

The Gammadiae, the Swastika, and the Divine Fluid

— A Study on the Ancient Symbolism —

Nobuaki KUNIYA

1.

In his extensive work on the religious symbols in the Greco-Roman period, E. R. Goodenough developed a methodology for evaluating the ancient pictorial symbols on the basis of recent achievements in psychology of symbolism. He asserts that an objective approach to ancient symbolism is possible only for those who are ready to combine historical with psychological techniques.¹⁻¹ According to him, a symbol is an object or a pattern which, whatever the reason may be, operates upon men, and causes effect in them, beyond mere recognition of what is literally presented in the given form.¹⁻² This definition involves much wider understanding of “symbol” than usually apprehended by historians and archaeologists. It seems to him highly unlikely that one can make even a geometric design without producing something symbolic. However, this does not mean that he would return to the fanciful imagination of a school of symbolists who interpreted any objects in their own way.¹⁻³ Referring to so-called projective technique of modern psychology, Goodenough says that people project their personalities into the blots and turn meaningless accidental forms into symbols, to such a point that one skilled in evaluating such tests can make profound observations about the psychological structure of the subject. This sort of symbolic projection, seems to him, can especially be observed in the use of “merely conventional” rosettes, columns, lozenges, leaves, and the other formal devices. The problem is how to evaluate ancient symbols to reconstruct the psychological structure of the people who made them. As the first step, Goodenough establishes an enormous corpus of symbols of the period centering around those found on Jewish objects and monuments.¹⁻⁴ He also checks relevant literary evidences. However, the most important procedure for him is to understand the underlying value of symbols, thus forming a vocabulary of *lingua franca* of the symbols of the period. To do so, he compares a symbol with another

and investigates the use of each of the symbols in as many as possible the pagan religions, occasionally going back to the earliest occurrences of the forms in Mesopotamia and Egypt when they can be traced that far.

Goodenough devoted several chapters to the study of the symbolism of the divine fluid from the pre-historic age to the early Christian period.¹⁻⁵ According to him, the earliest symbols of the divine fluid seem to refer to water or to the seminal fluid. Later, wine took over and became the sacramental fluid imparting divine life. Blood and milk were also common symbols of fluids of life. Much less to be expected but still quite frequently encountered is the identification of the divine fluid with the flow of light from the sun. He writes "The water of life and the light of life became interchangeable figures in a way entirely natural to the ancient mind."¹⁻⁶

The methodology pioneered by Goodenough seems to me quite proper, especially as a tool to decipher the lingua franca of the symbols of the Greco-Roman period. Generally following his method, I am trying to trace a lineage of a type of symbols which belongs to the family of the divine fluid symbolism. Particularly, I should like to confine my theme on this opportunity to the meaning of the *gammadiae* — a geometricised mark put on a robe, and the swastika, and try to discuss its relation to the divine fluid symbolism.

2.

In the paintings and mosaics of early Christian art, where dress seems conventionalized for the various figures, Christ, the Apostles, and other saints usually appear in the striped chiton (tunic) and the himation (pallium).²⁻¹ The himatia are almost always of white or light color and are marked, as a rule, with a dark designs at each of their corners. Fig. 1 and fig. 2 show examples of these marks, which came to be known as the *gammadiae* from their resemblance to the Greek letter gamma. They were called by various names:

γράμματα, γαμματισκοί, γάμμα, σημεία.

These marks have been regarded as a type of ornaments on the robes like *clavi* (stripes), *orbiculi* (disks), *tabulae* (squares), and *galliculae* (tassels). They occur on almost all the himatia found in the Roman catacomb paintings and the church mosaics which belong to the fourth to seventh century. According to H. Leclercq, it is from the third century that the *gammadiae* appeared on the robes of Christ and saints. He says that simple I shaped *gammadiae* were

the commonest among the third century Christian catacomb paintings. Then in the fourth century diversified other types appeared such as H, \boxplus , Z L, which are frequently accompanied by a small disk. Among other types are P, X, Y, θ , I, and ∇ . From the sixth century on Leclercq says, a cross and a swastika begun to appear frequently in place of the gammadiae.²⁻² Leclercq's explanation is entirely dependent on the chronology proposed by Wilpert, which is now matter of dispute.²⁻³ Just a glimpse on sporadic examples, however, leads us to a hypothesis that numerous varieties of this mark had developed out of fairly simple prototypes. For example, in the sixth century Ravenna monuments we find much wider variety of the gammadiae than in the mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome dated mid-fifth century.

These marks are found not only on the robes in Christian art but also in Jewish art. In the synagogue paintings of Dura-Europos, dated about the middle of the third century A.D., almost all the figures in himation have large gammadiae.²⁻⁴ There a himation with gammadiae is worn by Moses, Elijah, Jacob, Samuel, Ezekiel, the twelve heads of tribes, and several figures whose identity is disputed, as well as by the Throne Mates both of Solomon and of the Great Kings of the reredos. Fig. 3 shows one of the examples. In the Dura synagogue paintings all the gammadiae are in the shape of a bar with prongs at each end, but one end is always concealed by a fold or bend of the himatia. Among the Roman catacomb paintings are compositions, in which Christ in the himation balances Moses in the same robe. (cf. fig. 2) On this basis, Goodenough plausibly proposes that the himatia marked with gammadiae in early Christian art are direct heritages from Jewish symbolism. He believes that the convention started in paganism came to Christianity through its adoption by Jews for the holy figures of their Bible.²⁻⁵

The gammadiae are occasionally seen also on the robes of pagan monuments. They seem to have spread all over in Hellenized Mediterranean world, but we observe their frequent occurrence on the robes of funerary art in Hellenized Egypt and Palmyra. In the pagan Dura monuments holy figures sometimes appear in himation with gammadiae as in the mural paintings of the Temple of Adonis. (fig. 4) They are also found on the remnants of clothings excavated in Dura.²⁻⁶

These marks are also seen on the curtains and table cloths of the early Christian period. Fig. 5 represents a curtain of about the fourth century — plain tapestry of wool woven into the linen. Fig. 6 shows a scene from the

mosaics of the choir of S. Vitale, Ravenna, depicting the offerings of Abel and Melchizedek. Here we see two sets of four gammadiae embellishing the white cloth of the sacramental table.

I would not intend here to carry on a complete survey of the gammadiae on all the ancient and Christian monuments. It may be useful, however, for further discussion to enumerate certain basic types of the gammadiae. Goodenough describes the four fundamental patterns of the gammadiae as shown in fig. 8 a, b, c, and d.²⁻⁷

a: A straight bar with two prongs at each end.

b: A bar bent at right angles with or without prongs.

c: A Z shaped bar or a section of a zigzag line.

d: I shaped mark. This is regarded as a degeneration of a.

To these I would like to add e, f, and g as variations composed of straight lines. Besides these are numerous types which involve curves and circles.

e: A degeneration of d.

f: A gammate cross or a swastika. This may be regarded as a form made by combining four gammas or two Z shapes.

g: A cross. A cross is taken as a combination of four gammas or a degeneration of a swastika. It may also be regarded as a combination of two I shapes.

3.

