

VERITAS

# ARCANA

## Wow! signal

ECHOES FROM DEEP SPACE

*Wow!*



**ARISE AND SHINE...  
A NEW DAY BEGINS**  
INTERVIEW WITH ARCANE SYMPHONY



ARCANE SYMPHONY



LIGHT IS ALIVE!  
PLANTALÀMPARA

## THE NIGHT OF ODIN YULE

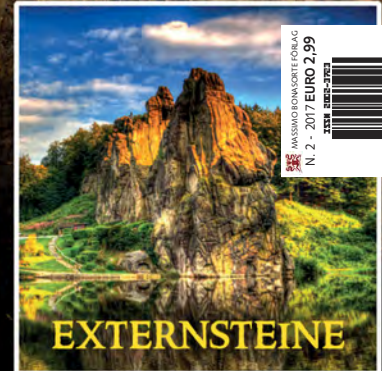
## THE TRUE ORIGIN OF CHRISTMAS

## BASIL

The forbidden plant  
of the Gods



## HOMER'S SECRET THE EPIC BATTLE OF TROY



## EXTERNSTEINE

MASSIMO FONDACORTE FONIAC  
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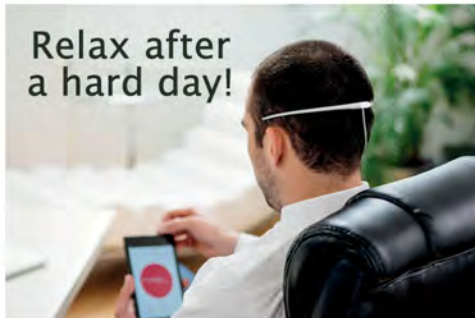
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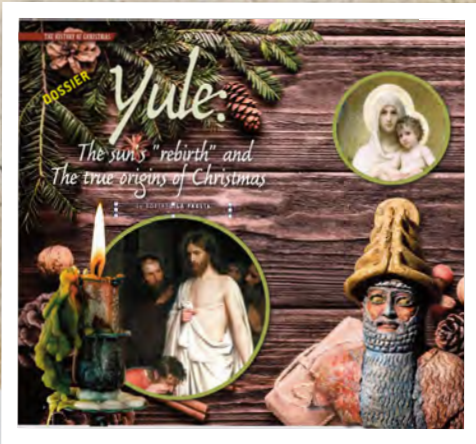




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# WELCOME TO ISSUE 2!

**W**e would like to thank you all for following us in our Quest for the truth. The first number was a success and now it is time to introduce you to the second English issue of our Swedish digital magazine Veritas Arcana. In this second issue we will discuss the **pagan Yule**, the winter solstice and the true origin, and symbolic meaning, of Christmas. Also we will discuss the celebration of the Roman **Saturnalia**, days dedicated to the god Saturn.



**Homer's secret**, an extraordinary study reveals the Nordic origins of the Iliad and the Odyssey. Now we will investigate the epic wars and the heroes of the great **battle of Troy**.

**"Wow!" Signal**, echoes from deep space. A strange and unique sound was caught only for a few seconds.

Are we alone in the universe? Maybe not...

**Plantalampara, light is alive!** An innovative project can help people to create light from plants in remote areas of the Peruvian forest.

**Externstein**, is a sacred place in Germany, and is a natural formation that has been altered by humans. The site was very important both for pagans and Christians, what is its secret?

**Basil**, the history of an important spice in ancient world, a story full of symbolic meanings and legends from Greek to India.

**Arcane Symphony**, arise and shine... discover with us this symphonic metal band in our long interview with Volodina Anna (vocals) and the members of the band.

We hope to have stimulated your appetite for research and just one last question: do you know that the Egyptians invented the **marshmallows**?

The adventure begins, enjoy the reading!

Per aspera ad astra ...

*Massimo Bonasorte*

massimo.bonasorte@arcana.se

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*Preserve the*

# *IceLandic*

Why the shout out for Support now? Rafn Sig,- has lived his passion of telling the story through his photographs by traveling and exploring the Icelandic nature as much as possible. He has been doing this in all his spare time as he is also working in two other jobs (teaching photography and as a tour guide). "It's more urgent than you think and it has to be done full time now.

I'm doing this to secure my financing and be able to jump out in my Super Jeep when the light is right where ever it is in Iceland.

I'm asking for your support through the web <https://www.patreon.com/RafnSig> so I can create Photographic Documentation of Iceland while it's still relatively untouched for our future generation to preserve".

**Calling out! Rafn is calling out to individuals, companies and Environmental Organizations to support him with a monthly fee from \$ 1 to \$ 1.000 so his campagne can start as soon as possible - we are running out of time. On his campaign page <https://www.patreon.com/RafnSig> you can find various support amounts from \$ 1 to \$ 1.000. You will be rewarded for your support with full resolution photos from his stock web: [www.IceStockPhotos.com](http://www.IceStockPhotos.com) so actually you will get more than you give. Discover Wild Iceland is supporting Rafn Sig,- by rewarding supporters with FREE tours, Day tours and Discounts on all Day tours and Other tours "All small contributions are highly appreciated (many small rivers makes one big) - the time is ticking and we are running out of time". If you prefer to support him directly pls. send e-mail to: [rafnsig@simnet.is](mailto:rafnsig@simnet.is) for bank account no.**



# Nature

**SUPPORT RAFN SIG,- IN CREATING PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION  
OF THE RAW NATURE OF ICELAND FOR FUTURE GENERATION, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE**

Who is Rafn Sig,-

Rafn Sig,- is well known freelance Icelandic photographer who have focused on the raw nature and landscape since he was a young boy. He has been hiking in the Icelandic highlands and low lands all his life and knows the nature and the hidden spots like a true native. He is self-educated photographer and has worked as a freelance photographer for more than thirty years. He has got his photos published all over the world, in magazines, books, postcards as on the internet Rafn recently published 8 photographic books about Iceland, called "WILD ICELAND the untouched nature" Each book focuses on the collection of the best of the sensational nature of the individual parts of Iceland; these eight books contain photographs of the south, southwest, west and Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland north, east, westfjord and the highlands (You can find them on e-bay, KEF airport and in Icelandic book stores)



DOSSIER

# Yule:

*The sun's "rebirth" and  
The true origin of Christmas*

by ROBERTO LA PAGLIA







**A**s an old saying goes: *investigate what is known and you'll end up unveiling the unknown*, and what's more renowned than the holiday of Christmas?

This is certainly one of the most popular, loved and experienced holidays, but it is enough to start to explore its origins to discover a parallel story very different from the one we know today, a story that sinks its roots far earlier than the birth of Jesus.

Anyone who is about to do research on Christmas as it is lived and remembered now, will find himself from the beginning in front of a strange "anomaly". In fact, while continuing to celebrate Christmas as a celebration of Christ's birth, in reality, this date is still unknown. Why is December 25th being proposed as the anniversary of the birth of Jesus? To answer this question we have to move back in time, in a period from 1600 to 600 BCE, when the Vedas were composed.





Above, reenactment of the ancient customs of the Aztecs, the cult of the sun was very important in their religion.

This ancient collection of sacred texts from ancient India becomes the beginning of this research path, since it contains the Rgveda or Veda of Laud, or the first texts in which Mithra is mentioned.

Mithra, which in the Avesta language means “pact”, was in fact the guarantor of pacts and laws, a divinity of light, which assists all the actions of men and acts as an intermediary between Good and Evil. It is a solar deity introduced later in Rome during the I century BC. by soldiers, merchants and slaves. Soon the cult of Mithraism spread throughout the Roman Empire, reaching Scotland and northern Africa; but its connections with the theme of this article require a further step back in time.

As everyone knows, December 25 falls close to the Winter Solstice (21/22 December), or when the sun, in its apparent motion, reaches its maximum or minimum declination point.

This peculiarity induced the ancients to think that the star of fire, in reality, was not swallowed by the darkness but emerged victorious; the sun, therefore, reborn, had its

new Christmas, confirmed its invincibility, the Dies Natalis Solis Invictis. This memory, even before representing the solar religions (male) and being associated with some deities, became a reason for celebration, a festivity celebrated in many cultures, starting from India to finish in northern Europe.

Before Christianity took on some characteristics of this tradition, in ancient Egypt the feast in memory of the Christmas of Horus was celebrated with great pomp, during which, particularly interesting, the statue of Isis was exhibited with a child in her womb or attached to the breast.

The people of the Germans remembered the solstice with the feast of Yule, while for the Celts it represented the image of the forces of ice and frost intended as generators of new life.

We must wait for the III century to find the Dies Natalis Solis Invicti in the Roman Empire. The feast was instituted by Aurelian, in the wake of even more ancient celebrations, the Saturnalia (December 19/25).





Mesopotamian depiction where you can see the symbol of the sun and the moon.





This particular scenario finds its definitive settlement in the last fifty years before the birth of Jesus, or when, probably from Syria, the cult of Mithra is introduced in Rome.

It was certainly not a minor deity, his name was among the Mesopotamian State Gods mentioned by the Mitanni; Mithra was a solar god, in fact he was the son of the Sun and Sun itself, and the festivities in his honor took place on December 25th.

The operation of syncretism operated by Christianity could not find better subjects; Mithraism, like Christianity, spoke of immortality and soul, mentioned baptism, the symbolic dinner of bread and wine, until the ascension of Mithra to reunite with the Sun.

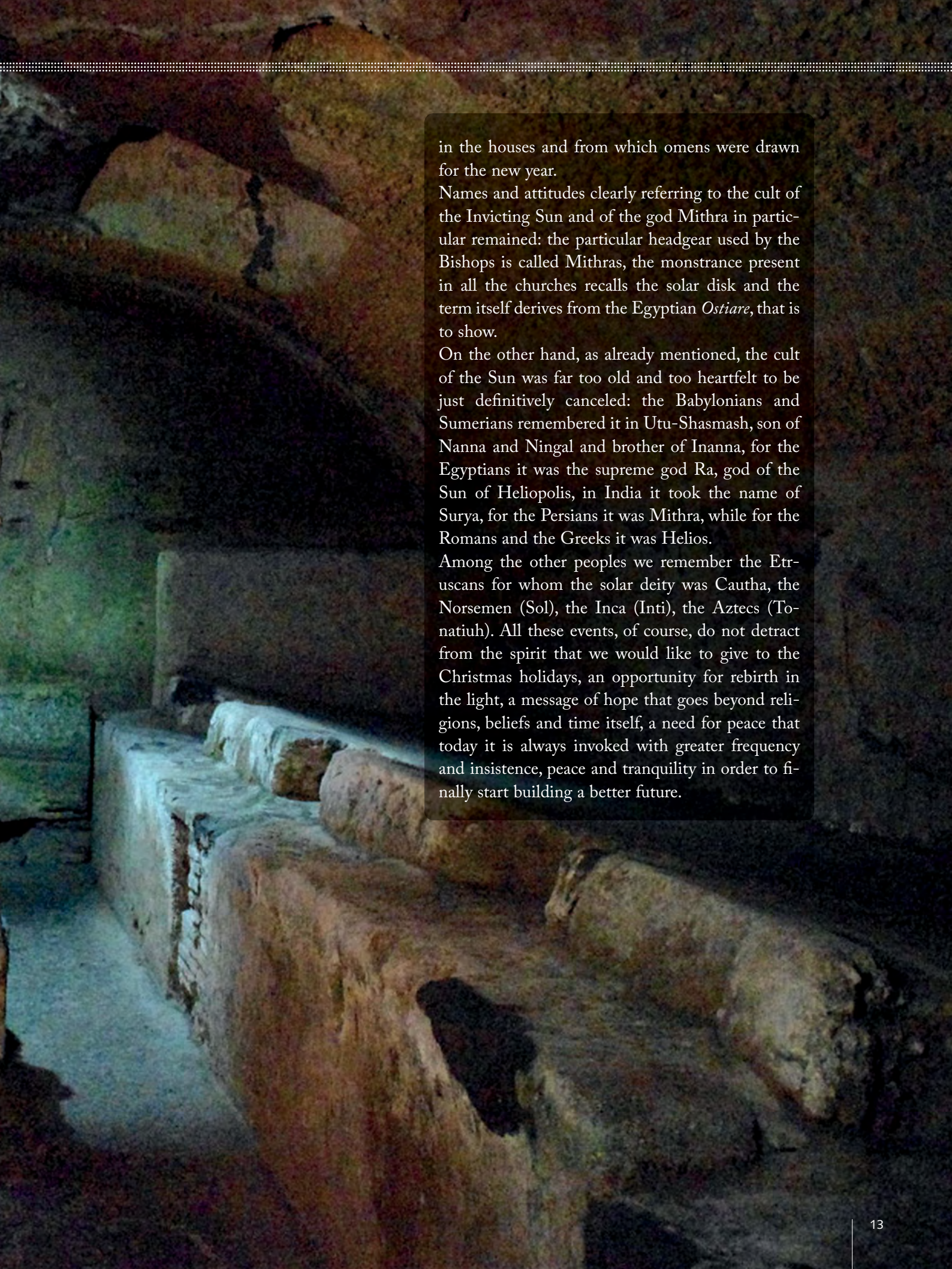
Over a period of time that could be quantified between the 4th and 5th centuries AD, the Church of Rome found ways to cope with two problems simultaneously: giving a reference date to the birth of Jesus and preventing the spread of the Mithra religion that threatened the spread of the new cult.

