos-*, *mus-*; *mos-riccub-* sa "bald werde ich kommen", *mus-creitfet* "bald werden sie glauben".¹⁰³

Being so close in form and meaning, the two Indo-European roots might, very well, have a common origin. Pokorny did not put the Indo-European roots in his dictionary with the consideration of the laryngeal theory. For instance, he gave **el-* for **h₁el-* (see below) etc. Therefore, in the light of this theory, **mois-o-s* and **mokš-* can be very well be conceived as heaving a laryngeal in the place of the central vowel: **m(o)h₃s-*. This could explain both the diphthongal elongation *-oi-* and the group *-ok-*. Other insufficiently explained European words could be linked to this root, as the Italian *maschera*.¹⁰⁴ For me, it is clear that the second term in the Thraco-Dacian *zál-mos* came from this PIE root, **m(o)h₃s-*, but it is sufficient, if someone looks skeptically at this further going explanation, to note the affinity of the Thraco-Dacian *-mos* with the above mentioned Indo-European roots.

¹⁰⁰ Mallory; Adams, 1997, 511.

¹⁰¹ Mallory; Adams, 1997, 366.

¹⁰² Pokorny, Band 2, 1959, 747.

¹⁰³ Pokorny, Band 2, 1959, 747.

¹⁰⁴ Grandsaignes d'Hauterive, 1994, 117.

I believe there is a connection between the Thraco-Dacian *zál-mos*, with the shamanic rituals that this term supports, and the Romanian word *moș* ("ancestor"), with the rich folk traditions related to it, as I shall elaborate below. The Romanian *moș* is identical with the Albanian *móshë*. As demonstrated by many common forms of the substratum, the Romanian words usually preserve better the older forms than the Albanian ones.¹⁰⁵ Russu mentioned a different etymological solution for the Romanian autochthonous word *moș* than the connection with the above mentioned Indo-European roots: "The only verosimile etymological explanation is that of Meyer with the Alb. *mot* "year", IE suff. *-s*; thus **mot-s-*, rad. **ē-* "to measure, to weigh", Gr. *μέτρον*, Lat. *metior*, Litt. *metas* "year, time" etc.; unclear is the reduction of *ts-* to *š* (*ș*), instead of *č*. In *moștean* (recent formation, under Slavic influence), there is not a **mots-* with methatesis in *mošt-*."¹⁰⁶ The PIE root for the words associated with *moș* in this quote is **mē-* / **me-t-* "to measure", with a rich development.¹⁰⁷ However, if this association is accepted as explanatory for the Rom. *moș* – Alb. *moshë*, it remains unclear "the reduction of *ts-* to *š* (*ș*), instead of *č*."

The name *Zálmoxis* might, therefore, be based on *ζάλμος*, with an etymology like **s/zal(m)-* < **h₁el(h₁n)-* "wild forest animal/ of Cervidae" + **mos-* / *moš-* < **mois(os)-* "animal skin, fur", meaning actually "wild animal skin", "coat", and even "(ritual) costume". The commentaries of Heinrich Werner cover the semantic and morphemic association between the Cervidae / wild animal and the use of the shamanic mantle or costumations in general, making much easier my task to prove that the name *Zálmoxis* reflects such practices.

Could we suppose a connection between *ζάλμος* and the Romanian word *moș* [*moș*] "ancestor", with a clear autochthonous origin? The Thraco-Dacian *s/zál-mos*, "wild animal costume or mask", is clearly explained by the shamanic practices, which have always had as a main function to establish a connection with the spirits of the ancestors. The Romanian word *moș* has ancient Romanian traditions attached to it, with wild animal masks and costumes, concerning the same link with the spirits of the ancestors. Actually, the shamanic *Dance of the Bear or of the Deer* helps a lot to make such a suggestion credible, while the bear has the folklore name *moș Martin!*... The

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Rom. *viezure*, *mazăre* – Alb. *modhullë*, *vjedhullë* etc. – Russu, 1981, 346, 418-419.

¹⁰⁶ Russu, 1981, 360.

¹⁰⁷ Pokorny, Band 2, 1959, 703.

Romanian onomatopoe for the sound of the bear is “môr”, close to the first sounds in *Mar-tin* (see above, about “Martinii de iarnă”). Such a connection might be speculated if all the semantical sphere of the ζῆλος was transferred to the last term, *moș* – the more comprehensive part, to which the whole could be reduced. This term could at first represent the costume of wild animal skin used in the shamanic rituals in the cult of the ancestors. Maybe it is not a superfluous note that Romanian also, aside with *moș/Moș*, has the personal name *Moiș*, which is even closer to its ancient Indo-European root. Whatever it would be the preferred earlier etymology, in my opinion, the connection between the Thracio-Dacian *s/zál-mos* and the Romanian word *moș* explains best the last word. I also think that, in this case, both words are better understood as an evolution from the shamanic mask to the meaning of the “ancestor”, which is made communicable for the people by the shaman.