The origin and the significance of these marks remain obscure.³⁻¹ Their use on robes, at least for a certain period, was considered to serve for identification of the possessors. In his Natural History Plinius tells us about the himation whose owner's initials are woven in the corners.³⁻² In this connection, Leclercq mentions, quoting from Letronne's work, that it was customary, in the Greco-Roman period, to mark mummy wrappings with the initials of the deceased. For instance, there was a mummy wrapping marked with two letters, AM, and we can know from the other source that the man was named AM $\mu\alpha\mu\alpha\sigma$.³⁻³ Such an explanation, however, does not explain why always a same pattern of gammadiae was used for many robes in the earlier period. Then should we take all the gammadiae purely ornamental?

From Goodenough's viewpoint of symbolism, it is impossible to regard such a conspicuous geometric design just as decorative. He insists that it must

have some significance, though he seldom specifies exact meaning. In order to clarify the significance of the gammadiae, we should examine more examples.

Fig. 7 shows a Roman banner now preserved at State Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow. It was first introduced by Rostovtzeff and was discussed by Goodenough.³⁻⁴ Here the four right-angled gammadiae with double-pronged ends surround a figure which Rostovtzeff called Victory though she has no wings. Rostovtzeff completely neglects the meaning of the four marks, and after reviewing the various use of such banners, concludes "not hesitating to regard it as a military banner" because of Victory. However, Goodenough feels that the four gammadiae have some significance. He thinks that the banner must be a religious one, probably carried in the religious procession of some group that hoped for immortality. He cites a mosaic floor of the same period depicting a religious procession carrying banners marked with the same type of gammadiae.³⁻⁵

Fig. 9 represents an Egyptian painted mummy-wrapping of the Greco-Roman period without exact dating. It was last reported to be at the Egyptian Museum, Berlin.³⁻⁶ A gammadia is clearly seen on the white robe of the deceased. Fig. 10 shows a mummy portrait now in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo.³⁻⁷ Conspicuously marked on the robe is a H shaped gammadia. These gammadiae, found from graves, must have some eschatological meaning, if they had significance.

We have more materials to provide us a clue to understand the significance of gammadiae. Fig. 11, reproduced from Cumont's work,³⁻⁸ is a Roman tombstone from Pamplona, Spain. Here we see two gamma shaped objects. Cumont shows three other instances of such objects.³⁻⁹ Goodenough points out the striking similarity of these objects to the gammadiae, but deliberately avoid to suggest any specific significance. Cumont calls them square and suggests that they might be locks or hinges on the doors of heaven.³⁻¹⁰

Another example shown as fig. 12 seems to me very important. This is the lintel over the door of a pagan tomb of Palestine which belongs to almost the same period as the above mentioned examples. A strange scene of man presenting a naked woman to a goddess, also naked, is depicted here. Two geometric rosettes and a design consisting of smaller six-point rosetts are crudely sketched. Toward the right end is illustrated a large swastika. By the swastika is a thin gammadiae with two prongs at the end.³⁻¹¹

We have no firm basis to interpret this scene. In the Greco-Roman

period, the six-point rosette seems to have been used as a symbol of heavenly bodies, usually of the sun. It is often accompanied by a crescent representing the moon. If the rosettes in this scene could be taken as symbols of the sun, the moon, and stars, it is natural to regard the swastika as something not related directly with the sun symbolism.

As I shall demonstrate later, there is a reason to believe that the swastika, for a certain period, was taken as a symbol of divine fluid closely associated with fish symbolism. (cf. pp. 27 ~ 30) Combination of celestial bodies and water symbol is not strange at all. It reflects a longstanding Iranian tradition of heavenly water. In his work tracing the origin and development of Iranian cult of the sacred trees, R. Hayashi points out the importance of Iranian tradition of the heavenly water known as *zrayo vurukrtam* or the sea of Vouru Kaša from which the sacred trees are supposed to grow.³⁻¹² This tradition, considered to date from pre-Aryan ages, is preserved in Zenda Avesta. It is said, "Ahura Mazda catches water from the sea of Vouru Kaša with wind and cloud."³⁻¹³ This sea in heaven is the place to which water going up and down along the heavenly stream concentrates.³⁻¹⁴ Among the sacred trees was the Tree called Gaokerena, which is also known as the tree of the moon. It is said that the moon possesses the seed of the sacred bull which gives water.³⁻¹⁵ Here is the symbolical composition consisting of the water, the moon, the tree and the bull. R. Hayashi further presents a thesis that Gaokerena might mean the horn of the bull. He thinks that the resemblance of the shape of the horns and the crescent may have prompted the combination of these two ideas.

Therefore, I would suggest, as one of many possibilities, that the swastika combined with a gammadia in this scene should be taken as a symbol of the divine fluid which influences the after life of the deceased. I am not sure such a cosmological significance as stated above was actually intended in this lintel. Nevertheless, it is a fact that the gammadia and the swastika are closely connected in this scene. The underlying value of these might be life-imparting symbolism. It is probable that people of the day may have imagined the heavenly water or water of life as medium of such a life-imparting symbolism. Furthermore, we may infer that the swastika and the gammadiae is combined in such a way to form the trunk and a limb relation. Namely, if we regard the swastika as the source of the divine fluid, the gammadia can be taken as a channel along which the fluid flows.

4.

The close relation between the swastika and the gammadiae seems to me extremely interesting. As previously stated, the swastika can be regarded as a design which consists of four gammas, and it often substitutes the regular gammadiae on the robe. Fig. 13 represents a mummy portrait in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It is dated in the third or fourth century A.D.⁴⁻¹ The man wears a striped chiton and has a variegated crown on his head. He also wears a sort of apron on which various Egyptian symbols are painted. He holds a wine cup in his right hand and in his left a sheaf of grain, symbols of bread and wine. On his left shoulder is found a large swastika. In view of fact, that the portrait lacks regular gammadiae which are usually seen on the robes of mummy portrait of the period, we can regard the swastika as a substitute of the gammadiae.⁴⁻²

In Christian archaeology the swastika is traditionally treated as a variation of the cross and is called the gammate cross or the gammadion. This terminology is more exact because "the swastika" means the gammate cross with limbs turned to the right in India, thus distinguished from "the sauvastika" with limbs turned to the left. In the northern Europe it was called *fulfot* presumably meaning "many-footed." It is generally associated with sun-cult of the nature-religions of Aryan races and is found in a vast area from India to Scandinavia, including ancient Mesopotamian and Mediterranean world. Furthermore, it appears in monumental remains of the ancient Mexicans and Peruvians as well as Africans. It is also one of the most important religious symbols in Hinduism and Buddhism. As the symbol with the widest diffusion, the swastika has attracted the attention of scholars and quite a few researches have been made on this symbol.⁴⁻³

According to Leclercq, the earliest instances of the swastika in Christian remains are found at the Cappella Greca and the galley L of the cemetery of Priscilla. (figs. 14, 15, and 16)⁴⁻⁴ The position of the swastika in these examples, placed toward the end of the composition, shows some resemblance to that of fig. 12. Besides these there are several examples found with inscriptions and on the robes in the Roman catacombs. Fig. 17 shows a fresco from an arcosolium in the cemetery of Callistus and represents the fossor Diogenes, dated by Wilpert in the third century. Three swastikas are seen on the chiton of the fossor.⁴⁻⁵

In a fresco of the crypt of Generosa (fig. 18), Christ as a Good Shepherd is represented just in chiton which is marked with two conspicuous swastikas.⁴⁻⁶ In the newly discovered catacomb in the Via Latina was found a mural which illustrates Moses closing the Red Sea. Moses in white himation, holding a rod, is represented in heroic proportion. (fig. 19) On his himation is clearly marked a swastika.⁴⁻⁷ This instance is interesting as it suggests Jewish ancestry of the swastika on the white himation.