Despite this, some references to the ancient ceremonies have survived within the modern Christmas festivities: the fire, for example, is a constant element of Christmas and is the same fire that burned in the torch hand held by Mithra, while the flashes that this spread have become the rays of light that surround Jesus' head.

The same applies to the famous Christmas Tree, formerly an oak wood that burned for twelve days

Mithraeum in the Basilica of San Clemente in Rome, an altar dedicated to the god Mithra.





in the houses and from which omens were drawn for the new year.

Names and attitudes clearly referring to the cult of the Invicting Sun and of the god Mithra in particular remained: the particular headgear used by the Bishops is called Mithras, the monstrance present in all the churches recalls the solar disk and the term itself derives from the Egyptian *Ostiare*, that is to show.

On the other hand, as already mentioned, the cult of the Sun was far too old and too heartfelt to be just definitively canceled: the Babylonians and Sumerians remembered it in Utu-Shasmash, son of Nanna and Ningal and brother of Inanna, for the Egyptians it was the supreme god Ra, god of the Sun of Heliopolis, in India it took the name of Surya, for the Persians it was Mithra, while for the Romans and the Greeks it was Helios.

Among the other peoples we remember the Etruscans for whom the solar deity was Cautha, the Norsemen (Sol), the Inca (Inti), the Aztecs (Tonatiuh). All these events, of course, do not detract from the spirit that we would like to give to the Christmas holidays, an opportunity for rebirth in the light, a message of hope that goes beyond religions, beliefs and time itself, a need for peace that today it is always invoked with greater frequency and insistence, peace and tranquility in order to finally start building a better future.



DOSSIER

# YULE

## THE NIGHT OF ODIN

**Y**ule is the winter solstice, when the daylight hours are the shortest of the year and of course, there is the longest night: December 21st. The etymology of the word "Yule" (*Jól*) is not clear.

The idea that derives from the Norse *Hjól* ("wheel") is widespread, with reference to the fact that, in the winter solstice, the "wheel of the year is at its lower extremity and begins to rise". Instead, linguists suggest that *Jól* was inherited from the Germanic languages by a pre-Indo-European linguistic substratum. In the Scandinavian languages the term *Jul* has both the meanings of *Yule* and *Christmas*, and it should be emphasized that the root *jul/jol* approaches that of feast or holiday banquet.

Also the names of *Jolfoor* (father of Yule) and *Jólnir* (*Jólnir*, meaning Lord of the gods) that correspond to the names of Odin, seem to be related to the term.

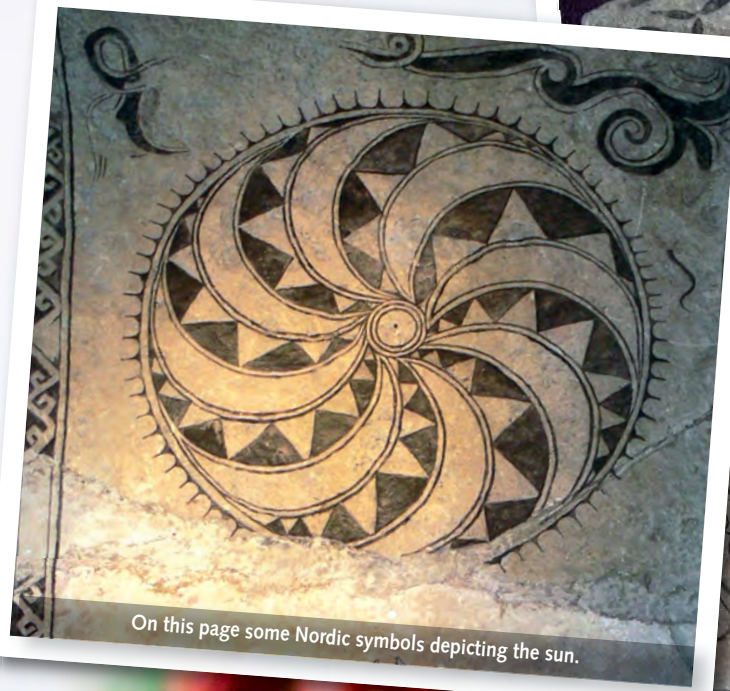
According to some scholars it is likely that there is a link between the figure of the god Odin and Santa Claus, in fact, it seems that originally the northern god was depicted tall and long, with a long black dress, in-



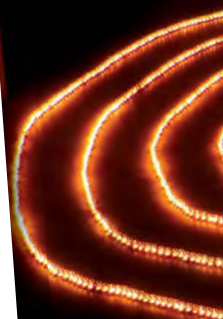








On this page some Nordic symbols depicting the sun.



stead of red and white, to deliver the gifts long before Santa Claus became popular in the Victorian era as a fat and happy elf. The first legends in fact tell that Santa Claus was leading a white horse, not a sleigh full of reindeer: a clear memory of the myth of Odin and his sleigh-legged horse Sleipner.

**The wheel of the Sun**

The most ancient quotation of the term Yule appears on a fragment of a gothic calendar, in the "Codex Ambrosianus" (VI-VII century AD), where the month of November is defined the month before Jul. It seems, however, that the Yule festival was originally celebrated later, around the middle of January. Only later, with the arrival of Christianity, the anniversary was anticipated, fixed around December 25 and married with

the birth of Jesus that ended up overlapping the original legends of the pagan celebration, replacing it with Christmas, making the true origins of Yule almost impossible to reconstruct.

It must not have been easy to eradicate from the popular memory what Bede Venerabilis, English monk and historian, reports in his writing "De temporum ratione" where he speaks of an event celebrated on January 8th, a special night's party in the middle of winter from the evocative name of Modranihit, or the Night of the Mother. Sound familiar if we approach the image of Christmas, of Jesus and the Mary of the Gospels, was she not a mother?

**In the cold North**

The "Haraldskvaedi" is a poetic composition of the 900 AD. derived from







the tradition of skalden, or Norwegian and medieval Icelandic poets, who moved from one court to another singing the sagas of the heroes, and represents the oldest written text in which we speak of a real Yule festival, not only of Yule as a time of year.

Here is the passage taken from the sixth stanza of the poem:

“The king wants to drink for Jul’s party out on the sea, and start the Freyrs game.”

It is certainly not easy to grasp the true meaning of

such an ancient text and succeed in revealing its symbolism, but we can point out that in reality the translation of this more correct phrase is “drinking Jul” an expression familiar to its countrymen. We know for sure that during the banquet there was a wide use of alcoholic beverages and the act of drinking represented a central moment of the party: to be inebriated, to escape from reality to reach other levels of consciousness so that anyone could approach a forbidden world that in everyday life it was the prerogative of the gods.



DOSSIER

The longest night of the year, that of the winter solstice, with the last great darkness and the frost that hibernates the earth, awaited by men because it marks the beginning of the light, more and more triumphant, harbinger of health, joy and prosperity with the fields dressed before the blooming colors of spring and then the lush and golden crops, has always been celebrated by men of every faith and social condition.

The Romans, since the dawn of their civilization, celebrated the winter solstice recalling the arrival of Saturn, correspondent of the Greek god Cronus, ousted by his son Zeus. So, he abandoned Hellas and headed to the land that would become Rome. Having settled on the Capitol, after founding a city, Saturnia, he had taught men how to cultivate the land. His was the “Golden Age”, under the banner of abundance, and the Romans, from the time of Numa Pompilio, decided to dedicate him the great celebrations for the end of the year, the Saturnalia.

# SATURNALIA...





# THE DAY OF THE GOD SATURN

by SALVATORE SPOTO





Above a painting named Ave, Caesar! Io, Saturnalia!

Subsequently, in the imperial age, the party in honor of the Iranian god Mithra, brought to Rome by soldiers and merchants, was added. A god, this, linked to the cult of fire, to the belief in the power of the stars and the purity of fire, celebrated in caves-like temples where, according to tradition, he was born. In the meantime, from a rib of Judaism, faith became increasingly affirmed in Christ, God made man to redeem men and bring them to the path of salvation. The early Christians adapted themselves to the mystical and

partying atmosphere of the winter solstice. Thus, even Christ, also born in a cave, was celebrated on the last day of the long darkness.

### Saturnalia

But let's go back to the oldest and most famous festival, that of Saturnalia. At the time when the earth was sleeping under the blanket of frost, one had to invoke prayers to Saturn in order for the revival of the crops to be fruitful. The Saturnalia evoked the happy times of the Golden Age. For the first time,







candles appeared in homes. The flames, whose origin and meaning will be told later, should propitiate the return of the summer. Same function had the gifts, called *straenae*, exchanged as a sign of good luck for a quick arrival of summer. The liturgy required that, in the days of *Saturnalia*, the beginning of which was fixed on 17th December, all manual activities should cease. The regulation of the *Saturnalia* took place in 217 BC Originally they lasted only one day (17th December). Caesar added two days and Caligula

three, while Domiziano took them until 24th December, that is, on the eve of *Natalis Solis*, of the Christmas of the Sun, solstice festival because in ancient times the Romans, as the Emperor Giuliano narrates, «they established this festival not on the exact day of solar conversion, but on the day when the return of the sun, from the south to the north, appears to everyone. In the ignorance in which there were still laws discovered by the Chaldeans and the Egyptians, and conducted to their perfection by Hipparchus and Ptolemy, they were founded on sensi-

*tive testimonies and mere appearances, then imitated by their successors who, as I have already said, adopted this point of view*». Farmers' tools were rested and weapons were also laid. No work, wars and death sentences. This traditional festival of ancient Rome, in many ways, a forerunner of modern celebrations like Christmas with hints that remind the modern New Year's Eve and Carnival, had an equivalent in faraway India. Here, it was called *Holi* and the ceremonies took place between February and March, in the same period,













therefore, that marks first the carnival and then the beginning of the Christian season of repentance, that is Lent. The Saturnalia represented a great opportunity for fun for everyone. In fact, not only “liberi”, citizens who had never been slaves, participated, but also the “freedmen”, ie those who had been freed from slavery and, unique in Roman society, even the slaves, equated by law to animals and, in any case, to property owned by the citizen.

