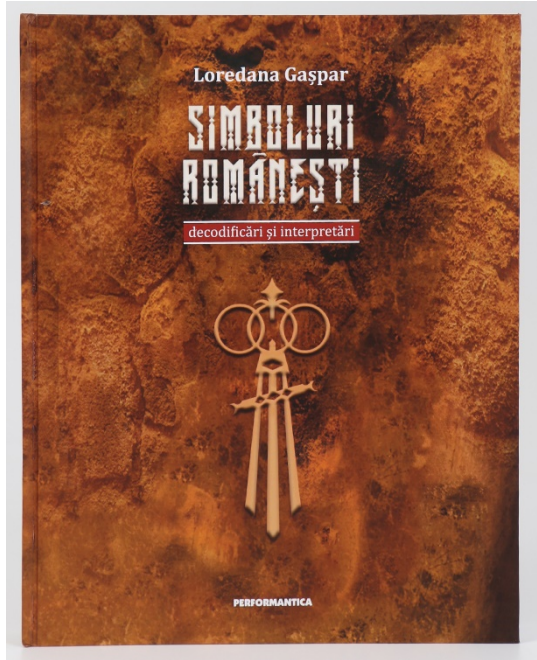


Romanian Symbols Decoding and Interpretation Book Review

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Loredana Gașpar, *Simboluri românești decodificări și interpretări/ Romanian Symbols Decoding and Interpretation*, Performantica Publishing House, Iași, 2022, 362 pages



The work is a research that has been carried out for over ten years, a massive documentation, the author making use of a rich biography, but also studying in the field in many villages, hamlets, and museums. Up to nowadays, no such study has been written. The courage to tackle such a study is extremely salutary, all the more so as information, practices, customs, traditions and traditional household are disappearing with each generation, and researchers to study them have been very few in number, and those currently in existence are almost non-existent.

The author synthesizes the main Romanian symbols found in the Romanian area, taking a look at each of them from the Neolithic period to the present day. In several cases, the meticulous research reveals the preservation of the main substratum of meanings, but in others mixtures of influences due to the dynamics of the populations that have left their mark, determining a different meaning in the reading of the symbols. In practice, none of the symbols can have a single interpretation, each being influenced in its reading by the context and substrate to which we are attached.

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The book presents two types of discourse, one oriented towards the depths of abstraction, the other iconic – directed towards the mystery of Faith, but not religious Faith, but the Faith of knowledge. The two discourses – the lexical one and the iconic one – in which the image comes and points, uncovers and reveals the archetype of the first graphic sign, they intertwine spectacularly, offering a complex key to understanding, sometimes on certain meanings, sometimes on the moment of the beginning of creation starting from the core of the symbols.

The search for the whole by penetrating deeper and deeper layers has led the author to search and find a Mystery that creates the image of an archetype. In the twenty-nine chapters (Point, Circle, Volute, Angle, Rhombus, Column, Twin Segments, Circular and Angular Spiral, Wandering Path, Water Wave, Ram's Horns, Sun, Moon, Stars, Flower of Life, Swastika, Tree of Life, Man, Horse, Bird, Snake, Wolf, Bull, Bear, Carpathian Lion, Egg, Rope, Sacred Knot, Fantastic Beings), Loredana Gașpar chronologically traces the path that symbols have travelled through time, but also notices the many facets that a symbol can have. It is an assiduous approach that tries to lead to a decoding of symbols and to create the initial structure that formed it.

"Myths give rise to traditions, rituals, emotionally charged objects that want to copy the behaviour of a divine ancestor. Over time, these practices are either preserved with great interest, forgotten or given other functions. Historical time sometimes mercilessly kidnaps mythical time, other times they happily cohabit together, which is still the case today."

The author decodes, but also interprets the symbols, always referring to archetypal myths and to the historical time that has blurred or enhanced some symbols. A common characteristic of symbols is that they are perfectly camouflaged behind an aesthetic veil that sometimes diminishes or complicates their true meaning. Repetitive decoration, violent chromaticism, especially after industrialisation, inadequate positioning or neighbourhoods that make the symbol a zone of gratuitous, ornamental writing, sometimes make reading and interpretation cumbersome, but this has not prevented the author from transcending beyond these syncopations and penetrating to the core of the archetypes.

In addition to the ancient authors who studied the myths Simion Florea Marian, Artur Gorovei, Tudor Pamfile, I.-A. Candrea, Elena Niculiță-Voronca, Romulus Vulcănescu or the even fewer who have studied symbols (Nicolae Dunăre, Constantin Prut), Loredana Gașpar speaks through her two discourses – lexical and iconic – about meanings, but also about the courage of creation starting from the core of the symbol, thus decoding deep mysteries.