The swastika does not fail to appear even on Jewish remains. Goodenough reports two instances of the swastika found in Jewish graves.⁴⁻⁸ One of them is shown as fig. 20. This is a Jewish ossuary and is now in the Palestine Archaeological Museum. Here are depicted three swastikas in a row on a column sandwiched by two rosettes.

The use of the swastika in Buddhism affords an apparent parallel to that in Christianity. We are not sure about the process how it came to be adopted by Buddhists. In Buddhist scriptures, the swastika is counted as one of the marks of a great man that should characterize the representation of Buddha and Bodhisattva figures.⁴⁻⁹ It is said that a Buddha or a Bodhisattva has a swastika marked in the middle of his breast symbolizing his virtue and merit.⁴⁻¹⁰ In accordance with the passage from the scripture, there are numerous Buddhist figures in China and in Japan with a swastika depicted on the breast. In regard to the swastika on the breast, we can hypothesize that the usage is one of the iconographies crept into Buddhism from the Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhara. The swastika was frequently used as the emblem of Apollo in Greek vase paintings, and Goblet d'Alviella reports of an Apollo image with a swastika on the breast, standing on a quadriga, painted on a vase.⁴⁻¹¹ However, this is not the only lineage of the swastika used in Buddhism. Another notable instances of its use in Buddhism is in the traditional representation of the *Buddhapada*, or footprint of Buddha. The earliest example of this usage occurs among the bas-reliefs of the stupa of Amarvati in India.

In China, the swastika came to have clear discursive meanings as it found a place among the written characters. As a Chinese character, the configuration is so heterogeneous that it is apparently a heritage from abroad, undoubtedly from India. Associated with the number 10,000, the swastika, pronounced Wan Tzu (萬字), has conveyed the meaning of plurality, abundance, prosperity and happiness. The Japanese who adopted it from the Chinese, still use it in their Buddhist temples and the Shinto shrines of *Inari*, a fertility god, with

syncretic background of Buddhism.⁴⁻¹²

As mentioned above, the Indian distinguish the swastika from the sauvastika in line with their dualistic philosophy. The former is taken as the male principle, the god Genesa, the sun and the life, while the latter the female principle, the goddess Kali, and destruction.⁴⁻¹³

Goblet d'Alviella is right in saying that there is scarcely a symbol which has given rise to such diverse interpretations. He summarizes various interpretations to his date as follows:

Men have seen in it the running water, the air or the god of air, the fire and the bow and drill to produce fire, the lightning, the female sex, the union of the two sexes, a Pali monogram, the reunion of the four castes of India, the nautilus, the crane flying, the primitive god of the Indo-Europeans, the sun in his course round the heaven, and astronomical motion in general.⁴⁻¹⁴

To such a statement one can add almost endless series of notions and objects, such as the four winds and even the argonaut, a kind of octopus. D'Aviella seems to me correct in pointing out that the swastika is fundamentally the sign of good omen, of propitiation, of benediction, of prosperity, of life, and of safety, with an exception in the case of the Indian sauvastika. However, I cannot agree his following explanation:

It might even be maintained, on the strength of the monuments, that, after having served as a symbol of the sun in motion, the gammate cross came to symbolize astronomical motion in general, and thus to be applied to the moon, the stars, the sky itself, and to everything that appears to move of itself—water, wind, lightning, fire, etc. In this way it would readily become a symbol of prosperity, fertility, blessing, or the appurtenance of such deities as secured the development of man and of Nature.⁴⁻¹⁵

Here d'Aviella starts from a conviction to associate the swastika with the sun. However, such an association is merely one of many interpretations, though it was incidentally popular in the later phase of the Greco-Roman culture. Secondly, d'Aviella's view depends on the assumption that the swastika, like all other symbols, can be traced back historically to a certain place in which it was supposed to be created. But there is no positive proof to support this assumption. On the contrary, many scholars today consider it quite natural that peoples in different surroundings may create a similar or the same pictorial symbol independently. Then we should ask further why this particular mark, the swastika, becomes a symbol with such an underlying value as prosperity and

life for various peoples. The answer seems to me to be obtained by psychological rather than historical approaches.

5.

The seemingly independent occurrence of a similar pictorial symbol in various peoples has recently attracted attentions of some anthropologists and psychologists. The greatest achievement on this subject has been made by C. G. Jung. He attempts to explain it by the notion of "archetypes". According to Jung, archetypes may be considered the fundamental elements of the conscious mind. They are systems of readiness for action, and at the same time images and emotions. They are inherited with the brain structure.⁵⁻¹ Symbols in Jung's theory are manifestations of the archetypes. The symbols have power to check the regression of the libido into the unconscious and are called "psychic transformer of energy."⁵⁻² For instance, the libido in Jung's psychology turns into fire and snake as symbols in a comparison by analogy. Thus the Egyptian symbol of the living sun-disc with snakes is a combination of both of these libido analogies.⁵⁻³ The swastika is taken as one of these sun symbols.⁵⁻⁴

In contrast to Jung's theory, R. Arnheim has recently given a new light to the understanding of pictorial symbols from the viewpoint of Gestalt psychology. He insists that a man recognizes the meaning from a symbol directly through the perceptual structure of the symbol without depending on inherited disposition like "archetypes." A figure conveys a pattern of meaning on account of its own perceptual characteristics and this meaning is "self-evident" to everybody.⁵⁻⁵

If we apply this theory to the swastika, the causes of its varied interpretation should be searched, not only in the mental structure of the people, but also in the perceptual structure of its configuration. If we analyze the perceptual characteristics of the swastika in the manner of Gestalt psychologists, it becomes evident that one can perceive the following types of perceptual dynamics. (cf. fig. 21)

1. The centripetal force toward the center where the four gammas join.
2. The centrifugal force from the center toward the end of each limb.
3. The rotatory force around the center.
4. Combination of 1 and 3. Screwing movement with dynamics of advance and concentration.

5. Combination of 2 and 3. Unscrewing movement with dynamics of emission, radiation and scattering.

6. Two independent zigzag, or straight line dynamics.

In the cognitive situation in which 4 is influential such symbolism as the four winds or the reunion of the four castes may be formed. The symbolism of the radiant sun and the source of divine fluid may be resulted in the cognitive situation in which 5 is dominant. This is my hypothesis. I may further hypothesize that needs, motivations, frustrations, attitudes, and learnings of a man should be counted as factors to form his perceptual and cognitive situation. For example, if a man has religious zeal for immortality in connotative thinking, he apt to feel a vivid symbolical value from the swastika such as the divine fluid, or the power of life. I suspect that the perceptual characteristic 4 is especially responsible for making the swastika a symbol of life and power.