**Magic rituals**

The first day was celebrated in the great temple built by Tarquinius the Superb, last king of Rome. This was a sacred place but also full of memories related to the ancient emigrants. In fact, there were the treasury coffers with bronze coins, as an act of imperishable devotion to Saturn who had taught people to use the aes, ie bronze, as a currency of exchange in commercial relations. Below the steps of the main door, there



Above the painting “The vintage Festival” by Alma Tadema.





Above, the Dodona Theater.

were the ashes of Oreste, son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, another eastern emigrant who had brought the statue of Diana to Rome. The devotees, without distinction of social class, left work, flocked to the temple to participate in the sacrifices in honor of the god and take advantage of the distribution of food. They all wore the pilleus, the traditional headgear of slaves, as an act of submission to Saturn, but also because of the principle of the equality of human beings before the divinity. It does not take long to realize the “modernity” of a concept bound to be forcefully echoed many centuries later, with the advent of Christianity whose doctrine will support precisely the equality of men before God, a principle which, albeit with different nuances, it will be constant in the so-called “oriental cults”, founded on faith but also permeated with magic, which will characterize the age of the empire and will prepare the ground for the triumph of the Catholic faith. The ceremony, between the sacred and the magical, foresaw, therefore, the dissolution of the compedes, bands of wool wrapped at the foot of the statue of the god Saturn, traditionally worn, like shoes, by the servants. The meaning of this ritual? That, propitiatory, of the liberation from the servile condition. The great merit of Saturn, first king and then god, was underlined by having favored, with the

“Golden Age”, the passage of men from the state of slavery to that of freedom. The faithful, therefore, left the temple, intoning psalms of praise to the good Saturn, while the cry “Long Live Saturnalia”, “Long Live Saturn”, continued to resound even in the three following days of celebration. According to tradition, the holiday was celebrated at home, with relatives and friends. The lunch was sumptuous and plentiful, as on solemn occasions.

At the center of the table, the usual oil lamp was replaced by candles whose cheerful flame enlivened the lunch in the name of nonconformity. The masters, in fact, had lunch with the slaves. Not only that. On the first day of the Saturnalia, the latter were served by the masters. Seneca has left a lucid image of this inverted social reality: «*Servi sunt, immo humiles amici...*», “slaves are therefore friends, at least for that day”. In the height of the imperial era, the winter Solstice period had in the solemn moment of lunch, an occasion of brotherhood not only between relatives but also between people of different social status. Followers of the traditional religion, new believers of Mithra and Christ celebrated, united around the table, a great moment of brotherhood. Mysticism and waiting for a better time made it an opportunity to live with joy and hope in the future. And now we explain the recondite reason for the fire lit on the table set for

the dinner. It is the memory of an ancient legend, linked to the migrant people who arrived in Italy. It all began when the Pelasgians, having decided to emigrate to a country to be colonized, had turned to the oracle of Dodona to ask for enlightenment on the route to be followed and the destination to be reached. When they arrived near the sanctuary, to prepare to receive the response, they had erected an altar to Saturn in order to implore the benevolence of this god with the sacrifice of a human being. Heracles, passing from that place, had dissuaded them. Not only that. The hero and demigod had taught them another system to win over the divine goodness: that of lighting a torch on the day of the feast of the god Saturn that fell, in fact, in the winter solstice. Destined to remain a solemn recurrence in ancient Rome because it coincided, starting from the second century after Christ, with the birth day, according to tradition, of the Iranian god Mithra, whose cult environment, as we shall see, was that of a cave, same of the nativity of Jesus, also Palestinian, therefore oriental, that the Christians will decide to honor in that same period of the year. Also because the magic value of that fire was to evoke the sunlight, an expression therefore of the supreme god, common to all men, capable of heating the earth and the bodies to prepare them for regeneration. •



# A MARSHMALLOW in the shadow of the pyramids



We have seen them many times in the camping scenes of American films, but their origins are much, but much older than you think, who invented marshmallows? Well it seems that the first to serve this "delicacy" were the ancient Egyptians, about 2000 years before the birth of Christ, who delighted their palates with a primitive form of marshmallows. The Egyptians obtained this trick mixing the sap of the mallow along with nuts and honey. But to have the form we know today, we had to wait the mid nineteenth century when the French pastry chefs created a new version, adding to the original egg whites and sugar. In the twentieth century then marshmallows arrived in the United States thanks to a new manufacturing process invented by Alex Doumak in the fifties. Enjoy your barbecue...





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# HOMER'S SECRET

The untold story of the Iliad and the Odyssey

by FELICE VINCI  
(PART TWO)

## THE EPIC BATTLE OF TROY





In the first part of this article we highlighted how the morphological characteristics of the territory, also the geographical location of this Finnish Troad fit perfectly with the mythological indications. Thus it is finally explained why the fighters in the plain of Troy often fall into a "dense fog", and the sea of Ulysses is never the shining one of the Greek islands, but it always looks "bruised" and "misty": the world sung by Homer they feel the harshness typical of northern climates. Everywhere there's a meteorology that is anything but Mediterranean, with mist, wind, cold, rain, snow - the latter even on the plain and even on the sea - while the sun, and especially the heat, are almost always absent: in what according to tradition, should be a torrid Anatolian lowland, the weather is almost always inclement, to the point that the fighters, covered with bronze, come to the point of begging for sunshine during the battle! Additionally, in recalling an episode of the Troy War, Ulysses tells that under the city





walls “the night had fallen badly, for Borea was blowing / freezing. Then came the snow, like a thick frost / freezing: ice settled on the shields” (Od. XIV, 475-477). But even in the Homeric Ithaca the weather is cold and disrupted and the sun never shines: yet the Odyssey events are set during the sailing season. Moreover, in this context, the clothing of the Homeric characters, tunic and “thick cloak”, which they never take off, even during banquets, fits perfectly: it finds an exact match in the remains of clothes found in the ancient Danish tombs. This

northern location also allows us to explain the macroscopic anomaly of the great battle that occupies the central books of the Iliad, with two mid days (XI, 86, XVI, 777) interspersed with a “fatal night” (XVI, 567), which however does not interrupt the fighting. The nocturnal continuation of the battle is incomprehensible in the Mediterranean world, while it is immediately explained with the Nordic localization: it is in fact the nocturnal flare, typical of the high latitudes in the days around the summer solstice, which allows the fresh troops led

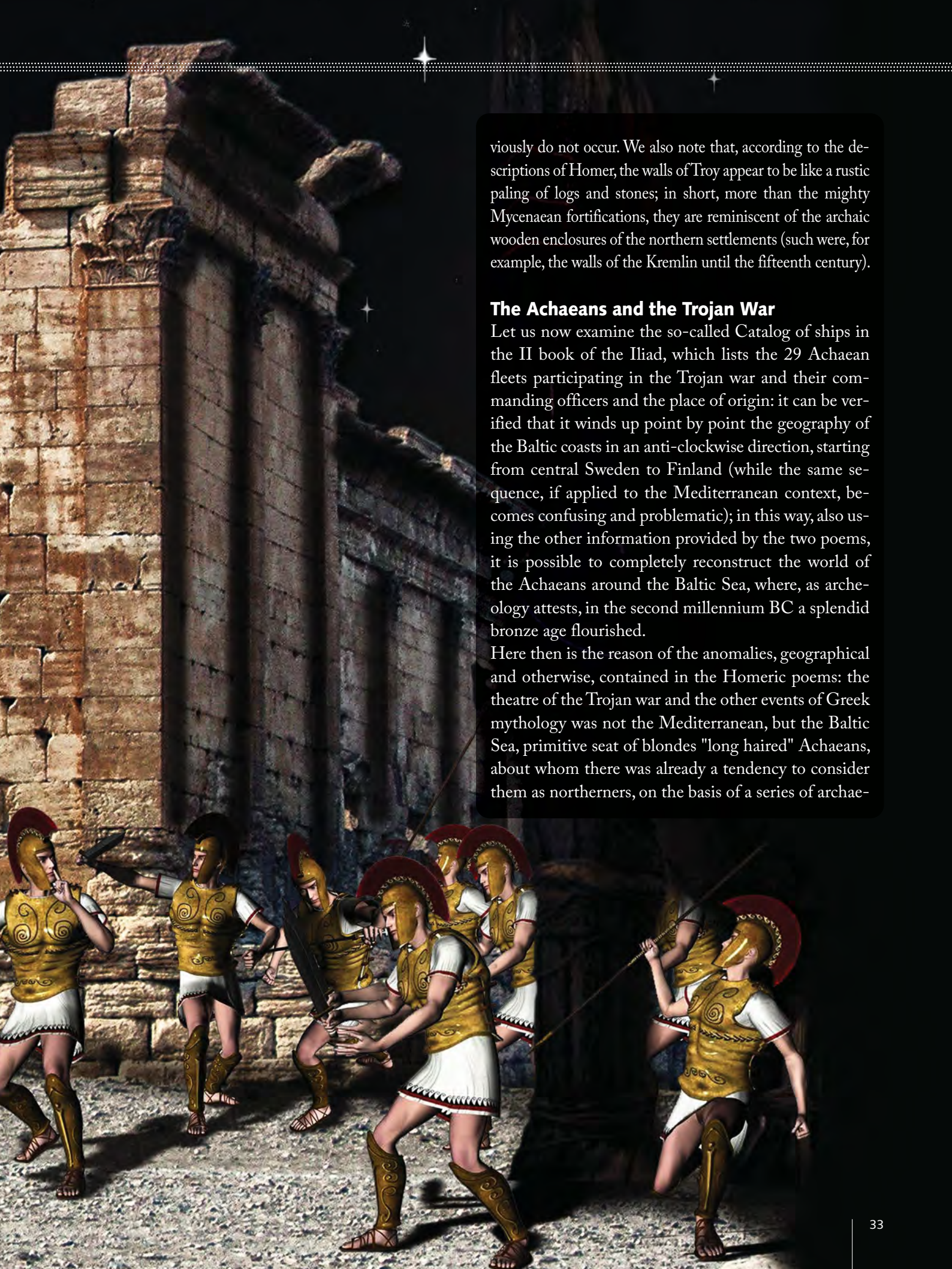




by Patroclus to continue to fight uninterruptedly until the next day. Add to this the concomitance of the flood wave of the two rivers of Troy, the Scamander and the Simoenta, in the battle of the next day, in which the same Achilles is likely to drown: this is in accordance with the seasonal regimes of the Nordic rivers, whose spring floods, subsequent to the thaw, occur between May and June, that is when the white nights occur. This interpretation allows finally to reconstruct the entire course of the two-day battle in a perfectly logical and coherent manner, without the perplexities and strains of the current interpretations, which in the name of the "Mediterranean ruling" are forced to compress it in just one day. Indeed, from one step of the Iliad we can even deduce the Greek name, "amphilyke nyx", of the phenomenon of the white nights, typical of the regions located near the Polar Circle: it is a real "linguistic fossil" that the Homeric epos has preserved to the movement of the Achaeans in southern Europe, where white nights ob-







