

Universality of Humanitarian Knowledge: A Cognitive Context of the Infosphere

Nestinarstvo (Ritual fire-dancing):
A Planetary Historiographical Map
of the Anthropological Transmissions of Time)

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Abstract

The information-retrieval aspect of the examined as a secondary-documentary system of knowledge of the international universal bibliographic indexes of the planet, which are transforming the **humanitarian cultural and value complex of the humanity (religion – philosophy – science – arts – every-day-life)** in a methodological key for decoding the message of the folklore Nestinar ritual, preserved at the crossroad between Europe and Asia Minor – on the Balkan Peninsula in Strandzha (mountain in Bulgaria).

Using the modern **concept of the „information environment”, obvious and tacit knowledge** in the planetary significant aspect of the overlapping levels of the reality and the consciousness, lends to the cultural and phenomenological rational historiographical overlapping mapping of the subjects of physical, biological and mental nature **in the ontological multilevel unity (interactions – information technologies – information collections).**

The natural connection of the millenaries in the rudiments of the traditions and the sagas in the Nestinarstvo have been preserved in archaic, open to ethno-demographic peculiarities; the kindred rituals, related to plays in-around-jumping over the fire in connection with the summer solstice, observed all over the world. The connections of the **polysemy of the pagan and the Christian culture**, many times interpreted through the ages under **the influence of the whole religious spectrum of the Humanity**, which genealogical propinquity of anthropological transmissions denotes a cosmical unique code – a programme of the philogenesis of profound coherence of the course of the planetary development.

Keywords: information environment, information collections, information technologies, interactions, humanitarian knowledge, cognitive context of the infosphere, nestinarstvo (ritual fire-dancing), philogenesis

Part I: Methodology

*“and they distributed
to each as anyone has need”*

Acts (4: 35)

I. Universality of Humanitarian Knowledge

The **bibliographical level of modelling of international universal secondary-documentary indexes of the planet**, studied in their **systematical dialectical globality** [1], on sufficiently extensive, but at the same time detailed observable **naturally historically determined level of congestion and filtering of information**, achieved image of human world contented in the works of the written communications.

Emphasizing on the course of the world historical and cultural process and the Western science (philosophical anthropology, anthropological trends in psychology and sociology, properly anthropological studies, structuralism and semiotics) at the end of XIX – the beginning of XX centuries and the modern times – the last decades of XX century - the beginning of XXI century [2], **the ontological picture of the humanitarian knowledge – knowledge of man** on the base of revealing the correlations of humanitarian sciences – social sciences – natural sciences – technical sciences has grown into an **information picture of knowledge of XXI century** [3].

The problem of the **character of the humanitarian knowledge** is proved to be a general, universal problem of the humanitarian learning by the achievement of generalized global system knowledge and the practical operation and bringing into requisition of various empirically complicated realities and consciousnesses [4].

II. Cognitive Context of the Infosphere

The **square root of the reflection from the observation of the infosphere** – a sphere of information examined as a planetary structured multilevel entity, composed by mutually crossing, concurring, contrary and the like ideas on the real world and the consciousness reflecting it in the form of an information picture of knowledge – as follows:

- **Methodological** (S. Denchev [5-6]);
- **Philosophical-scientometrical** (A. Kumanova [2-3]);
- **Information-technological** (D. Christozov [5-6]);
- **Meta-classificational** (N. Kazanski [7]).

The synthetic-complex and utmost lapidary recreation of the information picture of the humanitarian knowledge of the humanity in XXI century as a **epistemological knowledge** appears in the guise of specific case of the process of the **universalization of the knowledge** (observed at the same time as the process of **specialization** in it) [8].

The rhizomatal [9] (**mental building of relations**, materialized in the culture as a noospherical analogue of the biological structure of life [10] represented through an intelligible screen the natural-historical developed secondary-documentary level of the infosphere [11] in the shape of an information picture of the world.

III. Planetary

The cognitive substance of the rhizomathical information picture of the world consists in its phenomenology – appearing in the form of an **information picture of the epistemology** [12]. The intelligible layouts of the international universal secondary-documentary indexes of the planet [1] – a **cadastral structure of the infosphere** [13].