The *moș* (i.e., ancestor) is clearly involved in the *Dance of the Bear or of the Deer*, both in the complex significance of the mask, and in the assistant of the masked person – the *bloj*, *unchiaș* (“nucle”, “greybeard”),¹⁰⁸ or *moș* (in its autochthonous Romanian form), as “moșul de turcă”,¹⁰⁹ which doubles and emphasizes the role of the mask(ed) person. *Bloj* is the Slavic form (of *blagŭ* “good”, OCS: благословилъ “to bless”, блажени of блаженъ “blessed”, Russian блаженный “beatifical, blessed”, блаженство “blessedness, beatitude”),¹¹⁰ a term connected with the tradition of *Paștele blajinilor* (The Easter of the Blessed Ones) – in the honor of the holy ancestors of the people, kept on Monday, after the Sunday of St. Thomas.¹¹¹ “Blajinii” (the old blessed ones, the holy, good and happy ancestors of the people) are sometimes called “rohmani”.¹¹²

Other instance of the ritualic use of the term “moș” shows how deeply rooted is this term into the Romanian ancestral traditions, and brings new

¹⁰⁸ Bîrlea, vol. I, 1981, 274: “Masca e însoțită de un moșneag, “unchiaș” (împrumutată și de bulgari, “uncheșină” pentru “brăzaia” lor) și de fluierașul ce susține melodia de joc” = “The mask is accompanied by an elder man [*moșneag*, n.n.], “nucle” [“unchiaș” < *unchi*, n.n.] (borrowed by the Bulgarians, as well, “aunty” [actually, “nucle”-esse, “uncheșină”, from *unchi* – *uncle*, not from *mătușă* – *aunt*, n.n.] for their “brăzaia” [she-goat mask, n.n.], and by a flute, which plays the melody for the folk dance”).

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Bîrlea, vol. I, 1981, 274-275.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Buck, 1988, 16,71, 22,23, 1176 (“etym. dub.”), 1175-1177, 1479-1480. Adamchik, 1998, 89, 106 etc.

¹¹¹ Niculiță-Voronca, vol. I, 1998, 254.

¹¹² Niculiță-Voronca, vol. I, 1998, 254-255.

perspective. The word appears in the name of some popular celebrations of the cult of the dead: *Moșii de Florii* (*The Ancestors of Palm Sunday* – in the Saturday of St. Lazarus),¹¹³ *de Sân-Georgiu* (of St. George),¹¹⁴ *de Joia Mare* (of Big Thursday),¹¹⁵ *de Paști* (of Easter – Thursday after the Easter),¹¹⁶ *de Ispas* (of the Ascension of the Lord),¹¹⁷ *de Rusalii sau de Vară* (of the Pentecost or of the summer), *de Toamnă* (of autumn), *de Iarnă* (of winter), and *de Crăciun* (of Christmas). These traditions are spread in all the regions inhabited by the Romanians, north and south of Danube, from Tisa and Dniester to Thessaly. The Christian mark of these costumes is obvious, but there is also evident an older layer. The day of the ancestors is Saturday, when Christ was dead for the entire day, between His crucifixion and His resurrection. A chain of imaginary women saints are the personification of this dogma: St. Friday (Dusk) takes the soul to the kingdom of St. Saturday (Night), on which day the ghosts and the poltergeists are going out into the world. Consequently, St. Sunday represents the Light and the Resurrection.¹¹⁸ The most logical day to make intercessions, especially for the souls of the dead, and for oneself, in the eventuality of one's death, is, of course, Saturday. The holy objects, or any ritual object is put on the water in Saturday, to find its way to the afterworld – and thus the expression "apa sâmbetei" ("the water of Saturday") for something given away, vanished, including someone's life.¹¹⁹ Other tradition puts *Moșii* (the male ancestors), who are good, even seen as The Holy Ones, overlapped with the Christian martyrs, in opposition with *Babele* (female ancestors, the term *baba* "woman" has a Slavic origin), who are bad, bringing bad weather.¹²⁰ See, e. g., *Baba Dochia*, 1st of March,¹²¹ which preserves the name of Dacia in the term's second word.

The Saturday before the Pentecost is the great day of the ancestors – "Moșii Mari, de vară, ai Sâmbetei sau Duminicii Mari sau de Rusalii". This is also a most important day to give goods (pots, cloths, food, special cakes for

¹¹³ Marian, vol. II, 2001, 179-180.

¹¹⁴ Marian, vol. III, 2001, 198.

¹¹⁵ Marian, vol. II, 2001, 194-195.

¹¹⁶ Marian, vol. III, 2001, 82-83.

¹¹⁷ Marian, vol. III, 2001, 236.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Pamfile, 1997, 129, 351. See also Niculiță-Voronca, vol. I, 1998, 268 sqq.

¹¹⁹ Pamfile, 1997, 17.

¹²⁰ Marian, vol. II, 2001, 110-111.