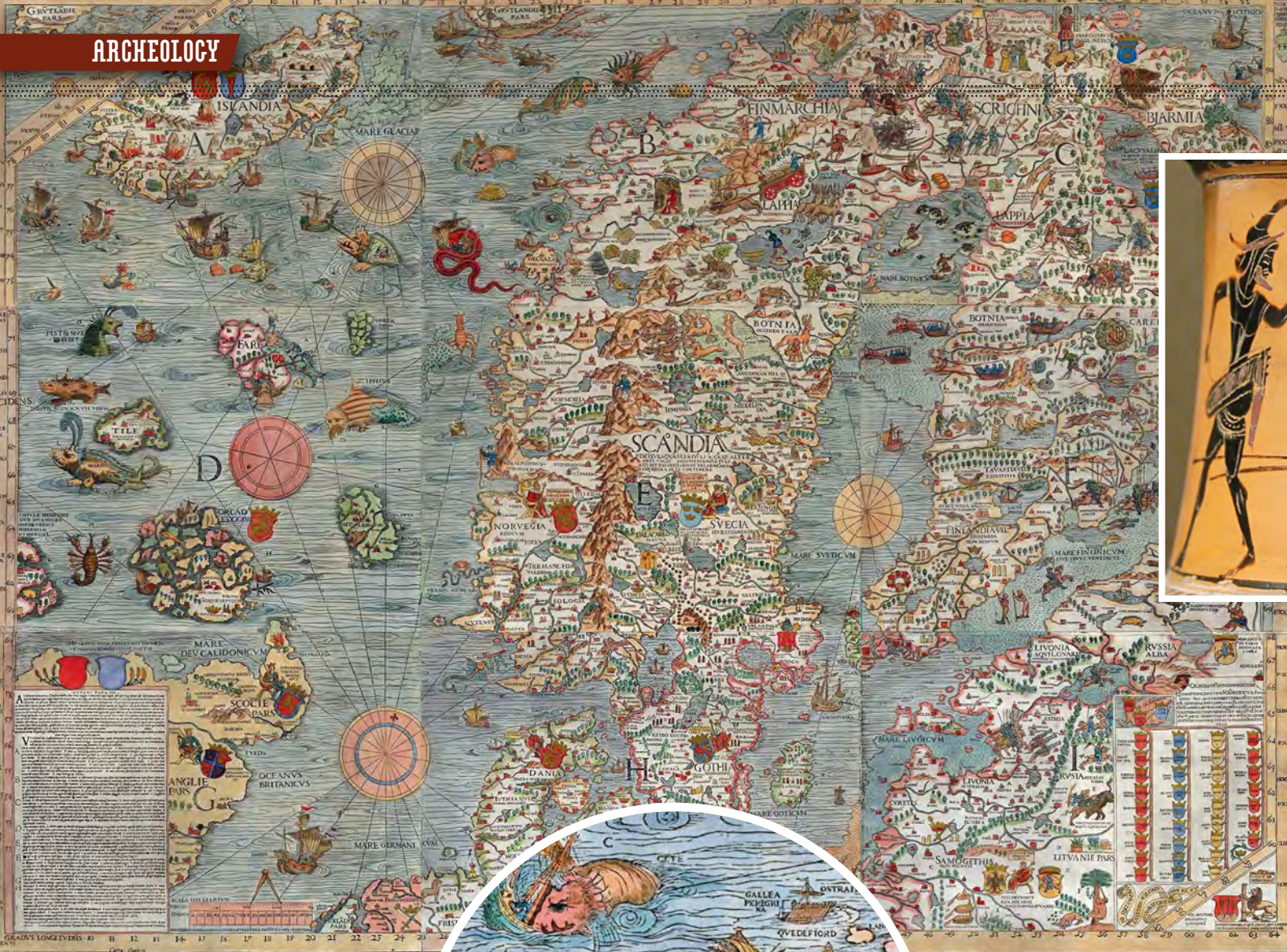
viously do not occur. We also note that, according to the descriptions of Homer, the walls of Troy appear to be like a rustic paling of logs and stones; in short, more than the mighty Mycenaean fortifications, they are reminiscent of the archaic wooden enclosures of the northern settlements (such were, for example, the walls of the Kremlin until the fifteenth century).

### **The Achaeans and the Trojan War**

Let us now examine the so-called Catalog of ships in the II book of the Iliad, which lists the 29 Achaean fleets participating in the Trojan war and their commanding officers and the place of origin: it can be verified that it winds up point by point the geography of the Baltic coasts in an anti-clockwise direction, starting from central Sweden to Finland (while the same sequence, if applied to the Mediterranean context, becomes confusing and problematic); in this way, also using the other information provided by the two poems, it is possible to completely reconstruct the world of the Achaeans around the Baltic Sea, where, as archeology attests, in the second millennium BC a splendid bronze age flourished.

Here then is the reason of the anomalies, geographical and otherwise, contained in the Homeric poems: the theatre of the Trojan war and the other events of Greek mythology was not the Mediterranean, but the Baltic Sea, primitive seat of blondes "long haired" Achaeans, about whom there was already a tendency to consider them as northerners, on the basis of a series of archae-





ological evidence collected in Mycenaean sites in Greece. In this regard Professor Martin P. Nilsson, a prominent Swedish scholar and archaeologist, in his famous Homer and Mycenae reports numerous, and significant, proofs that attest to the Nordic origin of that people: for example the presence, in the most ancient Mycenaean tombs in Greece, of large quantities of amber (which instead is scarce both in the more recent burials, and in the Minoan ones in Crete); the typically Nordic imprint of their architecture (the Mycenaean megaron "is identical to the hall of the ancient Scandinavian kings"); the "impressive resemblance" of some stone slabs from a Dendra tomb "with the menhirs known from the Bronze Age of Central Europe"; the Nordic skulls found in the necropolis of Kalkani and so on. On the other hand, in certain findings of Scandinavian archeology, and particularly in the



Ancient Scene In Heroic Landscape (1876), painting of Friedrich Preller.





To the left, Carta Marina the image shows the terrible Maelstrom.

figures engraved on the slabs of the great Kivik mound, in Sweden, remarkable affinities with the models of the Aegean art have been found, to the point of inducing some scholars of the past to speculate that this monument was the work of the Phoenicians. In addition, a significant indication of the presence of the Achaeans in northern Europe consists of a graffiti depicting a "Mycenaean" dagger, discovered in 1953 in the megalithic complex of Stonehenge, in southern England, together with other traces found by archaeologists in the same area ("Wessex culture"). It should be

emphasized that these findings, dated with the radiocarbon method (which has revolutionized the old chronologies, as underlined by the great English archaeologist Sir Colin Renfrew in his book "Europe of prehistory"), appear to be several centuries older than the beginning of the Mycenaean civilization in Greece.

### The "labors" of the blond Ulysses

As for Ulysses, of which Homer remembers "the blond hair" – even Pindar in the Nemea ode IX mentions the "blond Danaans" – there are singular convergences between his figure and that of Ull, warrior and archer of Nordic mythology; moreover, along the coasts and islands of the Norwegian Sea we find many striking findings of his famous wanderings, which start when our hero, on his return from the Trojan war, when he is now coming to Ithaca, runs into a storm that drags him away from his habitual world. So he finds himself in an "elsewhere" where he is involved in a series of fantastic adventures, until he reaches the island Ogygia, that the indication of Plutarch's *De facie* has allowed us to identify with one of the Faeroes, in the Northern Atlantic. These adventures, presumably born from tales of sailors, represent the last memory of routes followed by the ancient navigators of the Nordic bronze age outside the Baltic basin, in the Atlantic Ocean (where the "Oceano River" flows, ie the Gulf Current), that become unrecognizable transposed in the Mediterranean world. For example, the island of Eolia, where the "Lord of the

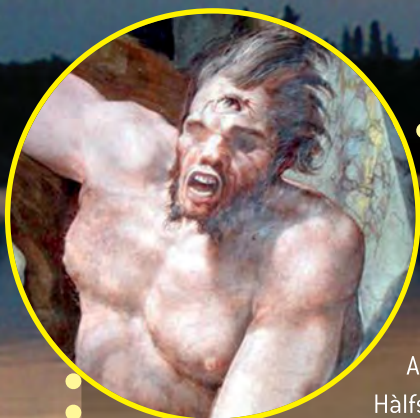




Winds" reigns Aeolus son of Hippotes, is one of the Shetland (perhaps Yell), where there are very strong winds and still lives a fine breed of ponies; the Cyclops lived on the coast of northern Norway, near the Tosenfjorden (not surprisingly, they remember the mythical trolls of Norwegian folklore); the Laestrygonians lived on the Norwegian coast as well, but even further north (where Prof. Robert Graves places them, based on the fact that, as Homer says, the summer days are very long in their land); the island of the sorceress Circe, where typical arctic phenomena are found, such as the midnight sun (Od. X, 190-192) and the "dances of the Aurora" (Od. XII, 3-4), was beyond the polar circle, towards the Lofoten islands (so the spells of Circe, called by Homer "polypharmakos", "the one with many potions", are actually manifestations of an archaic Lappish shamanism); Charybdis is the infamous gorge called Maelstrom (the Homeric description is extraordinarily similar to that of Edgar Allan Poe in the well-known tale The Descent

into the Maelstrom) and, soon after, Ulysses lands on the island of Trinachia, which means "Trident": in fact, in front of the Maelstrom there is Mosken, an island with a characteristic silhouette that resembles a three-pointed hat. As for the Sirens, it is deadly rocks and slums that infest the sea in front of the Lofoten, very dangerous for sailors, also due to fog and tidal currents: if, in fact, they are attracted by the deceptive noise of the surf ("the song of the sirens") and approach thinking of being close to the mainland, are likely to crash on the rocks (hence the expression "song of the sirens" actually turns out to be a kenning, a kind of metaphor, typical of Nordic poetry). Goodbye Greece, goodbye Mediterranean sea!

In short, Greek mythology turns out to be the last memory of ancient events set in northern Europe: in the world of Homer we find all the typical phenomena of high and very high latitudes, such as the white nights, the aurora borealis, the midnight sun, the rotating dawns, the darkness



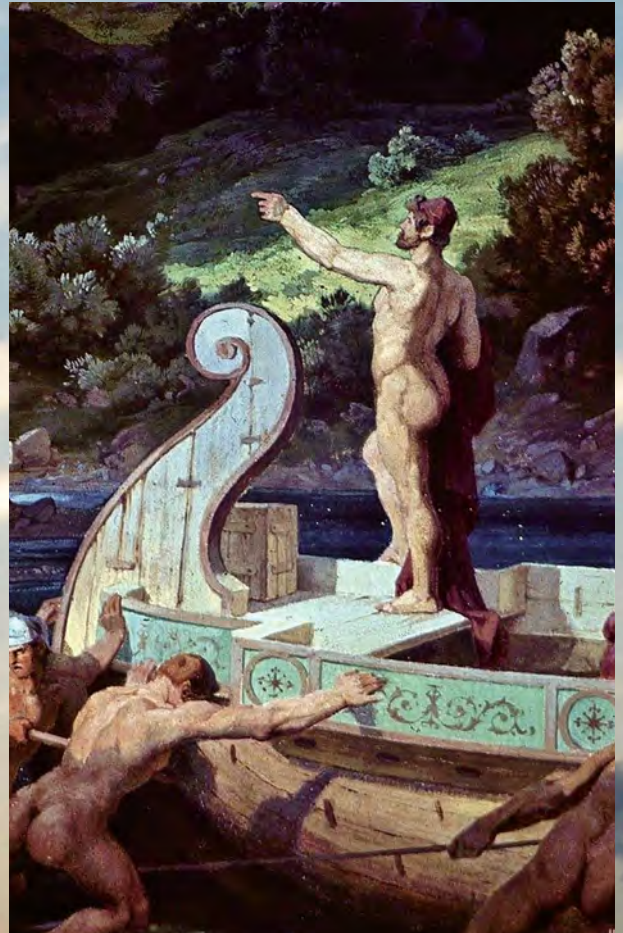
## POLYPHEMUS... THE LAPP

A saga of the Viking tradition, the Hålf's saga ok Hålf'srekka, tells the adventure of the Viking king Hjörleif who arrives with his men in a distant land, where he is forced to collide with a fearsome giant and defeats him by blinding him with a "fiery spear" after having burned the tip on the fire: well this story does not remember perhaps the episode of Ulysses that defeats the cyclops? The story is set in northern Norway

and scholars agree that the theme is very reminiscent of the myth of Polyphemus. A trace of the world of the Cyclops has perhaps also remained in the northern toponymy: along the coast of northern Norway we find a Tosenfjorden, which recalls the name of the mother of Polyphemus: «... It was generated by Toosa, the nymph / daughter of Forchis, lord of the tireless sea / in the dark ravines united with Poseidon» [Od. I, 71-73]. In front of the Tosenfjorden there are some islands, among