The methodology of the contemporary scientific conception “**information environment**” (a triad: **information collections – information technologies – interactions between men and equipment**) revealed by two **cardinal interrelated sections** of the infosphere:

- **vertical** (observed as a system unity of the levels of the **physical, biological and cultural organization of the life on the planet** [14];
- **horizontal** (represented through **mental by its nature ideal structures of interactions** – points of view, Weltanschauungen – **as correlated in information realities with the phenomena of the physical nature – information collections and information technologies** [5-6]).

The natural connection between the differentiated vertical and horizontal sections of the infosphere, consisting of the unified nature of these sections (at a point) by **interactions between the men and the equipment of the information environment, which meta-system character of decoding the meaning in the semantics of any dialogue and the sense of information reality itself** is presented as a leading in the information phenomenology [5-6].

As a result of the drawing of the methodological importance of the interaction substance between men and equipment for the information modelling, the **historiographical by its nature** is the task of building a **planetary information map of knowledge**.

IV. Anthropological Transmissions of Time

In the information – historical-cultural – scheme of building of a historiographical epistemological map of the anthropological transmissions of the humanitarian knowledge which are universally unified by **the entity of past – present – future** as a **noospherical perpetuity**.

Appearing by its substance as an integrated time – cultural eternity, the past, the present and the future naturally generate a historiographical material of the information environment **in the genesis of the integration of science, arts, literature, everyday life, philosophy, religion**.

The described methodological formulation of the phenomenology of the building of the information map of knowledge is **rational** in its basis because the moving idea to aggregate the scattered spheres of the learning, the experience of the humanity as a process of open possibilities, achievements of his creation in the full spectrum of his being and consciousness – and material, and ideal, not neglecting anyone of the diverse methods for establishing links between the reality and the consciousness.

V. Nestinarstvo: A Planetary Map

The folklore ritual of *nestinarstvo* conserved at the road between Europe and Asia Minor – on Balkan Peninsula in Strandzha (mountain in Bulgaria), represents an open **information environment of the obvious and tacit knowledge** in the planetary important aspect of overlapping levels of the reality, open to the **cultural-phenomenological mapping** through a screen of determined documentary sources – objects of the physical, the biological and the mental nature in the ontological multilevel entity.

The natural relation of millenaries in the rudiments of traditions and myths here has been preserved in the archaic, open to the ethno-demographical peculiarities of **easter-n-rups affiliations**.

The relations established in the **interweaving of the pagan and Christian cultures**, repeatedly pre-semantized all along the centuries (IV, IX, XV-XIX, XX) **under the influence of the whole religious spectrum of the Humanity**.

The genealogical propinquity of the physical, the biological and the cultural surroundings with the potential of the **methodology of the modern scientific concept of “information environment”** represents **the cosmically implemented unique code – the program of phylogenesis** with deep consistency of strata and trends of development.

VI. Phenomenology of the Rational Ritual Map

To the attention of the scientific community the core of the generalized **rational information map of perception the nestinarstvo** at the methodological level of the concept of “information environment” is presented in the shape of a special sort of document – a script of a documentary of the same name (consisting of three fragments, reflecting one another: **philosophical – technological – anthropological** [15]; all these fragments being deduced from the multilevel isomorphic titles, provided with established connotations from the Holy Script) (*comp.*: Part II: Observation).

In the cited at the beginning of the present work epigraph - **“and they distributed to each as anyone has need” Acts (4: 35)** – is reflected the rational paradigmatic character of the status of knowledge at the very outset of XXI century, in which focus the post-nonclassical information interdisciplinary science in the world of documentary information has a principal historiographical and historic-cultural futuristic deal simultaneously with an already transformed and with transforming world, given in the focus of the culture (cultural-philosophical-religious totality of the Humanity), containing in the guise of an information rhizome the methods of possible transformation by the man of his surrounding (and information) environment and of himself.