In the minds of people of the Greco-Roman period there must have been something verbally called the zeal for immortality or the wish for participating the eternal life, which prompted them to feel from the geometricised form of the swastika a life-imparting symbolism. Literary evidences from the history of religion also point to this fact. This may be called a communication symbolism as it symbolizes the process of conveying life from one being to another. Let us trace the tradition of this symbolism further.

6.

Tracing back the lineage of representations of the divine fluid, we find pottery designs of highly stylized water birds and fish, surrounding a swastika, on remains of the oldest clearly defined village culture, excavated at Samarra, which belong to the so-called Hassunnah period. (the fifth millennium). A typical example is shown as fig. 22⁶⁻¹. The fact that a swastika is usually accompanied by fish or water birds suggests its significance. It is natural to infer that a swastika represents water or the source of water. Since a setting of zigzag lines was a usual convention to depict water in that period, it is quite probable that a swastika was resulted from an intersection of zigzag lines. We may hypothesize that at least during a certain period a swastika had a symbolical value for water — possibly the source of water.

Mrs. van Buren finds the fish in ancient Mesopotamia for millennia to

be a fertility symbol and a funerary symbol, after having an elaborate study on the fish symbols in that region.⁶⁻² The fish symbols in Mesopotamia are frequently represented together with geometric patterns such as zigzags and swastikas suggesting water. In one of the early Mesopotamian seals now in the British Museum (fig. 23) we see a god from whose body flow four streams of water, with fish swimming up the streams. The god is traditionally interpreted as Ea, Lord of the Watery Deep and the third person in the highest triad, with Anu and Enlil.⁶⁻³

On another seal is depicted a god holding a vase from which streams flow. (fig. 24)⁶⁻⁴ As examples clearly illustrating the symbolism of the flowing vase and the divine fluid, Goodenough introduces two representations of Gudea.⁶⁻⁵ One of these is a seal which is now lost, but has been frequently reproduced. (fig. 25) Here, Gudea, ruler of Lagash in the late third millennium B.C., led by his patron deity, approaches to the god on the throne who holds a flowing vase to his breasts with streams rising and falling to six smaller vases. He also holds out another flowing vase with a tree to the patron deity of Gudea. Goodenough interpretes the god on the throne as Ea and the scene as a whole to be the investiture of kingly power for Gudea. The second example is a figure of Gudea. Now Gudea is himself represented as the ruler, holding the flowing vase from which four streams go down to four flowing vases on the base. (fig. 26)⁶⁻⁶

The symbolism of the flowing vase held by the ruler is amazingly reproduced for Sargon II. The Assyrian king holds the vase in exactly the same manner as the Gudea statue. Four streams go out from his vase, two of which fall down the front of his robe. The other two streams go over the king's shoulders and run down his back. (Fig. 27)⁶⁻⁷ Goodenough presumes that the wavy lines all around the lower part of the king's garment are not fringes but the water or fluid which the god provides for the earth — thus replacing the little vases at the bottom of the Gudea statue. In this example we can see a significant correlation of the garment symbolism and the attribute of the divine ruler. The streams of water show astonishing similarity of the stripes on the chiton of the Greco-Roman period. The fact stimulates us to start asking if some parts of garments, usually considered to be merely decorative, used to have symbolical value. For instance, fringes — including the Jewish *zizith* as a variation — may have had a symbolical value of the divine water.

It is worthwhile noticing that the number of the streams from a flowing vase is usually four. It is probable that the four streams correspond to the

four cardinal points, reflecting the cosmological or universal notion in distributing the divine fluid.

A later stone reservoir dating from the period of Sennacherib (705–681 B.C.) represents another type of the same symbolism. (fig. 28)⁶⁻⁸ Here are depicted gods with the flowing vase at each of the four corners and at the middle each side. At either side of each god are two priests of Ea, wearing the fish-shaped vestment.

A dramatic representation of the fish and the divine water is seen in the mural of the palace of Mari reported by Andre Parrot, who dates it at the end of the third or beginning of the second millennium. (fig. 29)⁶⁻⁹ In the upper panel is illustrated the scene of the investiture of a king by Ishtar, who gives him the symbols of royalty. Beneath this panel are represented two goddess each with vases from which water spouts. In the streams of water are fish moving up and down and the vases have the little trees growing from them. Parrot interpretes the water as fertility symbol. N.C. Graham and H.G. May suggest that these fish symbolize the life imparted by the fructifying water.⁶⁻¹⁰ Here we see a good example of the symbolical composition which consists of the divine water, a vase of the water, the tree of life, and fish.

A statue of a goddess found at Mari by Parrot is a remarkable example of the same symbolism occurred on female deity. She holds a flowing vase in the same manner as Gudea statue. (fig. 30) Down her robe the two traditional streams are drawn with fish swimming up the center. The statue, five feet tall, is constructed in such a way that actual water could flow out of the vase.⁶⁻¹¹

There also is a representation of the flowing vase without deity as seen on the seal from Susa, dated toward 3,000 B.C. (fig. 31)⁶⁻¹² According to Mrs. van Buren such a vase is merely an abbreviated symbols of the more complete composition. For me the more interesting fact is the way the streams from the vases is conventionalized. The water is depicted in an inverted J shape with three prongs at the lower ends, which reminds us of the prongs of the gammadiae in the Greco-Roman period.

7.

The combination of the divine fluid and fish reappears on the designs of the Greek geometric vases. Recent researches revealed that the Greek mainland was the meeting place of multiple cultural exchanges after the Neolithic Age.

According to B. Schweitzer and W. Fuchs., it was in the first half of and toward the middle of the second millennium that a rich opaque painting, the so-called *Mattmalerei*, made its appearance covering large and small vases with geometric motifs.⁷⁻¹ This geometric phase of Aegean art was introduced in a wide geographic belt reaching from Cappadocia to the Iranian plateau and from Syria, over Cilicia, to Cyprus. Schweizer and Fuchs point out that this geometric phase is evident above all in Tepe Giyan, where the new decoration was tied to the ancient proto-Elamite tradition.

Therefore, we are not amazed to find a Boeotian amphora of the early geometric period showing an obvious revival of the symbolism of the divine fluid. (fig. 32) On this amphora, a goddess is depicted in geometricised style. She has above each shoulder a bird and a swastika. Below her arms are the foreleg of a bull at the right and the head of a bull at the left — each accompanied with a swastika. On the ground at either side of the goddess are a pair of lions, again each with a swastika. Four zigzag lines go down from her waist. A large fish is drawn on her skirt as though it were approaching the lower part of her body.⁷⁻²

W. Schultz interpretes the goddess to be the general type of the “Nurse of Animals.”⁷⁻³ Dölger, in his classic work on the fish symbolism, admits that the fish is not an ornament on the dress. But he denies any phallic symbolism. He sees the goddess represented as powerful in the air (birds), on land (bull), and in the water (fish).⁷⁻⁴ On the other hand, the phallic significance of this fish seems obvious to Goodenough. He proposes that the fish had come over from the East to be an important symbol in the Aegean geometric culture. From his viewpoint, discussion of the name by which this goddess was called, whether it was Atargatis, the Syrian Artemis, the Persian Anahita, or some other, only obscures the importance of the fish as a symbol in its own right.⁷⁻⁵ This goddess seems to me a revival of the symbolism of the goddess from Mari. The four zigzag lines from her waist correspond to the four streams of the divine fluid in ancient Mesopotamian tradition. The bull also reminds me of Iranian tradition of the sea of Vouru Kaša and the tree of Gaokerena. Therefore, it is safe to hypothesize that the swastikas in the scene signify water, or the source of water of life.