of the winter solstice (not to mention a certain anomaly in the lunar phases that the scholars find in the Homeric hymn to Hermes, which can also be explained only by a circumpolar localization). It is then very significant that the geographic information obtainable from the entire Homeric universe can be cataloged in some large "groupings": the Ogygia and Scheria islands (in the Atlantic Ocean); the world of Ithaca (in the Danish islands); the world of Troy (in southern Finland); the world of the Achaeans (along the coast of the Baltic); the adventures of Ulysses (along the coasts of Norway), in each of which there are extraordinary correspondences with the respective areas identified in northern Europe, to which the inconsistencies of the traditional Mediterranean collocation are reflected. Furthermore, for each one a systematically cold, hazy and disrupted meteorological picture can be verified, in full accord with the Nordic context. *(Continues)*



which there could be the "flat island" that the poet places next to the landing of the Cyclops' island. And, not far from there, the pierced mountain of Torghatten, whose characteristic luminous "eye" is clearly visible from passing ships, could also have contributed to the construction of the myth of the giant monocle, which Homer



compares to "a wild peak of excellent mountains". The medieval historian and geographer Adamo di Bremen (eleventh century) places the Cyclops in the Rifei mounts, mentioned by various ancient geographers, who usually locate them to the far north, in the area inhabited by the Hyperboreans. These mountains are also men-



tioned by Pliny, who provides a very precise geographical indication, stating that the Ridei Mountains are located at a very northern latitude, corresponding to that of Tule, a site that Adam of Bremen identifies with Iceland: «Tule is now called Iceland, because of the ice that covers the ocean» [Thyle nunc Island appellatur, a glacie quae oceanum astringit]. And, to close this chain of relations between the land of the Cyclops, the Rifei, Tule and Iceland, is the fact that the area of Tosenfjorden, located on the Norwegian coast around the 65th parallel, besides being very mountainous is located actually at the same latitude as Iceland, which from that parallel is "cut" exactly in half. (the measure of latitude, unlike longitude, is quite easy, as it corresponds to the height of the Polar Star on the horizon of the place where the measurement is made).

It would be at this point one should wonder if the name of the Rifei mountains, also called Ripei, can not be compared to that of Hypereia, the "high land" where, according to the Odyssey, before going down in the Scheria the Phaeacians

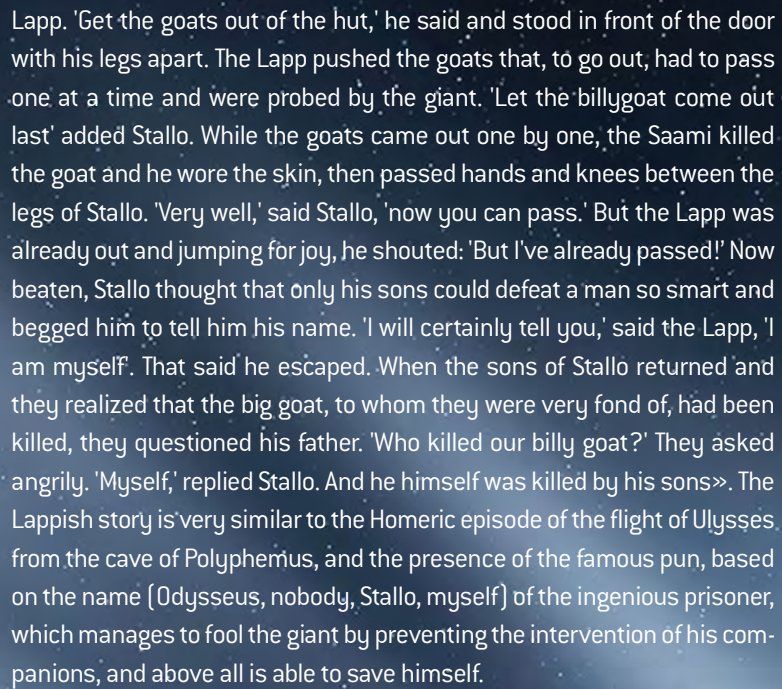
had suffered the discomforts of a difficult cohabitation with the Cyclops, "arrogant men / who robbed them." The fact that it was a mountainous region coincides with a precise indication of the Odyssey, according to which the Cyclops "live on the tops of high mountains". In any case, the combination of the homeric Hypereia and Rifei-Ripei is supported by the fact that, we repeat, one is the land of the Cyclops according to Homer, the others are the mountains of the Cyclops according to Adam of Bremen that in a map on lands around the Baltic Sea and Scandinavia, does not hesitate to place the Cyclops right along the coast of northern Norway: the Island of the Cyclops ("Insula Cyclopum").

Again, in another passage from Adam of Bremen we find the adventurous sailing in the far north of a crew of Friesians who "saw men of extraordinary height, which our people call Cyclops". Very interesting are also some Lappish legends (reported by Roberto Bosi in his Lappish: on the trail of a nomadic people), where it is said that «among all the monsters and giants that populated the extreme forests of Lap-

land, the strongest and most courageous was Stallo»: he was an evil ogre, dedicated to anthropophagy and with "one eye only in the middle of the forehead", just like Polyphemus. Among the various stories that concern him, the most interesting for our purposes is that in which he is blinded by the astuteness of a Lappish guest: soon after, Bosi continues, «Stallo got up and, realizing that he was now completely blind, tried to grab the Lapp, but it slipped out of his hand with great ease. Then he thought of deceiving the







Lapp. 'Get the goats out of the hut,' he said and stood in front of the door with his legs apart. The Lapp pushed the goats that, to go out, had to pass one at a time and were probed by the giant. 'Let the billygoat come out last' added Stallo. While the goats came out one by one, the Saami killed the goat and he wore the skin, then passed hands and knees between the legs of Stallo. 'Very well,' said Stallo, 'now you can pass.' But the Lapp was already out and jumping for joy, he shouted: 'But I've already passed!' Now beaten, Stallo thought that only his sons could defeat a man so smart and begged him to tell him his name. 'I will certainly tell you,' said the Lapp, 'I am myself. That said he escaped. When the sons of Stallo returned and they realized that the big goat, to whom they were very fond of, had been killed, they questioned his father. 'Who killed our billy goat?' They asked angrily. 'Myself,' replied Stallo. And he himself was killed by his sons». The Lappish story is very similar to the Homeric episode of the flight of Ulysses from the cave of Polyphemus, and the presence of the famous pun, based on the name (Odysseus, nobody, Stallo, myself) of the ingenious prisoner, which manages to fool the giant by preventing the intervention of his companions, and above all is able to save himself.







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- MAR 07: The Egyptian Museum. Lunch. Evening Lectures. Overnight Le Meridien Airport Cairo (B,L)
- MAR 08: Fly to Sohag. Visit Seti I & Osirion Temples in Abydos. Overnight Maritim Jolie Ville Kings Island Resort - Luxor (B,L,D)
- MAR 09: Visit Dendera. Overnight Maritim Jolie Ville Kings Island Resort - Luxor (B,D)
- MAR 10: Check into M/S Blue Shadow Nile Cruise. Visit the West Bank (Valley of Kings, Rameseum & Memnon Colossi), Luxor Temple in the Evening. Overnight M/S Blue Shadow Nile Cruise (B,L,D)
- MAR 11: Visit Karnak Temple & Nile Cruise (B,L,D)
- MAR 12: Visit Kom-Ombo. Morning & Afternoon Lectures. Overnight M/S Blue Shadow Nile Cruise (B,L,D)
- MAR 13: Visit the Unfinished Obelisk & Isis temple Overnight M/S Blue Shadow Nile Cruise (B,L,D)
- MAR 14: Visit Elephantine Island, Fly to Cairo and Overnight, Mena House, Giza (B,L)
- MAR 15: Visit Sakkara. Step Pyramid, Hospital, Unas Pyramid Entry & the Serapeum. Lunch. Overnight, Mena House, Giza (B,L)
- MAR 16: Bus trip to visit the site of Tanis. Overnight, Mena House, Giza (B,L)
- MAR 17: Exclusive Private Entries: Between the Paws of The Sphinx and inside the Great Pyramid. Farewell Dinner at the Pyramids Restaurant. Overnight, Mena House, Giza (B, D)
- MAR 18: Transfer to Airport (B) to fly home or to fly to Lebanon for the Extension Tour...

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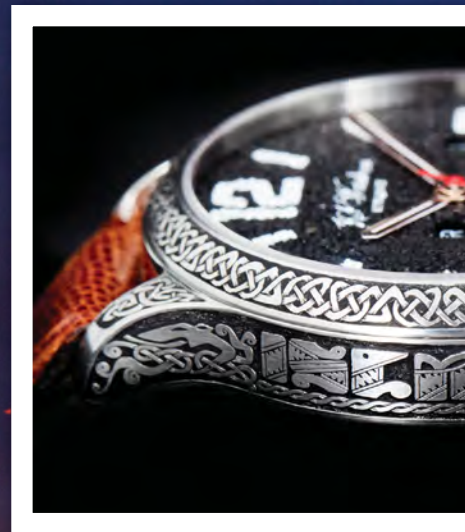
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## ICELAND, FROM THE LAND OF ICE AND FIRE FRISLAND GOÐ SPECIAL EDITION

**T**he magic of the landscapes of Iceland is extraordinarily powerful, the strength of the wild, the contrast between the colors of the sky and the play of light that chase between the veil of its millenary ice really leaves you breathless. Land of ancient Viking traditions but also of new inspirations as in the case of the FRISLAND GOÐ SPECIAL EDITION, a particular watch, whose dial was created with the powders of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano.

It was March 20, 2010, a date that marked great turmoil in Iceland where about 600 people were evacuated, but also throughout Europe, where volcanic dust caused huge inconvenience for a long time and the closure of airspace







## The watch with the clock-face made of ash from the volcano Eyjafjallajökull

and airports. A real crisis situation that could turn into catastrophe. The FRISLAND GOD SPECIAL EDITION seems to be inspired by the myth of the Phoenix rising from its ashes a new life, perhaps this is the symbol that Icelanders who created WATCH COMPANY JS REYKJAVIK, the watch brand, wanted to communicate. But who knows, maybe it is only my personal opinion.

Historically speaking, the watchmaking company was founded by Sigurdur Gilbertsson, technical director, Julius Heidarsson, director of development, Grimkell Sigurthorsson, director of design and marketing, and Gilbert O. Gudjonsson, master watchmaker. The collections on the market by JS WATCH COMPANY REYKJAVIK are many, but





the most intriguing, at least that's my impression, it is certainly the FRISLAND GOD SPECIAL EDITION. The watch is beautiful and cared down to the smallest detail, is distinguished by the excellent manufacture and the particular choice of symbols and iconography that are present on the case. But the element that makes it extraordinary and the reason why we chose to talk about it is the display: obtained from the processing of volcanic powders, it is set in a 42 mm steel case. The dimensions have thus made it possible to engrave decorative motifs that also recall Viking art. On one side you can read the word ÍSLAND (ICELAND), written in Höfðaletur, that is in capital letters; this type of Icelandic spelling was used in ancient times to engrave decorations on wooden objects, horn and only in a recent period on metals. Over time the letters in Höfðaletur became difficult to read for many people so they were chosen to preserve secrets ...

Surprises do not end here though, as not everyone can have the FRISLAND GOD SPECIAL EDITION: the exclusivity of the watch also manifests itself in fact, in its creation, in order to have a numbered sample, it is necessary to make an explicit request. The clock is totally handmade, as is the engraving of the text in Höfðaletur, which can be personalized with your name or something personal. In short, we like the idea of having created a negative event like the eruption of the volcano, a precious, exclusive object that symbolizes how much Man must respect Mother Earth. We like to think that FRISLAND GOD SPECIAL EDITION is a tribute to the power of our planet or to put it in ancient language as a tribute to the gods of fire and ice, the choice is yours.