¹²¹ Marian, vol. II, 2001, 65 sqq., 93 sqq.

this occasion etc.), which is connected with numerous local customs.¹²² *Moșii de Toamnă* (of autumn) is celebrated in the Saturday before St. Demetrius (26th of October, "Și-Medru").¹²³ *Moșii de Iarnă* (of winter) is in the Saturday before the White Week (the week before the Christmas fast) or before the day of a "Shrove" ("Lăsata secului", when the Christian leaves aside the meat), but before the Christmas fast. In some parts *Moșii* of autumn and winter are considered the great ones.¹²⁴ In some places (Ciclova-Română, Banat), *Moșii de Iarnă* is called *Sacrilegi* and *Sacrilegiu mic*, because of the sacrifice or offerings in goods, made as gifts for the dead. However, the etymology of *Sacrilegi* is different from that of Latin "sacrilegium" (< *sacer* + *lego*²: "to gether, collect..." > "pillage of holy objects, desecration").¹²⁵ The Romanian *Sacrilegi* word comes from Latin *sacer* + *ligo*¹ ("to tie").¹²⁶ The second term is used the same in compositions like *cârnelegi* (Lat. *carne* + *ligare*, "binding the meat", i. e. "leaving aside the meat") or *câșlegi* (Lat. *caseum* + *ligare*, "binding the cheese", i. e. "leaving aside the cheese"), and has the exact meaning as in the paragraph where Christ entrusts a priestly charisma to the Apostles: «Whatsoever ye shall *bind* on earth shall be *bound* in heaven...» (Matthew 18: 18, with my highlights).¹²⁷ *Moșii de Crăciun* (*The Ancestors of Christmas*) is on the Christmas Eve (or an entire period before Christmas) – also an important day for mercy.¹²⁸ In some places (Gorj county) children take some hazelnut sticks before St. Ignatius (20th of decembre), and their parents prepare them: they take out their bark, put some crossed linden bark bands on them, and put them to the smoke (of a greasy candle). These sticks are thrustured into the soil, at the head of the graves, together with some pillars and

¹²² Pamfile, 1997, 17-20.

¹²³ Marian, vol. I, 2001, 200.

¹²⁴ Marian, vol. I, 2001, 199-201.

¹²⁵ Marian, vol. I, 2001, 200; Lee, 1968, 1014, 1675.

¹²⁶ Lee, 1968, 1030: "cf. Albanian *lidh* ..., ON *lik*".

¹²⁷ *The Holy Bible*, 1611, 569: «Uerily I say vnto you, Whatsoeuer ye shall *binde* on earth, shall bee *bound* in heauen: and whatsoeuer yee shall loose on earth, shall bee loosed in heauen.». *Biblia*, 1688, 764: «Adevăr grăiesc voao, oricâte veți *lega* pre pământ, fi-vor *legate* în ceriu, și oricâte veți *dezlega* pre pământ, fi-vor *dezlegate* în ceriu». *Biblia*, 2008, 1120: «Adevăr grăiesc vouă: Oricâte veți *lega* pe pământ vor fi *legate* și în cer, și oricâte veți *dezlega* pe pământ vor fi *dezlegate* și în cer.». *Novum Testamentum*, 1994, 50: «Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅσα ἐὰν δήσητε ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἔσται δεδεμένα ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ὅσα ἐὰν λύσητε ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἔσται λελυμένα ἐν οὐρανῷ.» = «Amen dico vobis: Quaecumque *alligaveritis* super terram, erunt *ligata* in caelo, et quaecumque solveritis super terram, erunt soluta in caelo».

¹²⁸ Pamfile, 1997, 393-394.

firs, and with a smoking censer. These sticks have an apotropaic role, and they are even interpreted in a salvific way, in a mythico-magical comprehension of world, connected to St. Virgin.¹²⁹

Speaking of the Dacian-Roman synthesis that gave birth to the Romanian people, Constantiniu wrote that “the community [*obște*, n.n.] initially encompassed the descendants of a common ancestor [*strămoș*, n.n.], a *moș* (word of Geto-Dacian origin, a proof being the antiquity of this organization), from which it derived the word *moșie*, which designated the land owed as common by the stock of the same lineage [*ceata de neam*, n.n.]. It is a feature of the Dacian-Roman cohabitation that the *moș* was also named *bătrân*, derived ... from the Lat. *veteranus* (...); this is why it has the same significance for the Dacian-Roman symbiosis that the descendants of the *moș* lived in *sate* [“villages”, n.n.], a word with its origin in Lat. *fossatum*, a place surrounded by ditches...”¹³⁰

Therefore, the word *moș* has a Dacian origin, and its past form might have oscilated between that of the IE root **mois* and *moš*, as in the second term of the word *ζάλμος*, and leads to the shamanic rituals with wild animal masks, preserved by some Siberian peoples and in Romanian folklore, and also to the second name given to the Geto-Dacian divinity, *Zálmoxis*. This comes in concordance with my hypothesis that this form, *Zálmoxis*, was shaped for the supreme Dacian god from the preexisting form used for the *shaman*, *ζάλμος*, and a word game could have led to the use of two paronymic forms the other one being *Zámolxis*, with a completely different etymology.