In this way the fact that the information science today has to deal with more complex reality than the tensile and localized matter, is taken into account with the **phenomenological capacities of the human mind**, being able to surmount the reality, into which the man is plunged by transforming it, displaying the deficiency of the initial alternatives and by this opening unforeseen before (in the information database) possibilities, from which derived and the natural state **being in chime with the religion** (drawing on the religion the conviction in the significance of the scientific way as an insight into the Creator’s providence) [16].

VII. Axiology Of The Rational Ritual Map

In connection with the presented methodological formulation it is just the **historiographical rational information map (of the nestinarstvo, as well as of any other phenomenon)**, which gives to the man the real chance **to enter the information world as in the open information frame of manifold reality and consciousness** and to choose from it (out of the information map) **accessible and reliable to him (man) level and needs of comprehensive multifarious knowledge incarnated in the documentary flow**.

In this human right of exhaustive information the contemporary information culture could not deny to the users of information. Because the **free right of penetration into the information reality** is a transformed learning of information science for intellectual (rhizomatal) information-retrieval equipment of providing the access to the multiform (including and mutually exclusive) approaches to the information realities, conceding to the man unlimited, determined by himself, unpredictable roads to the knowledge.

VIII. On the Road to a Meta-Historiographical Map

The idea of the planetary information environment of the culture appears as a methodological basis for adoption in the information-retrieval practice of the **stupendous philosophical idea of knowledge of the entity of multilevel world of reality and consciousness of the *Homo Sapiens*** [17].

In the bosom of this idea the following **historiographical corner-stones of overlapping lines of knowledge** underlie:

- **semiotic theory of the culture, created by the renowned structuralists as U. Eco [18], Yu. M. Lotman [19] and T. A. Sebeok [20];**
- **phenomenology of the myth and the religion, revealed by the American historian Joseph Campbell (1904-1987) [21] and the Rumanian historian of religion Mircea Eliade (1907-1986) [22];**
- **historiographical studies, closed to the traditions of the comparative mythology, developed in the modern times by two philosophers and historians of science - the Italian American Giorgio de Santillana (1902-1974) and the German Hertha von Dechend (1915-2001), investigating the roots of human knowledge and the observed transmissions on the ground of the myth [23];**
- **synarchy of the astrological conceptions (in connection with the status of this sphere of knowledge at different stages of the history), achieved in the interdisciplinary trend, created by G. de Santillana and H. von Dechend [24], and their followers [25], which roots go to the work of uranology of the famous Dutch specialist in China of German origin Gustaaf Schlegel (1840-1903), written in French and published in 1875 in Leiden (photoreprinted in Taiwan in 1967) [26];**
- **publications of the migration school of the symbolic transformatism of knowledge, dispersed in the different centers all over the world and studying this crucial problematics [27];**
- **comprehensive studies on Ancient Iran [28], Zoroastrianism and Parsism [29], Mithraism [30]; Egiptian [31], Celtic [32], Ancient Greek and Antique Roman [33] mythologies; on the ritual cults of the Sun, Light, Fire and Times [34];**
- **works, which appeared on the limit of the correlation mythologies – religions - ethnologies [35].**

In the kaleidoscope of the universality of the established in the course of the world history of the humanitarian knowledge cognitive context the infosphere appeared as a basis of comparison of the constituting historiographical traditions about the nestinarstvo in Bulgaria.

The ritual dance on glowing embers is rudimentary preserved in a repeatedly pre-semantized form in the course of centuries as a result of the transmission of manifold cultural influences on the road between Europe and Asia Minor, and which are subject to decoding.