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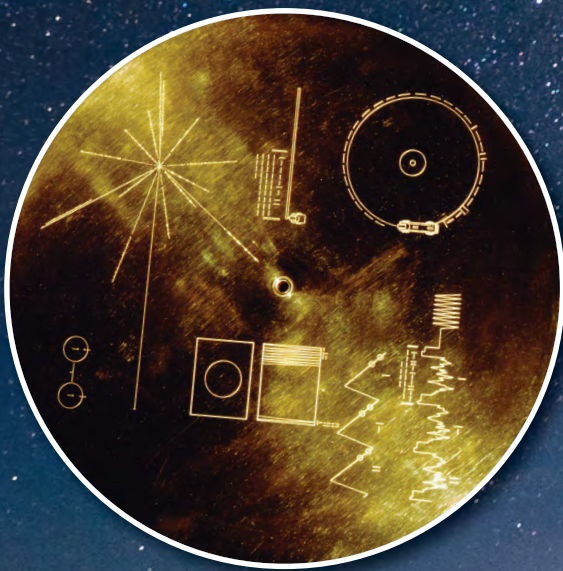


# Wow! signal

by MASSIMO BONASORTE

**A**ugust 15th, 1977, it is night and dr. Jerry Ehman is engaged in the normal tabular control routines printed by the Big Ear Radio Telescope Computer, Ohio State University, USA. The large structure had suffered a closure of funding, so from 1973 it was used by SETI (Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence), founded by two scientists Frank Drake and Carl Sagan, and created with the aim of discovering extraterrestrial life signals from space. Suddenly something attracts Ehman's attention: for 72 seconds, Big Ear listens to a radio signal from the southeastern border of the Sagittarius constellation, 30 times stronger than any background noise that was

commonly recorded. The signal was received through only one of the fifty channels of the receiver, so it was a narrowband signal, and it also had an artificial look. At that moment one of the most fascinating mysteries of astronomy and man's history began. Dr Ehman, in fact, marked on the tablets what he would later call the "wow!" Signal, as in the moment the scholar circled the signal in red, writing down the word Wow! Was it evidence of intelligent life crying in the dark universe? We will never know, surely we know that to emit a similar signal we would need a transmitter of 2.2 gigawatts of power, which currently does not exist on Earth...





# echoes from deep space

Wow!

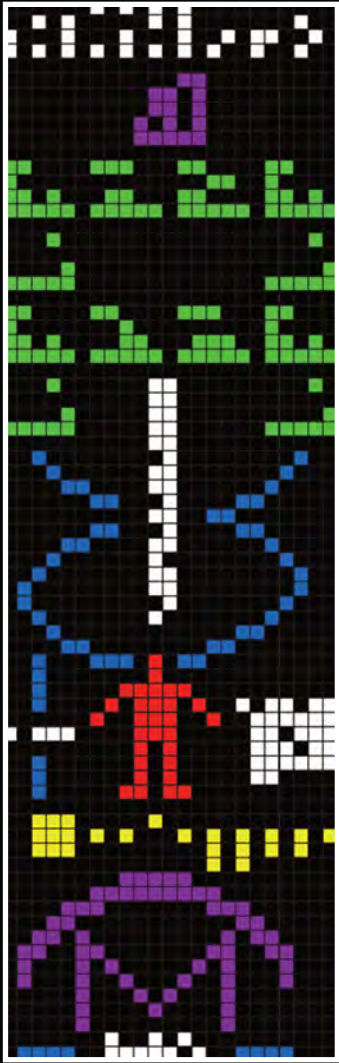
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### Do we have any evidence?

Seti scientists were confident that the signal came from an intelligent life form and was in no way a coincidence or a mistake. After analyzing the frequency of the signal they realized that it corresponded to 1,420 MHz, which is the same resonance of hydrogen atoms. This, according to the scientists, was the incontrovertible proof that the wow signal had been sent by an alien civilization, who had chosen that frequency to demonstrate that it was intelligent and that the signal had been sent for a specific purpose. As commented by Frank Drake, father of the homonymous equation, a mathematical formula used to estimate the number of existing extraterrestrial civilizations able to communicate in our galaxy: «among all the captured signals [the wow signal] is one of our best candidates of all time to be a clue of extraterrestrial intelligence. But, like all other candidates gathered so far, it never happened again. No one has ever heard the same signal in Ohio State or elsewhere. We have to conclude that it was an unfortunate incident that was rather difficult to explain». Drake, however, suggested a possible explana-







tion; he stated, in fact: «Suppose you are a technologically advanced civilization that intends to communicate with other civilizations of the cosmos. You will face different possibilities. You could transmit continuously in all directions, through a single antenna that illuminates half the celestial sphere at a time - or the entire celestial sphere, using other antennas on the planet. Doing so anyone who looks in your direction, at the right frequency, and with sufficiently sensitive instruments, will be able to pick up your signal. The problem is that in this way you will spend a huge amount of energy to create a signal that is weak, widespread, and not detectable at great distances. Alternatively, you might think to focus the same amount of energy in a narrower beam. So you can enlighten your target with a million times more intense signal, which can be captured at much higher distances. In this way, however, you will only illuminate one millionth of the celestial





© Foto Andrés N. Porras

sphere at a time. So the probability that another civilization will find you will be at most one in a million... even admitting they know which way to look! Probably your best option will be to convey a fan beam. This type of transmission causes the energy to concentrate on a narrow, solid corner of the sky, a bit like the signal of a lighthouse. With the rotation of your planet, this ray will spark the sky, illuminating much of the celestial sphere for a certain time each day. In this way, besides having an intense signal, you can probably illuminate the entire universe. However, depend-

ing on the rotation of your planet, in this way each entity will receive your signal perhaps for only ten minutes a year, or for ten minutes a decade».

In case of the WOW! Signal only 72 seconds... Perhaps at this time "other" scientists are discussing the origin of the signal transmitted to 25,000 light years from Arecibo's radiotelescope, towards the Globular Ammo of Hercules. It was 1974 and we also sent it one time. Our message contained mathematical signals, a radiotelescope, a stylized man and the spiral of DNA. Are we alone in the universe? At the moment it seems so...







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According to a recent study from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI) around 42% of the rural areas of the peruvian forest, more specifically in the Ucayali region, has no access to electricity. It is the case of the small native community Nuevo Saposoa that belongs to the Shipibo Conibo ethnicity and is located near the Rio Tachitea in the area of Ucayali. In this region, accessible only through the river, live 173 natives for a total of 37 families, whose only resources are agriculture, fishing and the production of local handcraft. Therefore, after sunset, darkness dominates the scene and the life of this community, that must in-







© PHOTO ENAC

The children can finally play or study even after sunset.

interrupt all activities such as work and study due to lack of electricity. However, a team from the University of Engineering and Technology in Lima (UTEC) has solved the problem by developing a device capable of producing small quantities of electricity and therefore light, powered by chlorophyll photosynthesis. The nature that was previously considered hostile therefore offers the solution: the Plantalàmpara. Scholars have developed a LED lamp that draws clean and renewable energy from the earth and above all from plants. The flow of current generated provides about two hours of light. The lamp exploits the electrons generated by the plants at the time of making the photosynthesis and transforms them into energy that is collected by a battery, at the end of the chemical process, light is generated. One wonders: is it really so impossible to use renewable and clean energy sources? Maybe not, there's only one drawback ... it's free!





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# EXTERNSTEINE

## GERMANY'S SACRED STONE FORMATION

by CAROLYN EMERICK

© Christian

**E**xternsteine is an unusual sandstone rock formation near Ostwestfalen-Lippe in the northwest of Germany. It is unique among other monolithic sites in Europe because it is a natural formation that has been altered by human hands. Whereas Stonehenge was built by people, Externsteine was built by Nature and then manipulated by people.

It is unclear who were the very first people to use Externsteine. There are many theories, and no clear consensus among researchers. What everyone does agree on is that the site has been used by many different

groups for strikingly different purposes throughout the ages. Was Externsteine used as a pre-historic sacred site? Did Neolithic people worship there? Did it have an astronomical function like other ancient European sites? The answer to all of these questions is: maybe.

Theories abound about Externsteine's use as a sacred place of worship and sacrifice, as well as an astronomical observatory. Paleolithic and Mesolithic stone tools have been found at the site giving some credence to the theory that pre-historic people were, indeed, present at the location. But, there is not enough evidence to conclusively determine their activities. Some theories of





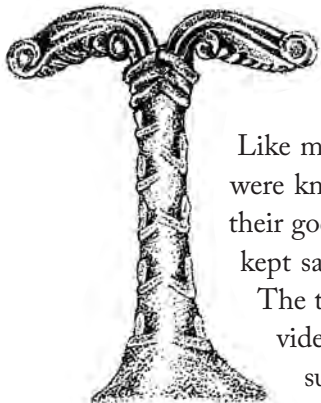




In this page: on the right, some symbols carved on the stone in Exerstein. The site was an important place for pagans rituals. Below, the Irminsul three.

Externsteine's early use include:

- Paleolithic sanctuary for nomadic reindeer hunters
- Neolithic meditation center
- Celtic cave sanctuary
- Germanic astronomical center
- Saxon spiritual center



**Place of Pagan Worship**

Some believe that Externsteine was a center for Saxon pagan rituals. Like many other European pagans, Saxons were known to gather in nature to worship their gods. Just as the Celts, Balts, and Slavs kept sacred groves, so, too, did the Saxons. The towering monoliths would have provided a sense of awe and an allure of the supernatural. It seems a natural place



© Jens-Olaf Walter









The nordic goddess Freyia and the archaeological site of Externstein.



© Waseda University

for any Earth-centered religious group to worship. It is said that when Charlemagne forcibly converted the Saxons to Christianity, that he destroyed pagan temples and banned the use of sacred sites such as Externsteine for such practices. However, we are again left with little evi-

dence to confirm this story. Based on what we know of pre-Christian Saxon worship, and of Charlemagne's conversion campaigns, the theory is plausible, but the evidence simply cannot substantiate the theory. We do know that there were Saxons in the region where Externsteine



© Waseda University





is located. We also know that Charlemagne reportedly destroyed many Saxon pagan religious sites such as sacred trees, groves, temples, and pillars known as Irminsuls. An Irminsul was a tall wooden post erected in areas of worship. Scholars can only speculate on their meaning, but many think that it may have a connection to Yggdrasil, the Norse World Tree, or that it may have had a connection to a lower god called Irmin. It is also speculated that Irmin was a "kenning" (or nickname) for another major deity such as Frey or Odin.

### Externsteine as a Christian Sacred Site

It is recorded that in the year 772 Charlemagne ordered the destruction of a very important Irminsul in a key Saxon religious and cultural center near Obermarsberg, Germany. This is relevant because the Christian relief carved

into the rock at Externsteine is said to depict the triumph of Christianity over Saxon paganism. Below the cross stands a withered and wilted stump of a tree, which is said to represent the great Saxon Irminsul. There is some evidence to suggest that not long after the destruction of the Irminsul a monastery was founded at Externsteine. It is believed that the Hethis monastery was founded here in the ninth century. Due to the reliefs carved into sections of rock and other carvings of religious significance, we know that Externsteine was certainly occupied by Christian monks in the Middle Ages. Precise dates of the occupation are unclear.