I. I. Russu minimized the difference between the Dacian and the general Indo-European religious system, on the ground that, being an Indo-European people, the Geto-Dacians should have had, as well, a threefold religion, as presented by George Dumézil.¹³¹ While his etymology and his interpretation of the deity have a clear powerful link, I. I. Russu was also driven in his choice for the variant *Zámolxis* by his just mentioned hypothesis. Assuming that the Daco-Getians had an IE threefold religion, I. I. Russu saw the story of the retreat in the cave as an argument for that, and a proof – contrary to the claim of Pârvan – that *Zámolxis* was a chthonian deity. As one of the finest scholars in IE studies, I. I. Russu made instantly the connection

¹²⁹ Pamfile, 1997, 393-394.

¹³⁰ Constantiniu, 1999, 28.

¹³¹ Russu, 1944-1948, 89-123. Alexandrescu, *Zalmoxis și cercetările lui Mircea Eliade*, 1978, 52. Fortson, 2004, 17, 28-29. Dumézil, 1998.

between the variant *Zámolxis* of the name and the radical *zamol-* (*ground, earth*), coming from a very productive IE root:¹³² *ghem-*, with an early IE suffix *-ol*. The root has striking representatives in Thracian and the connected languages: *Semele* was a Thracian (> Greek) goddess of the Earth, while *Zemeluks* (*Ziameluks*¹³³) a Lithuanian god of the Earth. Even if the "goddess" *Zámolxis* in *Suida* (see above) was a grammar mistake, the two deities provide a clear proof that the Indo-Europeans from the Black Sea to the Baltic Sea, passing through the Carpathians, have had a chthonian deity with an ambivalent gender: *Zemeluks-Semele*, as well as in the Slavic (cf. Russian) name for "earth": *zemliya*. The connection between *Semele* and the form *Zámolxis* indicates that its formation should also be sought inside the Thraco-Dacian.

Semele, the earth goddess,¹³⁴ was the mother of *Dionysos* – a god imported by the Greeks from Thrace, and whose cult was very popular among the Thracians.¹³⁵ The PIE word for *Earth* was **dheghom*.¹³⁶ The *satem* languages prefer the sibilant [s/z-like] beginning for a Pre- Indo-European aspirated. Regarding the meaning, we must notice a very important connection *earth – man*. Occurrences like Avestan *zâ*, Phrygian and Thracian *Semele* *Σεμέλη*, *zəm-* 'earth', Lithuanian *žēme* 'earth' and *žemyna*, Latvian *zeme* 'earth' and *Zemes Mate*, Old Prussian *semme* 'earth', as well as Phrygian *ζεμέλω* 'man' or 'earthly', Irish *duine* 'person', Wels. *dyn* 'person', Latin *homō* 'man', Lith *žmuo* 'person', from the same root, shows that the Thraco-Dacian should have had a similar parallel *earth – man*, as the related Phrygian dialect and the Balto-Slavic interpretations indicate. There is also "The Phrygian word for 'man', *zemelen*, preserved by Hesychius, is derived from PIE **dh(e)ghem-* 'earth'."¹³⁷ Old Church Slavonic *zemlya* 'earth' and Phrygian

¹³² Alexandrescu, *art. cit.*, 53-54.

¹³³ Paliga, 2007, 323. For the relations between the Thracian and the Baltic idioms see also id., *Introducere ...*, 2012, 32: "Regarding the language of the Thracians, after numerous linguistical analyses, it should have been related a lot with the Baltic languages (...) Strangely, the Thracian must have resembled more to the Baltic languages than to the Slavic dialects, even if the last ones would have been neighboring to the northern Thracian idioms." etc. Cf. Paliga, *Tracii ...*, 2012, 143-151. Id., 2002, 93-104.

¹³⁴ Mallory; Adams, 1997, 174.

¹³⁵ Cf. Feraru, 2004-2005, 239-252.

¹³⁶ Feraru, 2004-2005, 174.

¹³⁷ Cf. Feraru, 2004-2005, 419.

ζεμέλω "man" or "earthly", both *satem*, were related to the Thracian *Semele*.¹³⁸ The presence of the Slav word is an argument for the theory of S. Paliga regarding the role of the North Thracian and West Iranian superstratum (over a south Baltic stratum) in the formation of the Proto-Slavic language (PES).¹³⁹

The OCS form *zemlya* "earth" explains itself perfectly from the Thracian *Semele*, wrote in Greek as Σεμέλη. The evolution of the initial sibilant from *s* to *z* is documented in the name of *S-Zámolxis*, as well as in other Thracian words. The final Greek letter η hides the older *-ya*, from which evolved the Greek terminations – the *ǣ* in Attic, and the η preferred in the other dialects.¹⁴⁰ "Feminine stems in *-ā* < **-ch₂* were originally c-stems with final **-h₂* which, under pressure from the o-stem adjectives, were adapted to the thematic paradigm of the masculine o-stems."¹⁴¹ The PIE gave **-ch₂*, on one hand, a very wide-spread *-ā/-yā* and other vowel terminations. The termination *-yā* was the original Thracian one, written in Greek as *-η*, since it expresses a very old Indo-European case termination, associated with the feminine. Actually, the modern Slav *-yā* perpetuates it. Therefore, the Slav term for "earth", *zemlya*, is a perfect preservation of the late Thracian word for the same notion. As the Slavs moved the accent at the beginning of the word, the middle *e* was lost. Or this was a late Thracian reflex, as well.