The overlapping lines: 1) a planetary information map of the anthropological transmissions of the human culture within a time, and 2) a historiography of the problem of nestinarstvo in the studies of Bulgarian scholars and specialists in Bulgarian studies, - is a sign of the advent of a reef in the indicated trends:

- in the framework of the **ethnology** have been modified studies in nestinarstvo in Bulgaria in the beginning of XX century (**Prof. I. Shishmanov**, 1917 [36]), by which was surmounted on an empirical level the interest in the ritual dance established in the literature by its initial researchers by the end of XIX – in the beginning of XX centuries (**the**

poet **P. R. Slaveykov**, 1875 [37]; the explorer **S. Shivachev**, 1898-1899 [38]; the collector of folklore monuments **A. p. Stoilova /A. Popstoilova/** [39];

- on the base of the realization of the ethnological level of the nestinar's phenomenon in the beginning of XX century it became possible to establish its **religious significance** – the intense concentration of relations with venerable cultural transmissions from India, China, pre-semantized by the Christianity (**Academician M. Arnaudov**, 1917 [40]);

- **psycho-physiological problem** in the nestinarstvo became a subject of study from the medicine (psychiatry) in the works of **physician – philosopher E. Sharankov** (1947 [41]), developed in the researches of the **doctor – scientist (psychiatrist) Prof. N. S. Shipkovenski** [42];

- the location by the **historians** of influences and relations of the **cultural transmissions between the Ancient Iran and the Thrace (Prof. I. Marazov**, 1975 [43]) do not find direct analogies in the studies of the nestinar ritual, but there is obviously a new spirit in this trend – **the Iranian root** in 2000's (**P. Goliyski**, 2003; **V. Iliev**, 2005 [44], which is symptomatic;

- in the framework of the **humanitarian knowledge** the interest in the problem of nestinarstvo was transformed as a result of the studies of the **historian Prof. A. Fol** 1986 [45]) on the **Thracian orphism (an ethnological, mythological and natural complex: I. Georgieva**, 1987; **V. Fol, R. Neykova**, 1999-2000; **D. Radoynova**, 1999 [46]);

- **Shamanism and the astrological grounds of the nestinarstvo** are treated in the works of the historian **A. Kaloyanov**, 1994-1995 [47].

Considering the **documentary flow on the nestinarstvo as a system**, one could ascertain the fact that there are not yet established evident relationship in the public consciousness with the studies on:

1. **the region as a whole (Strandzha: the most northern in the remote past territory of the Ancient Egypt and the uttermost West outlying parts of the Persian empire)**;
2. **the etymological historical-cultural character of the revealed related transmissions** [48];
3. **Proto-Egyptian roots of the information cluster** (the information hints connected with Goddess Bastet [49]) (analogically indicated **Proto-Iranian roots** [43-44]).

In the literature there are very rarely studies consecrated to the **religious spectrum of the Humanity**, reflected in the nestinarstvo (and in the **Christianity** in particular), and those based on the historiographical method – a sort of the comprehensive study of **St. N. Stefanov**, 2008 [50] (obviously suggesting of coming changes in the examined complex field and its versatile systematical reflection).

IX. General Conclusion of the Information Approach

The **universality of the humanitarian knowledge** (Sect. I) in the **cognitive context of the infosphere** (Sect. II) outlines a **planetary historiographical map of knowledge** (Sect. III) in the **anthropological transmissions of a time** (Sect. IV), revealing the phenomenon of the **nestinarstvo as a substance of the comprehensive planetary map of epistemology** (Sect. V).

The **phenomenology of the rational map of the nestinar's ritual** (Sect. VI) possesses an **axiological nature** (Sect. VII) and appears as a threshold to the **interdisciplinary research way of information modelling in the building of a meta-historiographical rhizomatic rational map of the preservation, the creation and the transmission of knowledge for information-**

retrieval purposes without any restrictions of content-field, territorial and linguistic character (Sect. VIII), which provide unconditioned possibilities for information users to access the established multilevel (primary-documentary – secondary-documentary) resources in a dialectical connection.