The swastika makes frequent appearance on the vases of Cyprus, Rhodes, and Athens dating from the geometric period. On an Athenian vase depicting a burial scenes, it appears three times repeated before the funeral car. (fig.

33)⁷⁻⁶ Fig. 34 shows a design on a fibula now in the British Museum. Here again fish are depicted with the swastikas suggesting its waterly connotation.⁷⁻⁷

It seems to me very much interesting how the people of the geometric Greek culture solved the problem of representing the stream of the divine fluid. Such an abstract notion must have been represented by some symbolical figures. Among various designs such as zigzags, straight lines, rosettes, spirals, wheels etc., the people somehow found the swastika very congenial to their needs, presumably because of its rotating and dynamic perceptual structure as examined above.

8.

It is only a consequence of my hypothesis that I conjecture that the gammadiae and the swastika, developed out of the same ancestry, had once a symbolical value of the divine fluid or the water of life. The gammadiae on the robe, later taken as ornaments or the marks to identify the owner, must have been, at least for certain period, symbols of the hope for immortality or the participation with the eternal life through the connotation of the divine fluid.

The divine fluid symbolism should be understood dynamically as a life-imparting symbolism. It symbolizes the process of the life being imparted from one individual to another. In this sense it may be called the symbol of communication. Various liquids such as water, seminal fluid, blood, milk, and wine were used as mediums to symbolize the process. Wind and the flow of light from the sun were also among the symbols of this category. The stream of water represented with fish is one of the earliest images invoked by this symbolism. I have tried to trace the lineage of this tradition historically and have found its close relation to the geometricised figure of the swastika. Through a psychological approach, I have pointed out that the perceptual structure of the particular configuration of the swastika, especially its rotatory and emissive dynamics, should be the basis for such a symbolical cognition.

NOTES

1.

- 1-1 Erwin R. Goodenough: *Jewish symbols in the Greco-Roman period*, in 11 volumes, New York, 1953-1964 Part V. Chapter 2. Method in Evaluating Symbols (in vol. 4) especially deals with the methodology. This chapter, somewhat modified, was published as "The Evaluation of Symbols Recurrent in Time, as Illustrated in Judaism," *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, XX (1952), 285-319.
- 1-2 Goodenough: op. cit. vol. 4, 28. Immediately following this definition, Goodenough quotes a theory of discrimination between the realms of denotative (verbal) and connotative (averbal) thinking proposed by S. Langer in her *Philosophy in a New Key*, 1942. Thus he emphasizes the connotative character of a symbol.
- 1-3 Goodenough especially refers to F. Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, 1836: J. J. Bachofen, *Versuch über die Gräber symbolik der Alten*, 1859: Goblet d'Alviella, *La Migration des symbols*, 1891.
- 1-4 Goodenough: op. cit. vol. 1-3 are exclusively devoted to describe archaeological evidences.
- 1-5 *Ibid.* vol. 5. Part VIII Wine. Chapter 5. The Divine Fluid in Mesopotamia and Syria. Chapter 6. The Divine Fluid in Ancient Egypt *Ibid.* vol. 6. Chapter 7. The Divine Fluid in Greece. Chapter 9. The Divine Fluid in Late Syncretism.
- 1-6 *Ibid.* vol. 5. 112-113.

2.

- 2-1 Chiton is a sleeveless or short-sleeved body-garment reaching about to knees. Romans called it tunic. The himation is a large rectangular shawl ordinarily draped over the left shoulder, wound round the body just above the right hip, and held by throwing both ends over the left arm. The Romans called it pallium.
- 2-2 H. Leclercq: "Gammadiae" in F. Carbol and H. Leclercq ed: *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, tome vi. 610-613, Paris, 1924.
- 2-3 G. Wilpert: *Le pitture delle catacombe romane*, Rome, 1903 is still the greatest publication on the subject. However, his chronology dating the earliest fresco in the first century A.D. has been open to serious doubt. P. Styger refuses for the primitive group a date earlier than the second century. (*Die altchristlich Grabes Kunst*, München, 1927, 71). F. Wirt asserts that no catacomb paintings antedates the third century. (*Die römische Wandmalerei vom Untergang Pompeji bis aus Ende des III Jahrhunderts*, Berlin, 1934.)
- 2-4 In the course of excavations in Dura-Europos on the Euphrates, the ruins of a synagogue were found buried under a sloping brick embankment in 1932. The embankment had preserved major part of the building, saving almost half of the original wall paintings which illustrate the Bible story. The paintings, dated in 245-246 A.D. on the strength of the inscriptions, threw a new light on the study of the ancient Jewish art. Cf. C. H. Kraeling et al. *The Synagogue*, New Haven, 1956 (The excavations at Dura-Europos, Final Report

VIII, Part I).

- 2-5 Goodenough *op. cit.* vol. 9 160-161. Actually Goodenough's main concern here is on a figure in the striped chiton and the white himation holding a rod. Referring to the development of the image of Moses striking the rock, he proposes an interesting explanation on the origin of the legend of Peter and the rock. (*Ibid.* 161 note 282) He believes that the original design simply represented Moses at the rock. The design apparently needed new interpretation for most Christians, and he infers that the hero who brought new salvation from a rock early became Peter the Rock in popular Christian "explanations." Such a new explanation of the image itself, he continues to guess, prompted the Christians to create a new legend, still extant, that Peter struck the side of his prison wall to get water to baptize two guards whom he had converted.
- 2-6 *Ibid.* 127-128, Cf. R. Pfister and L. Bellinger, *Textiles*, New Haven, 1956 (The excavations at Dura-Europos, Final Report IV, Part II).
- 2-7 *Ibid.* 163.

3.

- 3-1 Leclercq: *op. cit.* 610. Leclercq introduces the following works on the subject, commenting they have not explained the origin and the significance of the gammadiae:
 Bosio: *Roma sotterranea*, Rome, 1632 l. IV, c. iii.
 Aringhi: *Roma subterranea*, Rome, 1651, t. ii, L. VI, c. xxviii.
 Ph. Buonarotti: *Osservazioni sopra alcuni frammenti di vetro*, Firenze, 1716, 89.
 Reiske, *Comment.*, l. I, De Caeremoniis, 553.
 Saumaise: *Ad Tertullianum "De pallio"* 472.
 R. Garrucci: *Vetri ornati di figure in oro*, Rome, 1858, pl. xviii, n. 4, p. 41.
 Ciampini: *Vetera monumenta*, Rome, 1690, t. I, c. xiii.
- 3-2 Plinius: *Historia naturalis*, XXXV, c. ix Cf. Duchesne: *Liber pontificalis*, t. ii, 133.
- 3-3 Leclercq: *op. cit.* 611. Cf. Letronne: *Observations critiques et archéologique sur l'objet des représentations zodiacales*, Paris, 1825, 14-39.
- 3-4 Rostovtzeff: "Vexillum and Victory," in *Journal of Roman Studies*, XXXII (1942), 92-106.
 Goodenough: *op. cit.* vol. 9, 163.
- 3-5 Goodenough: *op. cit.* vol. 11, fig. 123. It is the mosaic floor of a house on Via dei Cerchi, Rome.
- 3-6 Goodenough: *op. cit.* vol. 6, fig. 257, 116 Cf. R. Pagenstecher: *Nekropolis*, 1919, 92, fig. 62.
- 3-7 Goodenough: *op. cit.* vol. 11, fig. 132, vol. 9, 145. Courtesy of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo.
- 3-8 F. Cumont: *Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des Romains*, Paris, 1942 fig., 46 Cf. Goodenough: *op. cit.* vol. 8, 194.
- 3-9 Cumont: *op. cit.* figs. 51, 53, 57.
- 3-10 *Ibid.* 233.
- 3-11 Goodenough: *op. cit.* vol. 7, Fig. 216, 192-193. *Revue Biblique*, N. S. II (1905), 76.