The Phrygian term ζεμέλω could be seen either as a loan from the Thracian, or as a part of the Thracian heritage of the Phrygian. I am a supporter of the last theory, but it is irrelevant to extend the discussion on this subject here. The form of the word shows a Genitive used as a Nominative. This was a frequent Indo-European procedure still in use. For instance, the Slav *Pavlov* means "[the son] of Pavle", *Popov* "[the son] of the priest", *Vasiliev* "[the son] of Vasili", the Greek *Χριστοδούλου* "[the wife] of *Χριστοδούλος*" etc. It seems that the use of such Genitives was the same in Thracian, since we have several examples, besides ζεμέλω. For instance, *Kotýsō* (Dacian king, 1st c. AD) - "[the son] of [the goddess] *Kótys*". The name appears as of the goddess, *Kótys*, for a series of Odrysian kings, 4th c. BC. Tomaschek compared these names

¹³⁸ Duridanov, 1995, 830. Id., 1985, 69.

¹³⁹ Paliga, 2015, 39-40. Id., 2012, 29, 32, 34, 59 etc. Id., 2005, 69-71.

¹⁴⁰ Smyth, 1920, & 221, 51: "Most, if not all, of the substantives in *ǣ* are formed by the addition of the suffix *ǣz* or *ǣz*".

¹⁴¹ Quiles & López-Menclero, 2012, & 4.1.3, 162. Id., 166 sqq. Luraghi, 2011, 437: "feminine gender was later formed through the addition of a special suffix, which Brugmann reconstructed as **-ā*, and is currently noted as **-h₂* (or *-(e)h₂*)". Id., 438-443, 453-454, 457.

with *Kotéla* (a Getian prince), and with the Bactrian word *kata* "loved".¹⁴² Other example is *Skorylō* – *Skoris*. Others might be hidden under Greek endings.

The Thracian *-ω* ending for the Genitive must have been a development from the PIE *-osyo*, very close to the Greek one, but not identical, since it was not written as *-ου*. The Greek notation *-ω* could, most likely, hide an *-ō_w*. Therefore, who was "[the son] of the Mother Earth – *S/Zemélyā*"? It was "the man – *s/zemélō(w)*"! For the notion of "human", there was applied here the same reasoning as all over the world, even in different languages, using different words, such as the Lat. *hōmo* from *humus*, as well as the Hebrew masculine *adam* ("man") from *adama'* ("earth"). A similar old Greek adnotation in *-ω* is for Demeter, who is also Sito (Σιτώ), "[the goddess] of the grain" (< σῖτος, "wheat"), or Ioulo (Ιουλώ), "of the (wheat) sheaf".¹⁴³

The idea of Human (by excellence), *ζεμέλω* – *semélō_w*, is universal and thus, we should not be surprised to find it in the main theological concept of the Dacians. The cosmic, spiritual or celestial man is *Puruṣa* for the Indians¹⁴⁴ or *Pan-ku* (*Pangu*) for the Chinese.¹⁴⁵ The prophetic and then the divine figure of a Dacian reformer (or an entire cast of reformers) had, in my opinion, a major role in supporting and perpetuating of such a theonym in the Thraco-Dacian and then in the Baltic region.

Along with the emergence and spread of the Bronze culture tribes, the world of *yin* (matriarchate, chthonian fertility rites), if we are allow to put it so, made place for the world of *yang* (patriarchate, uranian military rites).¹⁴⁶ There was never an obliteration of the past, but a change that promoted the uranian divinities (mainly with masculine features) over the authority of the chthonian ones (mainly with feminine features). In the pantheon, those divinities stayed, however, together, and even formed "families", or triads, involving one divine child or more divine children. For instance: Anu – Enlil – Ea in Sumer, Brahma – Vishnu – Shiva in India, Amun – Re – Ptah and Isis – Osiris – Horus in Egypt, Gaia – Ouranos – Titans, Zeus – Demeter – Persephone and Zeus – Hera – Herakles in Greece, and, finally, *Semél-ya* – *Diónysos* – (*Semelō* / *Salmo-xis*) in the Thracian realm.

¹⁴² Tomaschek, 1883, 404.

¹⁴³ Kernbach, 1983, 157-159. Bailly, 2000, 972, 1753.

¹⁴⁴ Eliade, 1999, & 75, 146. Kernbach, 1983, 538-539.

¹⁴⁵ Eliade, 1999, & 129, 246-247. Kernbach, 1978, 62-63. Id., 1983, 538-539.

¹⁴⁶ Kernbach, 1978, 61-62.