Efficiently is such an information modelling of the retrieved sources of information totality of documents on the nestinarstvo and the related problematics, in which the **cultures observed in unity of transmissions, their cross-referencing and pre-semantisations THROUGH THE META-SYSTEMATIC AND PHILOSOPHICAL-RELIGIOUS INFORMATION CODES of the following overlapping offsets of relations to being and consciousness: Proto-Egyptian; Proto-Iranian; Proto-Thracian.**

Part II: Observation Nestinarstvo (Ritual Fire-Dancing) Information Map

I. Holy Ghost (Love: Interactions)

“while a mighty wind swept over the waters”

Genesis (1: 2)

The road between Europe and Asia Minor, passing through Balkan Peninsula, takes us off to the Strandzha Mountain – the biggest natural park in Bulgaria, in order to reveal, in **pictures and notions, its information environment – physical, biological, cultural** in natural system entity, reflecting **the knowledge – obvious and tacit**, decoding the **substance** in the **naming of the realities – spiritual and material** – in their live connection with millenaries, wrapped in the traditions with sagas, legends, mystery. These layers, encompassed as a transforming substance through the **conception of information environment**, lead to **the cosmicity...**

Strandzha is build of old metamorphic and granitoid, Triassic and Jurassic sediments covered with evergreen vegetation, interspersed with lush pastures. Oriented inwards direction – from the Southeastern part to the center of the mountain we reach the Veleka river, decorated with dense forest of ash, elm, beech, oak; liana; water-lily, periwinkle... Red deer, roe, wild-boar, reptiles; 41 species of river-fish; 260 species of birds are also to be found. Here it is passing over one of the most popular bird-way **Via Pontica**. The ecological diversity is planetary significant.

Although low as a whole, Strandzha hides many **Thracian cult complexes of tumuli**, dated VI-V centuries Before Christ often inaccessibly overgrown. The region was described in the Antiquity by Herodotus, Xenophon, Thucydides, and in modern times by the Czech Constantine Jirecek, the Bulgarian Petko Rachev Slaveykov and many others in latest time.

Sparely populated, the Bulgarian territory of Strandzha of 1161 square kilometers has today 21 settlements - from which only 2 small towns and the rest hamlets – among them villages Balgari (*other names:* Urgari, Urguri, Vurgari), Kosti, Brodilovo, Kondolovo, Slivarovo, Gramatikovo... The villages have always been organized around a square with **church – SS Constantine and Helena** in Balgari, **SS Cyril and Methodius** in Kosti, **St Panteleymon** in Brodilovo...

Down the ages the name of the mountain was **Mons Asticus** (from the local tribe **asti** – XIII-I centuries Before Christ) and means **eliminated, closed, mystic...** Even nowadays the mountain is a meeting of times open to ethno-demographic features of **Eastern-rup belonging**.

During the Second millenary Before Christ here was established the pagan creed of **Thracian Orphism** (related to the cult of ancient poet Orpheus), incarnated in special **heathen folklore rites**, widespread until the adopting of the **Christianity**. These intercultural syncretic layers have been intermingled even today in multiple traces in legends, songs, dances, among which in the historical folklore rudiments of **a nestinar's rites** are observed (*from Ancient through Modern Greek* : anastenari / anestinari – by the fireside / in the hearth; *there are also other etymologies*).

The numerous and contradictory views on the nestinarstvo (nestinar's rite) in the documents, as well as in the living tradition are:

- expressed by the Church position of the Christian doctrine – of its **rejection** – as a superstitious practice in life **(1)**;
- conviction that it is a remote **reminiscence** of an ancient cult rite with eastern origin **(2)**;
- determination of numerous **analogies** between the enigmatic antiquity and the pattern, and significance of the magical-religious initiations of the primitive and advanced peoples all over the world during the different periods of cultural transmissions **(3)**.

Here we do not set forth the task to elucidate the nestinar cult on its own, as well to restore or to rebuild it with the well developed religious doctrine of Christianity. We do tackle **the idea of rational reconstruction the message of the phenomenon by fixing its information environment as a practical basis for future investigations, giving the possibility of manifold readings, in which comparison is hiding the code of the multi-dimensional reality of human being and consciousness, continuously transforming in metamorphosing phases.**

The idea – to reconstruct the sense of the information unity of nestinarstvo – is carried out:

- **on the a x i s reminiscences - analogies in the planetary space area (I)**;
- **on the v e r t i c a l of times (past – present) as a cultural continuum (II)**.