- 3-12 Ryoichi Hayashi: "The ornamental motif of a tree and ibex as an embodiment of Iranian worship of the Sacred Tree", *Bijutsushi*, No. 19 (1956) 85-95.
- 3-13 J. Darmesteter: *The Zend-Avesta* part I. *The Vendidad*, V-15 (The Sacred Books of the East, vol. iv) Oxford, 1895.
- 3-14 *Ibid.* part I, *The Vendidad* XXI-4.
- 3-15 R. Hayashi: *op. cit.* 88.

4.

- 4-1 Goodenough: *op. cit.* vol. 6, 91-92, fig. 255. Published by courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. (82111, g66).
- 4-2 See fig. 7.
- 4-3 Thomas Wilson: *The Swastika*, Washington, 1896 mentions 114 books and articles on the subject up to his date.
- E. Thomas: "The Indian Swastika and its Western Counterpart" *Numismatic Chronicle*, vol. xx, No. 3, 1885.
- R. R. Greg: "The Flycot and Swastika" *Archaeologia*, 1885, 293 ff.
- G. Dumoutier: "Le Swastika et la roue solaire en Chine," *Revue d'ethnographie*, Paris, 1885, vol. iv 327 ff.
- Goblet d'Aviella: "De croix gammée ou swastika" *Bulletins de l'Académie royale de Belgique*, 1889.
- D. G. Brinton: "The Ka-ti, the Swastika, and the Cross in America" *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. xxvi, 1889, 177 ff.
- M. de Zmigrodzki: *Geschichte der Swastika*, Brunswick, 1890.
- Goblet d'Aviella: "Cross", in James Hastings ed.: *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, London, 1911. vol. 4, 327-328. Hereunder this will be abbreviated as, *Cross*.
- 4-4 Leclercq: "Croix et Crucifix" in F. Carbol and H. Leclercq: *op. cit.* tome iii, 3120.
- 4-5 W. Lowrie: *Art in the early Church*, New York, 1947, Pl. 9, c.
- 4-6 F. Carbol and H. Leclercq: *op. cit.* tome vi, 610.
- De Rossi: *Roma sotterranea*, t. iii, pl. 50.
- 4-7 Goodenough: *op. cit.* vol. 10, 119; vol. 11, fig. 274, Published by courtesy of the Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra, Rome.
- 4-8 *Ibid.* vol. 3 figs. 160 and 835.
- 4-9 Buddha is believed to have special marks called *Lakshana*. They are classified into the thirty-two major marks (mahapurusha-lakshana) and the eighty minor marks (anuvyankana-lakshana). The major marks are enumerated in A. Getty: *The gods of northern Buddhism*, Oxford, 1928 (2nd ed.) 190. The minor marks are listed by Grünwedel: *Buddhist Art in India*, London, 1901, 161. There are a few different systems to count these marks. The thirty-two marks mentioned in *Chôagon-daiichi-daihonyô* 長阿含第一大本經 counts the swastika in the breast as the sixteenth mark. Cf. Mochizuki ed.: *Bukkyo Daijiten*, vol. 5, 4755-4757.
- 4-10 Cf. *Jûchi-kyôron*, c. 12 (十地經論第十二) Chinese translation.
- 4-11 Goblet d'Alviella: *The Migration of Symbols*, London, 1894, pl. i.

- 4-12 Now in Japan, the swastika is used commonly as an emblem of Buddhist religion, very much like the cross is an emblem of Christianity.
- 4-13 Sir G. Birdwood: *Old Records of the Indian Office*, London, 1891, x f.
- 4-14 Goblet d'Aviella: *Cross*, 328 cf. note 4-3.
- 4-15 *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

5

- 5-1 J. Jacobi: *Complex/Archetype/Symbol in the psychology of C. G. Jung*. London, 1959, 37. Cf. C. G. Jung "Ming and Earth" in *Contributions*, (The collected works of C. G. Jung, 10, 118)
- 5-2 Jacobi: *op. cit.* 99-100.
- 5-3 C. G. Jung: *Symbols of Transformation*, London, 1956 (The collected works of C. G. Jung) 96-97.
- 5-4 *Ibid.* 107.
- 5-5 His theory of art in general is seen in, R. Arnheim: *Art and visual perception*, Berkely, 1954. The specific application of his theory to a pictorial symbol was made public in his speech to the Japanese Society for Aesthetics in 1960, while he was in Japan as an exchange professor. I had an honor of interpreting his speech, of which summary is in *Bigaku* (Aesthetics) vol. 10, No. 4 (1960, March) 55-57.

6

- 6-1 E. Herzfeld: *Die vorgeschichtlichen Töpfereien von Samarra*, Berlin 1930, pl. vi, no. 6.
- 6-2 E. Douglas van Buren: "Fish-Offerings in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Iraq*, X (1948), 101-121.
- 6-3 Christian Zervos: *L'Art de la Mésopotamie*, 1935, 258.
A seal at the British Museum' no. 89 115.
- 6-4 A seal now in the Louvre, dating from the old Akkad period.
Louis de Clercq: *Catalogue méthodique: Antiquités assyriennes*, I, 1888, pl. v. fig. 46.
- 6-5 R. Labat: *Le Caractère religieux de la royauté assyro-babylonienne*, 1939, 89. The seal is marked "Gudea, Ruler (Ensi) of Lagash."
- 6-6 V. Scheil in *Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale*, XXVII (1930), pl. i and ii, Goodenough: *op. cit.* vol. 5, 114.
- 6-7 Victor Place: *Ninive et l'Assyrie*, 1867, pl. XXXI.
Goodenough: *op. cit.* vol. 5, 138, fig. 147.
- 6-8 G. Contenau: *Manuel d'archéologie orientale depuis les origines jusqu'à l'époque d'Alexandre*, Paris, 1922-1947, IV, 2249, Fig. 1274. Goodenough: *op. cit.* vol. 5, 121.
- 6-9 A. Parrot: "Les Peintures du palais de Mari," *Syria*, vol. xviii (1937), pl. xxxix, fig. 8, Dated about 3,000 B.C.
- 6-10 W. C. Graham and H. G. May: *Culture and Conscience*, 1936, 86.
- 6-11 A. Parrot: *Mari*, 1936, 176.
- 6-12 G. Contenau: *op. cit.* I, 399, fig. 300.