The chthonian end of the religiosity was developed more by the southern Thracians, in the cult and later the mysteries of Dionysos, the son of *Semele*, while the celestial-uranian side was developed by the Dacians, underlining ideas like the life after death, celestial signs and an ascetic life, as well as the practice of the cremation related to the sacred fire. Maybe this is what have had led to a word game about their supreme God, associating *Semelē* / *Zemelō*, in a masculine form, with *Zalmoxis*. The fact that some of such peculiarities of the Dacian religion were already clearly expressed long before Herodotus (and Pythagoras, being already present in Orphism), and that, in the times of Burebista (1st century BC), the high priest Deceneas strived again to impose a puritan life among the Dacians (the cutting of the wines – Strabo, 297), demonstrates the repeated and sustained effort to cultivate such reforms inside the Dacian society. The Dacians did not preserved the orgiastic form of the chthonian cult, as Pârvan wrote, but this does not mean that they did not have, before the particular religious evolution that occurred among them, a common religious origin with all the Thracians.

A chthonian goddess of the vegetation and fertility existed in the Indo-European religious thinking in parallel with an uranian god, but *Semele* could be also connected with the Pre-Indo-European religion in the Carpathian-Balkan region.¹⁴⁷ The root **sam-* in *Semele* and *Zámolxis* has also a powerful Pre-Indo-European source, meaning ‘high and deep’, as already signaled by Sorin Paliga. He offers *Someş* (and French *Somme*), *semeş*, and *Semenic* and the derivated words from these as examples. And he remarks: “On peut voir que le sens de *semeş* peut être appliqué avec succès pour reconstituer la “substance” de la divinité suprême de Thraco-daces.”¹⁴⁸ The Pre-Indo-European speakers in the Carpathian-Balkan area would have used words based on **SAM* and **OR/OL*, and maybe even a combination of them in relation with the Mother Earth goddess. This must have been the ingredients that led to the Thracian word *Semelē*, where the actual suffix *-yā* is a very old Indo-European form to express the feminine. Although important, I will not insist here on the alternance S-Z in the beginning of the word.¹⁴⁹ This way, S. Paliga proposed, as a first form, **Sam-ol-č-is*. If this tempting solution is correct, then the first part of the name would have had a meaning like ‘The Great High/Deep’. It would not be neither so unconceivable nor a joke for a

¹⁴⁷ Paliga, 2007, 320-321.

¹⁴⁸ Paliga, 2007, 323.

¹⁴⁹ Paliga, 2007, 324.

theonym like **Samolčis* to resonate with modern expressions like ‘The Highest One’ or ‘His Great Highness’! The second stage would have been *Zámolčis*, this leading to *Zámolxis*. That from *Zálmoxis* corresponds to a Thraco-Dacian “... *zalmos* ‘cuir, fourrure’; cette dernière explication a été, très probablement, fabriquée par les Thraces, pour cacher la signification réelle, “sérieuse”, de leur divinité suprême.”¹⁵⁰

Like on many other occasions the import of Pre-IE words into IE languages caused some confusion due to their resemblance with the IE words. This is why some of the original meanings survived, but some were reinterpreted. The thesis of S. Paliga of the evolution in three steps of the term which became *Zámolxis* supports this assertion. A Pre-IE chthonian divinity, and most probable a feminine divinity of the earth and vegetation was interpreted by the Thraco-Dacian Indo-Europeans according to their pantheon. This pantheon was defined by the duality *chthonian-uranian* and by the tripartition *priesthood – warriors (nobility) – workers* (functions: *sacred, martial, and economic; religion – political leadership – reproduction*). If there was a masculine counterpart for *Semele*,¹⁵¹ like **Samolčis*, it could have been associated with the supreme place in the Dacian pantheon. Therefore, no reductionist theory could be completely right, because this divinity had a powerful and productive original ambiguity on the coordinate chthonian-uranian spectrum. Long before Herodotus wrote, in spite of a strong chthonian background, the Dacian religion had clear uranian features, just as Pârvan explained it.¹⁵² The southern Thracians kept better the chthonian elements in the cult of *Semele* and *Dionysos*, while the Geto-Dacians promoted exclusively the uranian feature of their supreme divinity, a God to whom they gave so much worship that there was left too little for others. As a matter of fact, this is precisely the core of the religious revolution that took place in the Geto-Dacian religion, along with the accent on the doctrine of immortality, the eternal and sacred fire, and the aniconism.

The Lithuanian name *Zemeluks* is practically the same with the variant *Zámolxis*. It is well known the general difficulty of transmitting the foreign names in other languages, and in particular, that the foreign names were oftenly given in variants in Greek for this reason. More than that, *Zemeluks* is already a god, the god of the Earth, corresponding with the story

¹⁵⁰ Paliga, 2007, 325.

¹⁵¹ Paliga, 2007, 320-321.

¹⁵² Pârvan, 1982, note 8, 101 (151).

of the retreat into the cave. Although, as we know, the flow of cultural information and habits circulated rather northward, from the Dacians to the Lithuanians, from the furthestmost times of prehistory (Neolithic and Bronze Age), and with a powerful peak in the time of the Dacian kingdom. The Baltic and Slavic languages had many affinities with Thraco-Dacian.¹⁵³ The Baltic peoples imported from the Dacians, altogether with many groups of Thraco-Dacians who migrated there in different waves, words (or had a significant number of common words), features of material culture, funerary rituals, legends and *dainas* (Romanian *doine*) about Danube, and also religious beliefs.¹⁵⁴ The Lithuanian form *Zemeluks* is a late loan from the Dacian.