We are attracted from the concept of the Bulgarian scholar in religious cults and folklore academician Mihail Arnaudov, who perceives in nestinars – initiated in secret cult **hierophants, filled up with supreme spirit prophets**, called (utter further: **with Holy Ghost**) to affiliate with blessings [40]. The sparks of **the divine gleams**, grasped by the man of science just before the withering away of the nestinarstvo in 20th century, we correlate to the rudiments surviving intact from the rite today – those of **pristine (ancestral) purity. The “vital” (“Dionysian”)** in the nestinar rites are also interrelated to the conclusions of Bulgarian Prof. Alexander Fol about Thracian Orphism [45] and we ascertain that it is a personification of the **“out of time inception of the spirit”** (term of the Russian philosopher Vyacheslav I. Ivanov).

In the Greek mythology God Apollo (-Phebus) is an incarnation of **the unity** as an element and its substance is **a monad**; God Dionysus (Bacchus) – represents **the multiplicity – dyad**. The dyad (separation) precedes the monad (integration). The Greek philosopher Proclus makes a synthesis: *the influence of the Apollo's element on the Dionysian one is necessary in order to avoid their self-prodigality and presumption*. Through Orpheus Dionysus is a premonition of the filial hypostasis – of the celestial Father (God-Son), suffering, sacrificing its complete deity. The element Orpheus – Dionysus in the Antiquity could not yet completely amalgamate – in love. Orpheus expresses the mystical synthesis of **the revelations – Dionysian and Apollonian**, with a new meaning of **“play” (multivariable – relative – decisions: Dionysus)** and **“game” (one and only – absolute – decisions: Apollo)** of Homo Ludens. So – through Orpheus – Dionysus affiliates with the universal martyrdom, denying emphatically his own will, submitting to those of the Father (God-Father).

The Christianity acquires the form and the practice of Sacraments (“Baptism with water” – “Baptism with fire”), filling them with new content: substrata-symbols “water” (memory) and “fire” (spirit) do not have any materialistic connotations (as in polytheistic mythologema). The consecration of flock through the Holy Ghost commences after the Ascension of Jesus Christ in the day of Pentecost (when the Holy Ghost reveals as a fire: “**tongues of flame**” – **Word – God-Logos**).

The French philosopher Gaston Bachelard – researcher of the meaning of the fire phenomenon in the continuum of times, gives the following meaning: “*Love, death and fire coalesce in one particular moment. Through its self-sacrifice in the very heart of the flame, the Transience gives us lesson in Eternity. The purging through fire is a bail for a complete passing beyond. Losing all for gaining all.*” [51].

The catharistic syncretism **love-death-fire**, fixed in the nestinar rite, is an enduring of the **Man’s transition across the eternity**. And if **love and death** – as an expression of the **noetic aspect** of this passing – are individually measurable, but the **fire** – as a **material substratum** possesses absolute physical properties: it burns, purges, worms and shines (as absolute – in an **ideal plan** – are the real actions of the **Holy Ghost**: it burns away the sins, purges out the hearts, worms the colds and lightens the misbelievers.

Nestinarstvo in the moment of the **fire dancing** (*according to Dostoyevsky any dance is a declaration of love!*) amalgamates the physical and the ideal in an entity. These times are **rhythm-mighty wind** of the eternity, crossed by the anthropologic trajectory **love-death**.

II. Fire (Matter: Technology)

“They walked about in the flames”

Daniel (3: 24)

The transformation through fire of the energy of **the Man and the Universe** as an integrated world is determined by **the complex of Empedocles** - Greek philosopher, poet, physician, political figure. In his hilosistic naturphilosophy the roots of all are the four eternal immutable elements (**earth, water, air, fire**), and the momenta – **love** and **hate** by which impact the universe either unites in a aggregated infinite sphere, or disaggregates...

The expression “*Pro aries et focus*” (“About altars and fireplaces”) – by Cicero in his treatise “On the nature of gods” – is a metaphor of the existence, because **the fire** – **as an altar** – is a sacred vital archetypal element and symbol of life, of light and warmth, of hearth and family. At the dawn of the humanity that was precisely the mastery of the fire, which marks the origination of **the culture**. The mastering of the first **technology (fire)** initiated the advent of the technosphere as a sociosphere-anthroposphere. The fire is the only element that man could obtain by his own, so the fire is initially an evidence for the relationship of the man with the universe. The fire possesses the property of a “purging flame”, which destroys the evil and annihilates the flesh; and in the nestinarstvo it expresses the human **concern** providing – through magic acts and words - for health, yield and livestock.