7.

- 7-1 "Geometric Style" in *Encyclopedia of World Art*, vol vi, London 1962.
- 7-2 Paul Wolters: *Ephemeris archaeologica* III, 1892, pl. X, I.
- 7-3 W. Schultz: *Memnon*, III (1909), 197.
- 7-4 Dölger: *Das Fisch-Symbol in frühchristlicher Zeit*, 2nd ed. Münster, 1928 et seq. II, 179-181.
- 7-5 Goodenough: *op. cit.* vol. 5, 18.
- 7-6 Perrot and Chipiez: *Histoire de l'art dans l'antiquité*, Paris, 1882-1914 VII, 59. fig. 6.
Now at National Museum, Athens.
- 7-7 Furtwängler: *Archäologischer Anzeiger zur Archäologischen Zeitung*, IX, (1894) 116, fig. 2.



Fig. 1 Abraham visited by the three men, S. Maria Maggiore, Rome

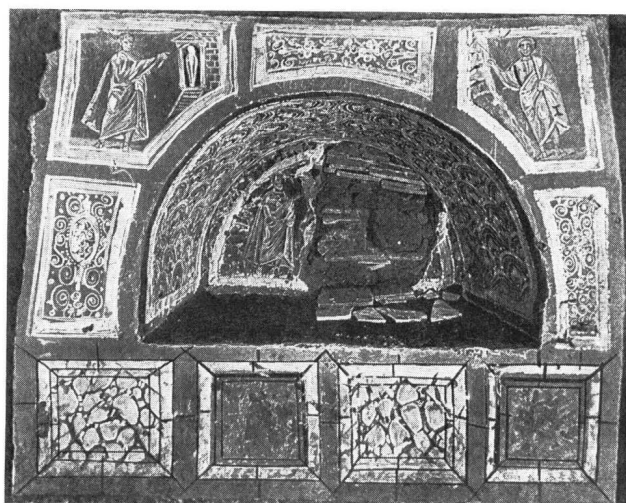


Fig. 2 Christ and Moses, catacomb of Domitilla, Rome



Fig. 3 part of Ezekiel's vision of the resurrection of the dry bones, the Synagogue, Dura-Europos

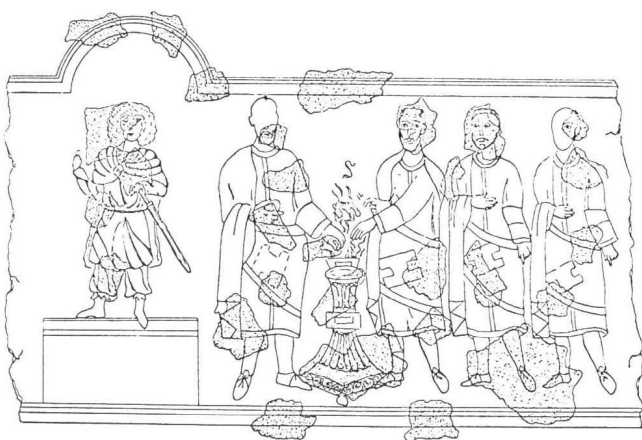


Fig. 4 A ritual scene, the Temple of Adonis, Dura-Europos

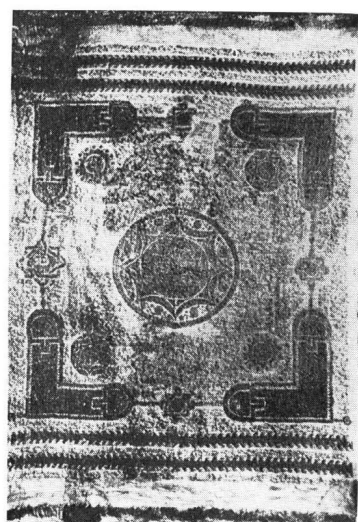


Fig. 5 A Roman curtain (the 3rd~6th cent.), Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Plate II

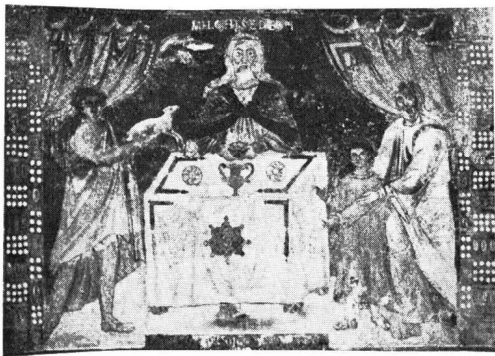


Fig. 6 Mosaic in the sanctuary of S. Apollinare in Classe



Fig. 7 Roman-Egyptian banner, State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow



Fig. 9 Egyptian painted mummy-wrapping

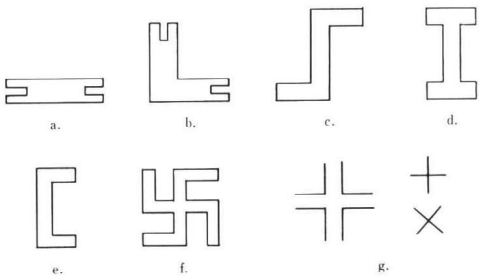


Fig. 8 Various types of the gammadiae

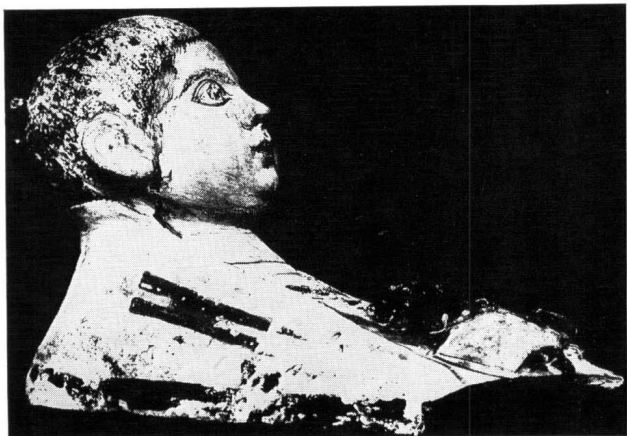


Fig. 10 Mummy portrait, Egyptian Museum, Cairo



Fig. 11 Roman tombstone from Pamplona, Spain

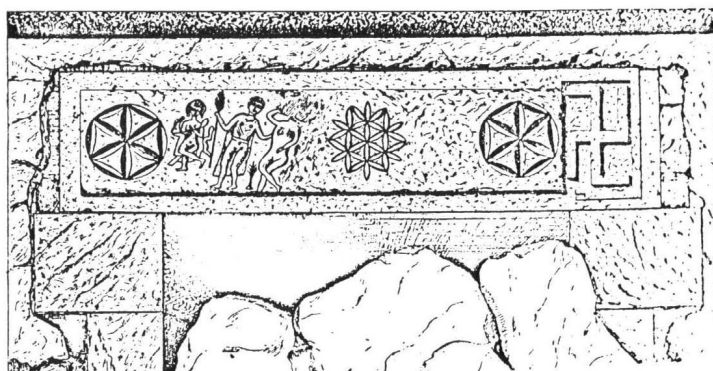


Fig. 12 Lintel of pagan tomb at Abdeh, Palestine

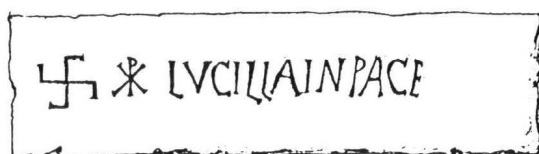


Fig. 14 Inscription with swastika, Cemetery of Priscilla, Rome



Fig. 15 Inscription with swastika, Cemetery of Priscilla, Rome

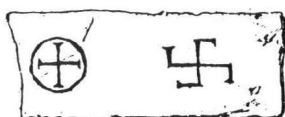


Fig. 16 Cross and swastika, Cemetery of Priscilla, Rome



Fig. 17 Fossor Diogenes, Cemetery of Callistus, Rome

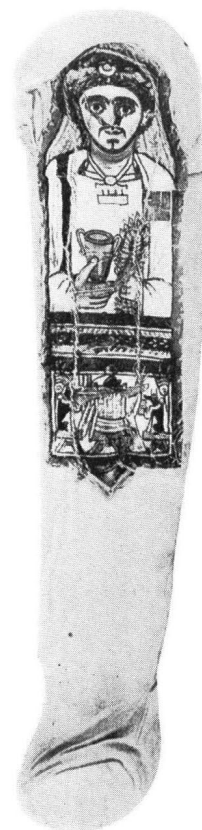


Fig. 13 Egyptian mummy wrapping, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Fig. 18 Good Shepherd, Crypt of Generosa, Rome

Plate IV



Fig. 19 Moses closing the Red Sea, Catacomb in the Via Latina, Rome

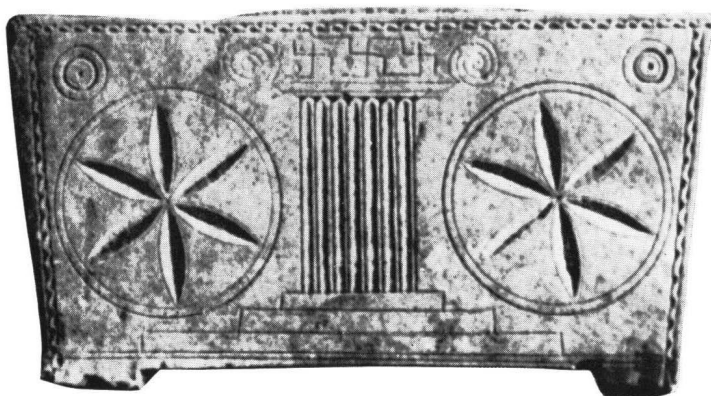


Fig. 20 Palestinian Ossuary, Palestine Archaeological Museum

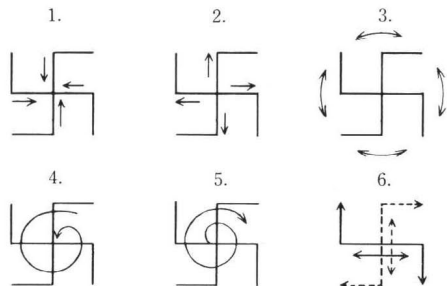


Fig. 21 Perceptual structure of swastika



Fig. 23 Early Mesopotamian seal, British Museum, London



Fig. 22 Prehistoric pottery design from Samarra



Fig. 24 Seal of Ibni-Sharrum, Louvre, Paris



Fig. 25 Seal of Gudea, Louvre, Paris



Fig. 26 Statue of Gudea, Louvre, Paris

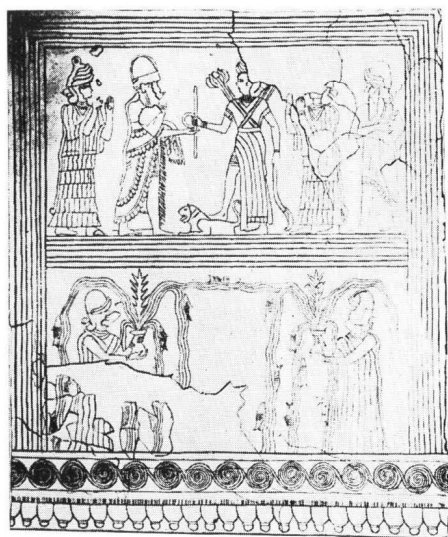


Fig. 29 Wall painting in the palace of Mari



Fig. 27 Statue of Sargon II, Destroyed



Fig. 30 Statue of goddess from Mari

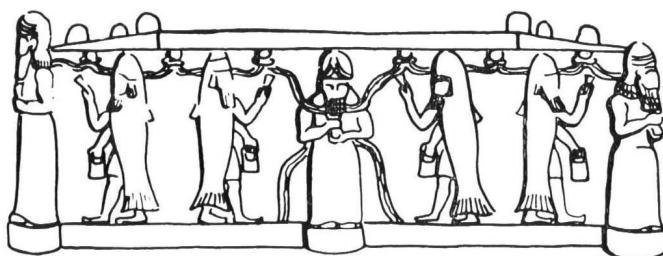


Fig. 28 Assyrian stone reservoir, Archeological Museum, Berlin

Plate VI



Fig. 31 Early seal from Susa



Fig. 32 Early Bocotian amphora, National Museum, Athens



Fig. 33 Attic geometric crater, National Museum, Athens

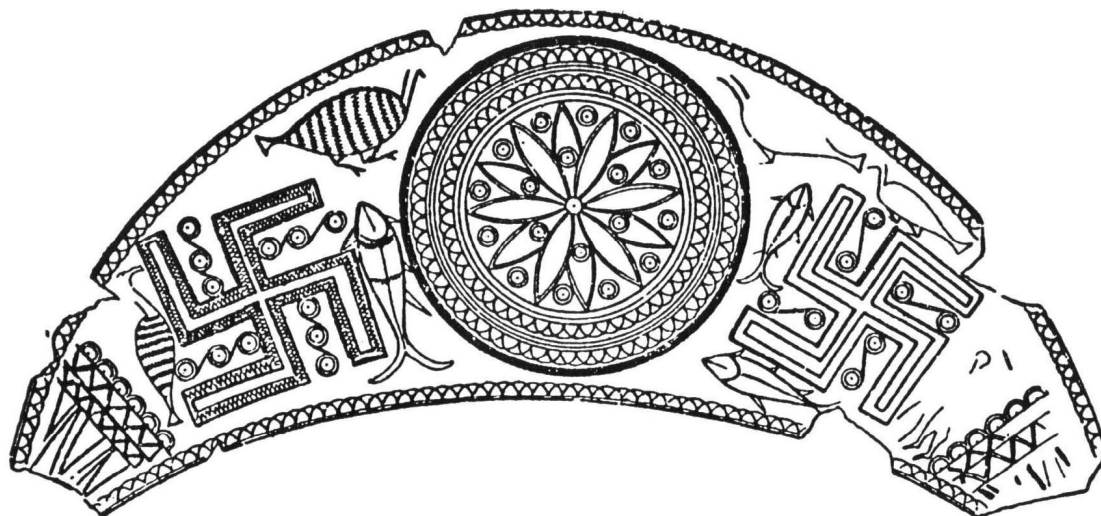


Fig. 34 Fibula, British Museum, London