Conclusions

I think that the supreme god of the Dacians contains an *intended* ambiguity of his identity. It was not simply a heavenly or an earthly deity, but we are compelled to see his intended ambivalent nature in its origins: "We should seek in this direction the difficult problem of the essence of *Zalmoxis*. He seems to have had attributes of both a deity of Earth, as well as one of Heaven, as some rituals indicate. As the main divinity of the Getians, he could have accumulated diverse attributions."¹⁵⁵

Even if revealing some important guidelines, I think that a rigid support for some formulae as "three-fold religion", "mystery cult", "chthonian" or "uranian", and even "henotheism" (or "monotheism") or "polytheism" is predestined to fail (being too scholastic and partial) in explaining the very complex religious phenomenon which took place under the name of Zalmoxis in the Dacian world, influencing other neighboring worlds, as the Baltic and the Greek realms.

¹⁵³ Paliga, 2014, 355 sqq.

¹⁵⁴ Paliga, 2007, 95-108. Cf., for the common words, Duridanov, 1985, 142-144. Id., 1969, 87-93. Manole, *Aleksiejus* ..., 2015. Id., *"Ei, Dauno, Dauno..."* ..., 2015. Cf. Bender, 1921, p. 30: "dainā 'Volkslied' –Uh. [Uhlenbeck, *Sanskrit*] *diyati*; (F. [Feist, *Gothic*] *tains*); B. [Karl Brugmann, 1897] II, I, 263; Ber. [Berneker, *Slavic*] *dikū*; Boi. [Boisacq, *Greek*] *δῖνος*. Cf. Lesk. Abl. [August Leskien, *Der Ablaut der Wurzelsilben im Litauischen*, 1884] 271."

¹⁵⁵ Petre Alexandrescu, *Zalmoxis și cercetările lui Mircea Eliade*, 1978, 54: "În această direcție trebuie poate căutată soluția spinoasei problem a esenței lui Zalmoxis. El pare să fi avut atât atribuții de zeitate o pământului, puse în relief de legenda ascunderii sale sub pământ, dar și a cerului, așa cum indică unele ritualuri. Ca principală divinitate a geților el a putut cumula atribuții diverse."

It is clear that the Thraco-Dacians, as they appeared in history in the Carpathian-Balkan area starting with the Bronze Age, were the carriers of a "three-fold religion". The Thracian figures of divinities bear witness for this, through literary and archaeological data. But it is also very clear that north of Danube a radical transformation took place in religion, with very few exceptions – inevitable because of the cultural contacts of the Dacians with their neighbors, and especially with the south Danube Thracians, still exponents of the old tradition. And the mentioned transformation north of Danube looks like whipping out all the divine anthropomorphic representations for many centuries, even long before the kingdom of Burebista, and until the Roman conquest. The same features, however, were preserved in the areas of the free Dacians even in the time of the Roman province of Dacia and after that, leaving gradually space to funerary and other cultural forms of the provincial Roman Empire, bearing more and more Christian marks.

The religion of the Dacians began as a "three-fold religion", but differentiated itself with very unique features, original and unexplained only by the developments in the Roman and Greek areas.

The mystery cult was supported by the nobility and by the priesthood, but in its popular manifestations, far from the elevated forms materialized in the cultic ground of Sarmizegetusa, this religion could not refrain from some shamanic practices, and intervened even in guiding the Dacian medicine, a field where this religion of immortality seemed to have had a more powerful echo even to the south Danubian Thracians, unlike in other domains.

I think that the much experienced scholar in the history of religions, Mircea Eliade sensed more than others that Zamolxianism was an uranian religion, as well as its founder, an uranian figure, and not a chthonian one. The entire complex of Sarmizegetusa, with its calendaristic features, proves this point. The descent of Zalmoxis into the entrails of the earth (which must have had a powerful effect on Dacians), inevitably added some chthonian characteristics, but to an uranian deity with prehistorical chthonian origins.

One familiar with the Christian doctrine cannot pretend not to see, in the metaphor in action of Zalmoxis' descend in the cave and his promise of the immortality, a prophetic value, foretelling the death and resurrection of Christ. Such a pattern is a point for a clear uranian accent of the divine, as in the Osirian cult and mysteries. The uranian good defeats the chthonian evil, especially by descending into the realm of the evil, and taking down its power.

Therefore, if the Dacians used the form *Zámolxis* it was not for an overall chthonian character of the reformer, but for an originary dual, chthonian-uranian figure. And this feature corresponded, in a positive sense, with the attribute of life giving of any chthonian divinity connected with the vegetation, as the older Thraco-Dacian *Semele*.

