

CULT AND SACRIFICE – RITUAL BURIALS IN THE SANCTUARIES OF LEPENSKI VIR

Recognized as a sacred space of divine epiphanies, the site of Lepenski Vir served, from the end of the 7th millennium BCE to the beginning of the 6th millennium BCE, as a religious and cultic centre dedicated to the Sun god, to whom an architectural complex of sanctuaries was devoted. These sanctuaries represent a distinctive symbolic realization through architecture, interior design, cult objects (sculptures), altars and ritual instruments—each featuring natural analogues that are symbolically articulated and recognizably defined.

The sanctuary complex, situated within an artificially altered space corresponding to mythical conceptions of sacred realms, embodies an orthogonal projection of the apparent annual path of the Sun across the hemispheres of day and night. This is marked by the Axis of the Spheres (stations 26 and 10, orientation SSE–NNW), which passes through the centres of both hemispheres and station 54 between them, forming the conceptual structure of the created world. Within these hemispheres (SE for day, NW for night), the positioning of the sanctuaries defines the zones of the Sun god's movement through the visible and invisible realms as well as the domain of the globe (twilight and dawn zones) and the space beyond the globe, where the lives of the deities/the divine pair unfold, them being anthropomorphic personifications of the celestial bodies, the Sun and Moon.

Calendrometric and analytical procedures have confirmed the presence of the cult of a dual-deity, understood as a divine pair. The existence of symbolic-numerical and numerical calendars affirms the presence of solar and lunar cults, along with the places and conditions of their performance.

Significant anthropological and osteological material from 164 burials, together with extensive osteological remains of associated fauna and new architectural forms over sanctuaries with burials, all symbolically shaped and numerically expressed in the calendrometrics method – rules out a profane character of the burials in any form or instance.

The mythical narratives of the Sun and Moon cults remain unknown to us—their contents, sequences and ritual actions, including the act of sacrifice, are understood as personalized and actualized. Ritual burial represents the final act of the sacrificial performance, through which the cultic purpose and sacred analogy to divine theophanies in Nature are interpreted. In this study, sacrificial victims are considered sacralized through social status, selection and ritual treatment. They assume divine functions and are placed within sanctified spaces—sanctuaries marked by mounds and monuments, over which unknown ritual acts were also performed, but whose theophanic cause and timing are identified.

Within the hemispheres of day and night, there are 72 sanctuaries ($27 + 45 = 72$), of which 30 ($14 + 16 = 30$) contain 72 ritual burials of individuals of both sexes and different age groups (neonatum, infans, iuvenilis, adultus, maturus, senilis): 37 neonates ($16 + 21 = 37$) and 35 of other ages ($14 + 21 = 35$).

In the zones of the visible and the invisible, the number of sanctuaries with ritual burials is as follows: in the zones of movement there are 18 sanctuaries ($11 + 7 = 18$)

with 43 burials ($22 + 21 = 43$), in the domain of the globe there are 7 sanctuaries ($1 + 6 = 7$) with 15 burials ($2 + 13 = 15$) and beyond the globe there are 5 sanctuaries ($2 + 3 = 5$) with 14 burials ($6 + 8 = 14$) Total: 30 sanctuaries ($18 + 7 + 5 = 30$) with 72 burials ($43 + 15 + 14 = 72$).

The equipment of the sanctuaries with ritual burials involves presence or absence—numerically expressed—of elements which symbolically signify the presence of specific deities or the divine pair. Among these are: symbols of light in 15 sanctuaries ($5 + 10 = 15$), fire in hearths in 21 sanctuaries ($9 + 12 = 21$), 21 altars ($11 + 10 = 21$), 45 cult objects ($18 + 27 = 45$), 61 sacrificial tables ($30 + 31 = 61$) and 72 human ritual victims ($30 + 42 = 72$) across 30 sanctuaries ($14 + 16 = 30$).

All the above numbers and their combinations, when meaningfully analyzed, reflect lunar or solar calendrometrics causality. The study demonstrates derived lunar and solar calendars, both in astronomical and computational formats, indicating an awareness of the rhythms and cycles of the Sun and Moon in space and time.

The numerical/calendar expression of the Moon's synodic revolution (of 354 or 348 days), as a final, actualized act of ritual burial in the sanctuaries of Lepenski Vir, resolves the mystery of the sacrificial drama whose core content and meaning is the birth of a new deity, following the mysterious disappearance of the Moon goddess from the sky dome (lasting about 2.5 days) between the periods of the sidereal and synodic revolutions, and after the act of Covering/Eclipse of the divine pair.

With this, the veil is lifted from the understanding of divine life in the southern sanctuaries-palaces (stations 61/XXXIV, XLV/XLV', 65/XXXV, XLIV, XXXIII), as well as the northern sanctuaries (stations 28, XXVI/XXVII), including the sanctuary at station 28—the site of the act of anthropogenesis, which is in the cosmogonic sacred epic Enuma Elish described as a theogonic act of creation, rather than the act of birth.

Keywords: cult, sacrifice, ritual burial, movement zones, globe domain, globe, calendars

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