To be found in different continents and corners of the earth, the ritual of walking barefoot on glowing embers, initially, and in modern times, is related to the renewal of the nature in spring. Similar are the rites connected with dancing in/around and jumping (over) a fire with regards to the summer solstice in the eve of St John the Baptist (Enyovden), observed in Western, Southern and Eastern Europe; China, India... The predominant positive evaluation of the “living flame” – especially after its mastering connected to the achievements and the progress of the civilization – is manifesting in ancient customs like cresset processions, as well as in candle light by the sanctuaries in different religious cults (for Christians the lighted tapers at Baptism, Eucharist, Obse-

quies have a crucial symbolic role as expression of the spiritual light – of the relation of Man to Ancient of Days.

The panagir (*Greek; Bulg.*: panair) – nestinar fairs in Strandzha have a unique musical accompaniment – they are traditional sounds, which **metrical picture – substitute of SS Constantine and Helena – through extended (irregular) rhythm – is a sacral code**. The tunes are played on **sacred drums and bagpipes**, thurified with incense. The most ringing melody is “Skopos” (“on leaving”) – with fixed constant model in the drum part oriented to the **mythologema Beginning – End**, followed by the **sacral harrowing – crossing the space: church – chapel (“konaka”) – spring (“ayazmoto”) and back**.

The fusion Man-Nature in the rite is in **the wrapped silence** (of usually emphatically loquacious folk), accompanied with blazing up sparks of **sounds and exclamations**. **The rhythm of copper and silver bells and ancient coins**, adorning **the icons**, is dominating. **The ceremonial walk around the fire** before and during the **sacral dance** is characterized by the **tempo of metrical speed – psychophysical – ritual – dimension – transcendental archetypical state of mind**. **The dance-crossing of the live coals** is realized in a trajectory of the **axes of the Cross and figures of flying**.

At midnight – analogy of the eternity, the **sacrificial circle of trampled fire** (representing the sun, the moon and the infinity of the space) is surrounded by **ritual horo** (round dance), which revolving sphere symbolizes **cydic recurrence (transient – eternal), rotation (natural – supernatural), cosmic level of reiteration (physical – metaphysical)**.

The tangle of questions about the nestinar ritualism is like a folded information map of the cultural strata composed by ambiguous **dilemma**:

- widely spread pagan cult or shaman rite?
- planetary significant religious mixtures or local folklore phenomenon?

III. Sun (Energy: Fund)

“the Sun of righteousness shall rise”

Malachi (4: 2)

From the middle of XIX century there are records that the nestinar villages have celebrated **the Sunday (27th of May)** after the day of **SS Constantine and Helena (21st of May)** and before **the Birth of St John the Baptist (Enyovden) (24th of June)**. The descriptions of the scientists during XX century (prof. A. Kaloyanov [47], etc.) indicated three more feasts in their **calendar**:

- in the day of **St John the Baptist** (7th of January);
- in the night before the day of **St Athanasius** (18th of January);
- in the day of **St Elias the Prophet (Ilinden)** (20th of July).

The period of 183 days designates these feasts and divides into halves the other six months... This is the circle of the **constellation of Pleiads**: in November it is “above” and unites **Heaven – Earth**; in May, when is down below, - **Earth – Hell**. In the middle of the period “down”, through which goes the **universal axe Heaven – Earth – Hell** is namely 27 May. The nestinars depicted **a cross** with cattle-manure on the gates of their houses.

The spring-well Big ayazmo in the place Vlahov dol - ravine (Vlahovo,

Pripor) on Big Sunday (27th of May) is a **sacral common space**; towards it **ritual processions** from neighbouring villages throng in five rays like to an **ancestral homeland**.