After the Zalmoxian reform, the religion of the Dacians clearly concentrated on one uranian divinity who took upon it also the chthonian attributes. This means that at some level, the Dacians were henotheists and maybe even monotheists – enlarging so much the distance between their “only God” (Herodotus IV,94) and other spiritual beings. *Zámolxis* was also associated, as God by excellence, with the surname *Gebeléizis*. Very probable, the distance between this supreme, or sometimes even thought as unique God, and other spiritual beings, was not so big in the lower classes of the Dacian society and in the geographical regions more influenced by foreigners and less controlled by the Dacian political establishment, especially from the times of Burebista to those of Decebalus.

Zálmoxis has the etymological explanation in Porphyrius as ζάλμος (**sal-mo(i)š*) – “bear or wild animal skin” or “mask” and has a correspondence in *Zalmodigkos*, a Thracian anthroponym from the 3rd century BC. This name is connected with shamanic practices, some of them perpetuated in Romanian folklore, as “the Dance of the Bear” and with animal masks in general. The spelling of the second surname of the theonym, *Zálmoxis*, would be closer to *Sèlmoš*, as reasoned above in this paper (given the oscillations in the written sources and the Indo-European context). The *Dance of the Bear* and that of the *She-Goat or Deer* is a clear pre-Christian heritage in the Romanian folklore and has a connection with the cult of the ancestors, a very powerful feature of the Thraco-Dacian and Scythian religion. The shamanic cult with bear masks and skins was the older one, coming from the prehistoric twighlights, while the mystery rites were the reflex of the newer, overlapped, reform.

The mystery religion did not remain without collateral, but vivid, powerful, tradition of shamanic practices were connected to it. These traditions, on the background of the doctrine of immortality and the mystery rituals, responded to the need to reach to the (immortal) ancestors and their realm through shamanic practices. The witness of Porphyrios shows that the final consonant of Thraco-Dacian word was not well reproduced either by the Greek -ξ, or by -ς, while the ending -ις is a mere Greek adaptation. Like in

other occurrences of the Greek adnotations -ξ/-ζ/-σι/-σις we might very well suspect a Thracian -š, at least in later forms. Here we could see a link between the Dacian word *moš* and the Romanian autochthonous word *moș*. There could be also a connection (even if post-factual) with the Romanian radical "*mor*", which appears in the onomatopoeic construction of the sound done by the bear, and in the expression "*moș Martin*" given to the bear in the Romanian folklore. One should also note, in this respect, the powerful resonance of the word "*moș*" in the Romanian folklore, with special days, bearing a lot of rituals which lead us back to their shamanic origins, and to their connections with the hunting, the pastoral life, and the cult of the ancestors.

The Dacian religion had all the features characteristic to the solar-uranian pole of the Indo-European religious system, and it had many similar manifestations, especially to the Indo-Iranians. The form *Zálmoxis* I supposed it took its shape from the term ζάλμος, as given by Porphyrius, but as a word game. The ζάλμος was the "wild animal costume" used by the shaman performing the ritual of the Masked Dancing, with bear or deer appearance. This practice was very spreaded among the Indo-European populations from ancient prehistoric times. The mystic reverence given to the bear was also connected to the taboo occultation of its name – the reason why here might appear an ambiguous term for the "wild forest animal", or "beast" (without a pejorative connotation), as **zal(m)-* from the PIE root **h₁el(h₁n)-*. There is a strong possibility that the final term **mos-* / **moš-* (< PIE **mois-*) "animal skin, sack, bag" was preserved in the Romanian autochthonous word *moș*, meaning "ancestor", since all these rituals were about the (immortal) ancestors gone into the world of *Zálmoxis*. This might be also explained through the connection of the form *Zálmoxis* with the shamanic rituals involving the *Bear or Deer/She-Goat Dance* rituals and the veneration of the ancestors. If *Zálmoxis* was "The (Divine) Man" by excellence, as the supreme god, the form *Zálmoxis* represented "The Ancestor" by excellence, materialized by the shaman dressed with the ritual costume *moš*. The paronymic relation between the two forms indicates a possible word game. The Romanian word *moș* is autochthonous, of a clear Dacian origin – the source of the Romanian substratum.¹⁵⁶ We should not forget, in this context, the rich family of this

¹⁵⁶ For the discussion about the three major ethnic sources of the Carpathian-Balkan region – Thracian, Illyrian and Greek – see Paliga, 2015, p. 39: "southeast Europe of the Antiquity in the Classical and Post-Classical times housed three main ethnic groups, the result of the

word in Romanian – e. g. *moașă* (old lady that delivers the baby, midwife), *moșie* (inherited land), a *moșteni* (to inherit), *moștenire* (heritage), *moștean* and *moștenitor* (hier).

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repeated IE migrations: the Greeks in the south, the Illyrians on the Adriatic coast and penetrating somewhat to the east, the Thracians groups, occupying a vast area in the Balkans and beyond the Danube to the north, and some scattered Celtic groups, later acculturated. There was NOT another major, important ethnic group, a detail to be carefully noted when attempting to understand the period AFTER Romanization and later, in the period of the decline of the Empire and the period of migrations.”

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