(End of the first part)

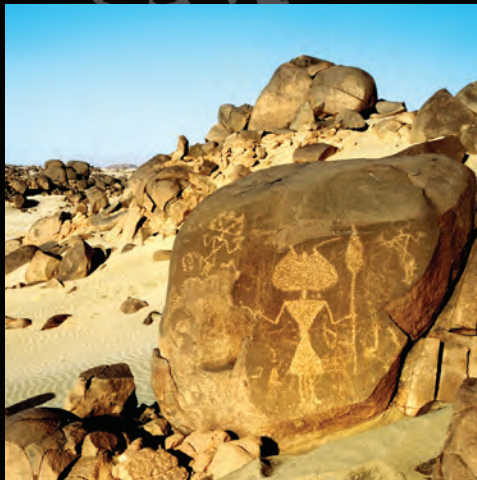
Carolyn Emerick writes about the history, mythology, and folklore of Northwestern Europe. Follow her on [www.facebook.com/carolynemerickwriter](http://www.facebook.com/carolynemerickwriter)





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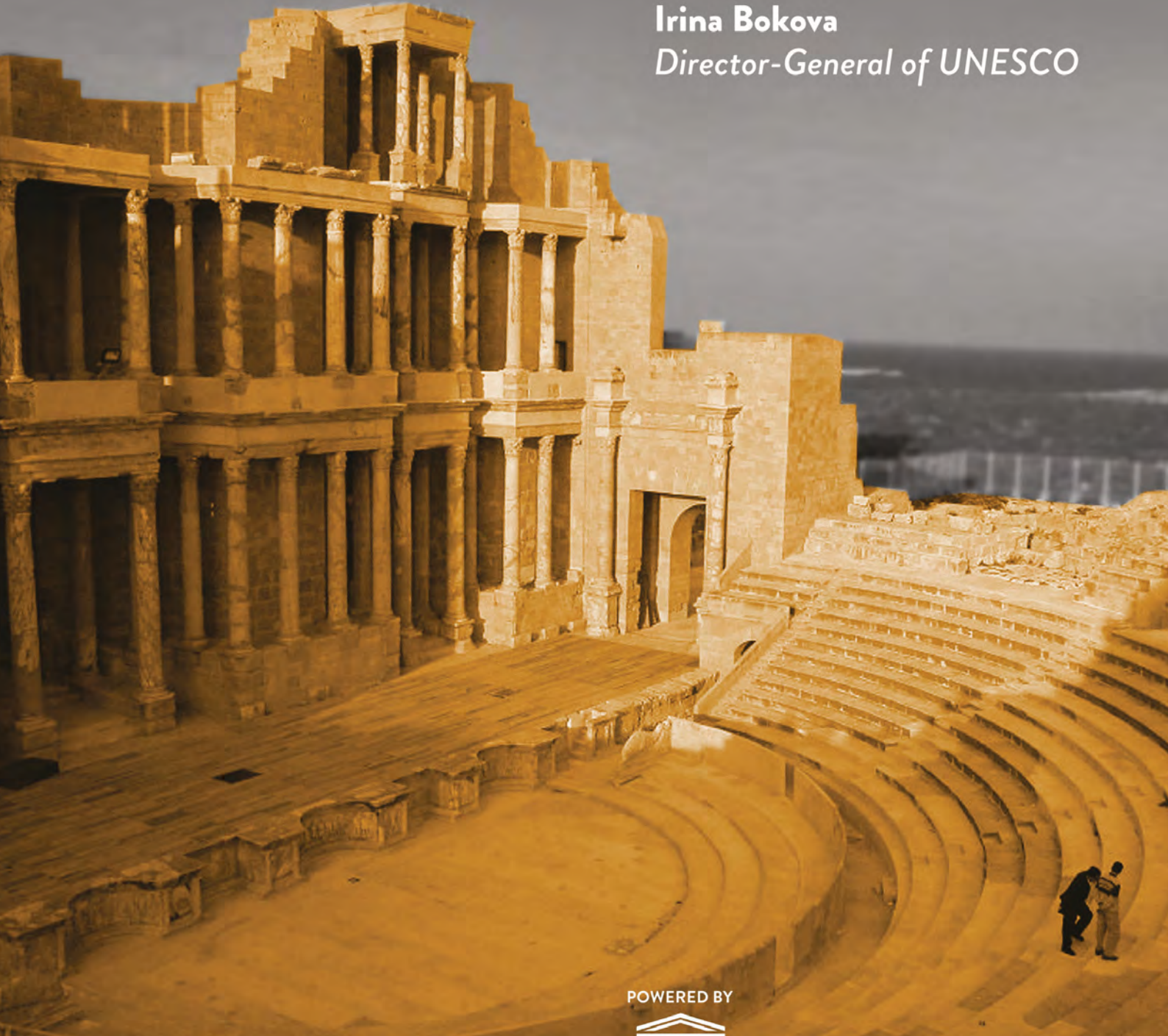
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**Irina Bokova**

*Director-General of UNESCO*



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE OF SABRATHA, LIBYA  
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*The plant of eternal love worthy of a king*

# The history of Basil

In Mediterranean cuisine it is the symbol of summer and its origins are lost in the mists of time. Fragrant and delicate with its green leaves it manages to tantalize the most demanding palates, it is basil. Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*) is an annual herbaceous plant belonging to the Lamiaceae family, and is easily recognized by the shape of its lanceolate leaves that vary from pale green to intense green to violet or purple of some varieties.

The name derives from the Greek "basilikos", which means "herb worthy of a king", as mentioned by the Greek philosopher and botanist Theophrastus, in the III century BC. Basil seems to have originated in India and was brought to the West by the merchants of spices; the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans were already aware of its flavours and healing properties.

The Greeks and Romans believed that, to grow a healthy seedling, it was necessary to sow it, accompanying the operation with insults and curses, but to speak of the basil more seriously was the Roman writer Lucius Junius Moderatus Columella, who explains how the basil is a plant to sow in abundance "after the Ides of May until the summer solstice". Among the Romans it was considered a magical and sacred plant to Venus, like many other fragrant herbs, to be harvested following precise rituals.

Some authors argued that it should not be severed with iron tools because the metal would undo all its qualities. It really is true, in fact, if we try to cut the basil leaves with a knife, due to oxidation, they immediately become black, so on the food is to be chopped by hand. The famous Roman naturalist Pliny was convinced that the seeds of the basil, and not the leaves, were powerful



Above, a painting by William Waterhouse, Enchanted garden.









Above painting of a scene of the Decameron of Boccaccio.

aphrodisiacs; in some areas, even today, farmers make donkeys and horses eat it during the reproductive period to increase their sexual strength. Later, thanks to these aphrodisiac characteristics, it became the true symbol of lovers. Even the Gauls thought basil was a sacred plant, so much so that its leaves were harvested only by those who had followed a complex ritual of purification. The Gauls cultivated basil in July/August until it was in bloom. The harvesters of this sacred plant had to undergo strict purification rituals: washing the

hand with which one had to collect the plants in the water of three different springs, dress in clean clothes, keep oneself at a distance from impure people (for example, women during menstruation) and do not use metal tools to cut the stems. The sanctity of basil was also held in high esteem by the Egyptians, who used it for the preparation of balms used in the embalming of the dead.

### Tears of love

In the Middle Ages, in order to collect basil, one had to first purify the



right hand, washing it in three different springs, then using an oak branch and wearing white linen clothes. In Boccaccio's Decameron we find one of the the strangest love stories that have as its protagonist the basil. Boccaccio in V Novella, IV day, tells the story of Elisabetta da Messina who buried the head of her beloved Lorenzo, barbarously murdered by her jealous brothers, in a large vase of basil, which she watered every day with tears.

In the Middle Ages, moreover, basil was also used for exorcisms and therefore to drive out devils from the possessed, and it was believed that it performed miracles in case of pestilence and physical weakness of man. In the Renaissance the culinary and therapeutic properties of the basil were definitively recognized when Cosimo de' Medici also included it among the fragrances of the "Giardino dei Semplici" (1545). But all over the world the basil is known above all for its use in the preparation of the most cooked sauce on earth... pesto!

### **The history of pesto**

Historically basil arrived in Liguria in the second half of the eleventh and early twelfth century and especially in Genoa following the enterprises of the Genoese commander Guglielmo Embriaco, known as Head of Chainmail. The leader kept on one of his galleys his real secret entrusted to Captain Bartolomeo Decotto. The captain experimented with the therapeutic





© photo www.freepik.com



A scene of the Decamerone of Gustaf Wappers.



A woman worship the Tulsi planta.



Painting of Leighton, Tristan and Isolde.

characteristics of the basil when he was in Palestine during the crusades and returning to Genoa he brought some bags of seeds with him. A true legend was born. At first it was said that the basil leaves were only used as a medicine, but then when working with the pestle to obtain ointments, it happened that someone thought it well to add olive oil to use as a cream for skin irritations. It is said that accidentally the sauce fell on bread and ... pesto was born! Legends and superstitions have always accompanied the history of spices, but curiously some have survived until the 1800s. It is said that some English peo-

ple living in India roamed regularly with a wooden necklace of basil to neutralize the electrical impulses, keeping away the lightning, as claimed by the Hindu religion. In the same period, but only in the eclipses, basil was also eaten and placed in water reserves to prevent contamination. We do not know if the basil is actually a magic plant or not, but we can underline that Napoleone used it for its property to stimulate intellectual concentration. Napoleon was in fact convinced that its scent would help him prepare the plans for maneuvering the armies and history is no legend...





Above, painting of Stillman, Loves Messenger.







## The true history of PESTO



Pesto wasn't widespread in the Middle Ages as it is today and to find the original pesto recipe we need to wait for the 19th century. In the beginning the original recipe lacked the pine nuts and the pecorino cheese that will be added later.

The true pesto sauce was "born" in 1863, when Giovanni Battista Ratto published "La Cuciniera Genovese", considered the first and most complete book about Ligurian cuisine, in which the pesto recipe - with pine nuts - is mentioned for the first time, as follows:

"Take a clove of garlic, basil (baxaicö) or in alternative marjoram and parsley, grated dutch cheese and parmesan. Mix together with pine nuts and grind in the mortar with a bit of butter until you have a homogeneous paste. Then dissolve it with plenty of fine oil. With this wrought season lasagnas and pasta (troffie), adding a bit of warm water without salt to make it more liquid".

In the recipe, we can see alternatives to basil, which proves that pesto was born as a poor, everyday meal, as basil is a seasonal plant. Therefore, parsley or marjoram are a valid alternative to basil.