Early in the morning from the churches they escort the **icons in “mantles” from red cloth**. The processions led by the major nestinar-woman (churchwarden, musicians, juveniles, all of them with names Constantine and Helena), direct to Vlahov ravine... Here meet all the villages and any one of them has its own **ritual place (“odarche” – altar)**. **The descent of the processions to the spring, sprinkling of icons and people with spring water** ends in **dance and common table...** **“The sacrificial bull”** (a symbol of the solar God) (*today*: lamb) in the consciousness of the Christian multitude is recovered with the self-sacrifice of the Redeemer... In the past here was not lighted ritual fire... Today men, among them – those arriving from Greece (to honour “Homeland”), and the **stripling Kostadin** Mihaylov from village Brodilovo tramples down the embers... The **neophyte Kostadin** for the second time takes part in the rite; the first time – it was at the patron Saint’s day of his village; he possesses also a great talent for music performance...

The week between 27 May and 3 June is full of numerous **fairs** – close to **chapels situated circular on the periphery** (build on or near **Thracian sanctuaries**): **St Trinity** near Balgari, **St Petka** near Kondolovo... The churchwardens Kostadin Iliev and Kiril Epitropov, Radi Ivanov – a son of the fourth nestinar-woman from all six in village Balgari are our interlocutors...

The transmission of nestinarstvo is not by heredity but according to her/his dexterity – in live coals and in righteous life. In the past the nestinar fire was lighted from the real fire; in it entered the “obsessed” ones from the spirit of St. Constantine (and St. Helena). The ring of fire is the earthly image of the sun – *“and as for the sun is hard to speak, so it is hard to tell about the nestinarstvo”* – utters Kiril Epitropov. The performance of the nestinar ritual is a help of the cosmic forces in the **diurnal and annual of natural cycle**. With the gradual restriction of the ritual by the local authorities the last nestinars disappear (in the 70s of the past century) and the figure of the churchwarden comes to the fore (he could not enter in the embers, but has kinship ties with a nestinar family).

On **3rd of June** – **fair in village Balgari** – the procession goes round the church and the glowing embers, on which nestinar-woman Veselina Ilieva and nestinar-man Kostadin Mihailov from village Brodilovo and others are dancing... After the ritual they remain sweet-tampered, bashful, naturally downright and reticent about their sacred part in the rite.

What is the missive of this ritual we try to find out by consulting following neutral scientists, giving opinions on that phenomenon, which have not been expressed yet:

- **Prof. Michel Wieviorka** (High School of Social Sciences in Paris): he **refers to the studies of Gaston Bachelard**;
- **Prof. Francesca Brezzi** (Pontifical Lateran University in Rome): she **emphasizes on the connection between the female principle of human spirit and the fire phenomenon**;
- **Prof. Elsa Wilfried** (Institute of Social Sciences in Freiburg, Germany): **“Fire is the light and all that is reincarnated by it”**;
- **Prof. Nikolaj Jaramov** (leading chief-surgeon in Medical University of Sofia) comments the key problem of the lack of thermal cauterizations: **“neurohumoral and vascular changes, occurring at the expense of the compensatory resources of the organism; in order to perceive the nestinarstvo one should pay attention to the endocrine and nervous system, which traditionally acting in synchronization, obviously, in case of nestinarstvo, does not go simultaneously and by this poses the problem of the limits of human possibilities”**.

Apparently the information fund of nestinarstvo has an ontology matter of the interrelation between man and nature in rational aspect connected to **the unity of spiritual, mental and physical sphere**.

The phenomenon of **fire** correlating to nestinarstvo opens Indo-European parallels (Proto-Indo-Iranian cult of **Mitra** /*avestan*: “contract”, agreement/).

Without being a religion the folkloric ritual of nestinarstvo in Strandzha is rooted in the local Christian tradition through various cultural transmissions and its rationalization depends on the study of the whole **phenomenological spectrum** (pre-semantic rudiments), including the **meta-physical approach**, decoding its religious spirituality. The solution of this enigma is probably in **the humanistic code of the universally given program of philogenesis**.

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