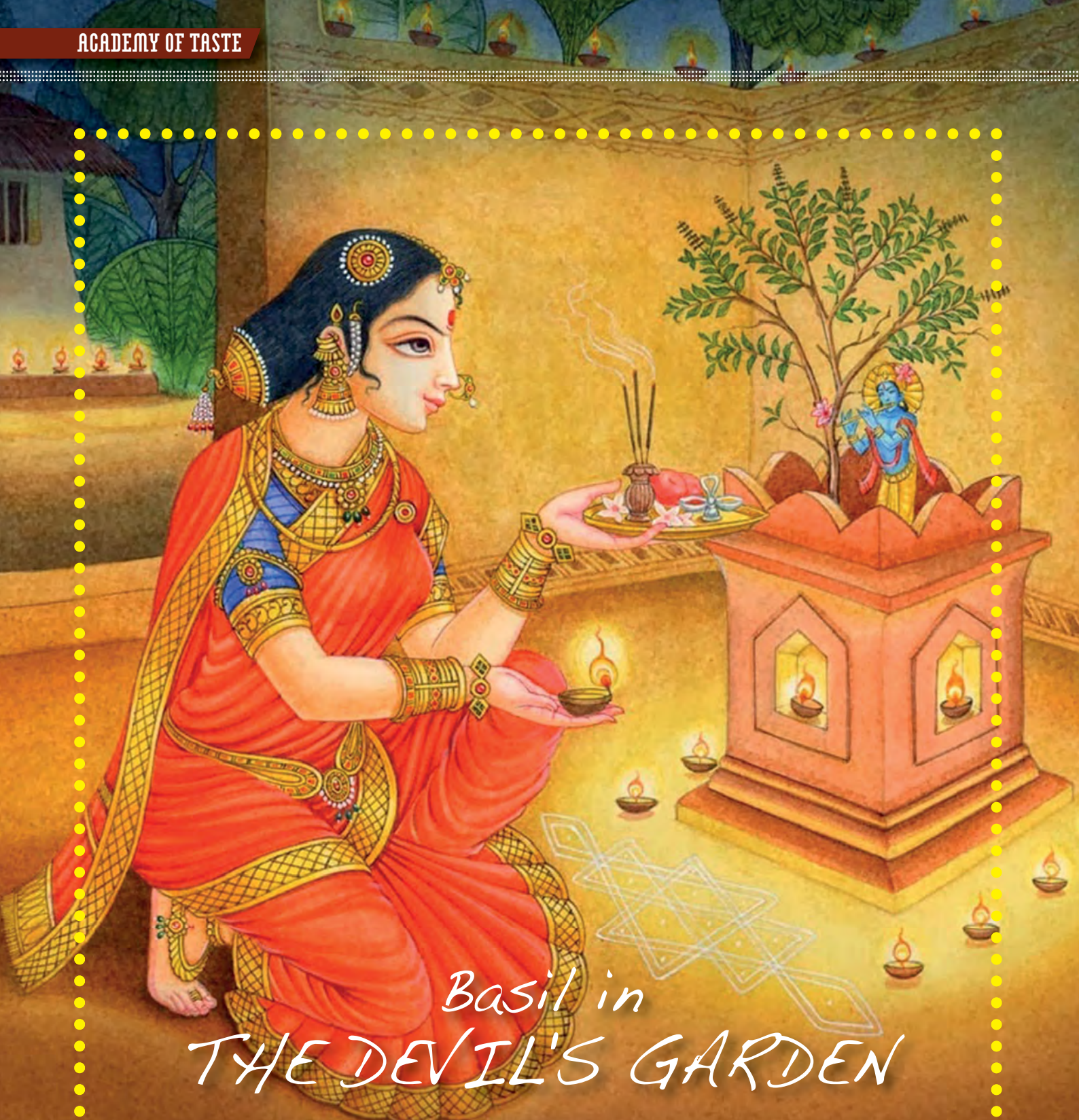
Fun fact: in Liguria, especially in Genova, it's common to add potatoes, fava beans or green beans, sometimes even zucchini cubes to the pesto, cooked with the pasta. So no more doubts about the true ingredients to make a real Genoese pesto, thanks to Giovanni Battista Ratto.

Enjoy your meal!

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## Basil in THE DEVIL'S GARDEN

Basil was imported into Europe by Alexander the Great, around the fourth century BC, returning from a campaign in Asia, near India. With the plant came also the legend of a girl named Vrinda. It is a complex story full of jealous deities, demons and angelic seductions where Vrinda eventually finds out that her husband has been murdered. This upsets her mind so much that she decides to let her-

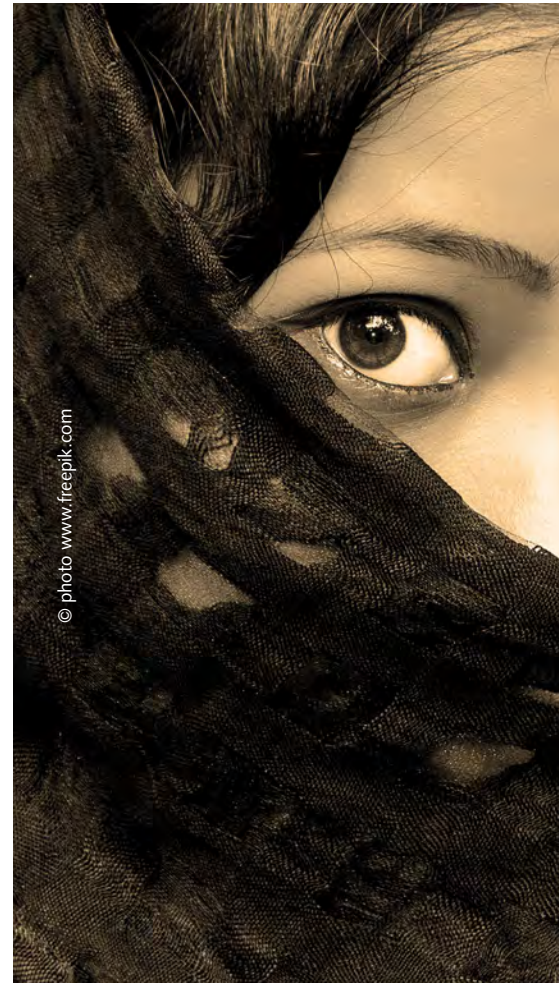
self be burned alive on the lover's pyre. To hand down the memory of this insane gesture of devotion, the Hindu gods transformed her burned hair into a plant with a sweet scent called tulsi or basil and ordered the priests to adore it. Even today, in some Indian courts, witnesses take an oath on a tuft of basil, as we do with the bible and millions of Hindu devotees start their day by turning in prayer





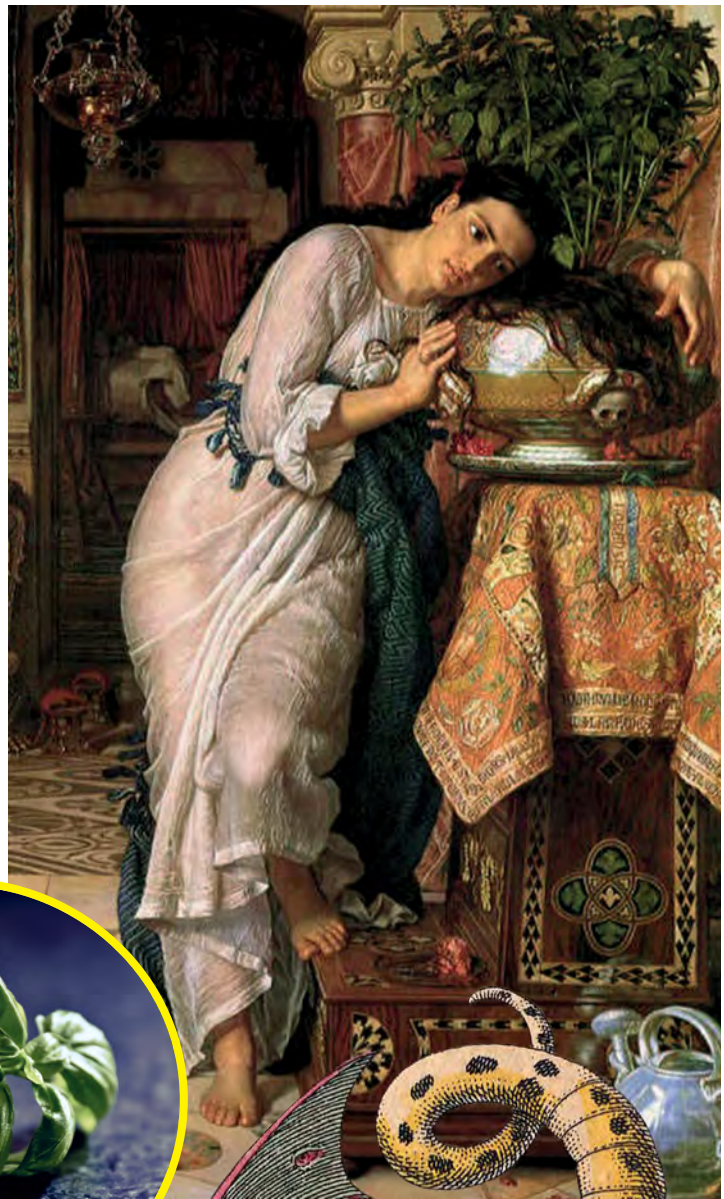
Above, Lisabetta is watering the basil, a symbol of her love, with her tears.





around their tulsi seedling. The basil that Alexander the Great brought to Europe underwent a series of genetic transformations. The same fate touched the story of Vrinda. The gods initially disappeared, then the episode of Vrinda's terrible suicide was eliminated. Until the final version in which Vrinda becomes Lisabetta who, unable to bear the idea of separating herself from the body of the dead lover, cuts off his head and buries it in a vase of basil. Lisabetta devotionally waters the plant with her tears to the point of dying of heartbreak. Thanks to the nourishment of this special fertilizer, the plant becomes so large that people come on pilgrimage to visit it.





Also in his poem *Isabella* the English poet Keats narrates how the decapitated head of the rotting lover gave the plant a particularly pleasant fragrance. And here we have the link between basil and madness that led Europeans to change the history of basil. Now it becomes Basilisk, the monster that grows in the brain of those who sniff the plant. (For further information, we recommend the book *In the Devil's Garden: A Sinful History of Forbidden Food*, by Stewart Lee Allen)





## BASIL THERAPY

The therapeutic properties of basil are many, its leaves in fact contain anti-inflammatory and antibacterial compounds, first of all eugenol, beneficial for those suffering from chronic inflammatory conditions in the intestine, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis or osteoarthritis, fever and other inflammations.

Basil also has a low caloric intake, containing many essential nutrients, minerals and vitamins necessary for the health of the body.

Potassium, in particular, helps to control heart rate, blood pressure and levels of psycho-physical stress, as well as being necessary for the regulation of water balance in the body; on the other hand, as we know, calcium is fundamental for bone health; iron for the

formation of hemoglobin, a protein that carries oxygen in the blood; contains beta-carotene, a powerful antioxidant that prevents the accumulation of cholesterol on the walls of blood vessels, preventing the risk of atherosclerosis and heart attacks.

The beneficial effects of basil are also found in cases of mental fatigue, bringing more clarity, attenuating indecision, negative ideas, headaches and general fatigue. Consumed raw on food, it helps with digestion; in the form of infusion, it is excellent to gargle against bad breath. In short, a true elixir of beauty.





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# ARISE AND SHINE... A NEW DAY BEGINS

ARCANE  
SYMPHONY





**M**ythology tells us about the heroic deeds of powerful gods and warriors, but every legend in the ancient world was narrated to the sound of music. And since prehistory, music is a continuous evolution of new sounds and emotional experiments. On the subject of epic deeds in this issue we speak of symphonic metal, a real mix of completely different sound experiences. Can the purity of symphonic music embrace the most powerful sounds of heavy metal? The answer is yes, especially if we talk about symphonic metal, a genre







born in the late 80's and perfected, in every aspect, by bands like Nightwish, Therion or Epica, just to name the most well known ones over those who are expert of the genre. The music in symphonic metal is an asymmetric alternation of electric guitar riffs, powerful battery cadences and a dreamlike atmosphere, especially when the keyboard introduces the singer's soft voice. This sparks a contrast of rough sounds and delicate harmonies sung in a classical opera style.

Our magazine is a project that is also based on the discovery and sharing of creative experiences and what is more exciting and creative than music? So we interviewed Anna Volodina, singer of the Russian band Arcane Symphony. Anna has, undoubtedly, an angelic voice that contrasts with the sound of the band who is currently working on their second album, after the great success of the first one, titled *A new day begin*.

In our view, Arcane Symphony have a tremendous potential for growth in the symphonic metal landscape, especially because they do not resemble anyone and we do not find in their sounds and in their guitar riffs, any sounds already heard and inspired by well-known bands. A pleasant mix of metal and melody. The sounds are pure and without confusion, while the songs are constructed to elicit at different times the passion of the fundamental band to create the right atmosphere, waiting to appreciate the sweet voice of Anna and Anton Andryushin virtuosity at the piano. But now it's Anna's turn, so let's find out who Arcane Symphony are.









**The band was created in 2013, but where did you first meet together with the other members to create the band?**

Our band was founded by the keyboardist (Anton Andryushin) and the first guitarist (Cyrill Romaniuk). They began to make instrumental music. I knew about the band and helped in finding a bassist and a drummer from the very beginning, and in the spring of 2014 I also became the part of it. It was a difficult and long period of searching for like-minded people because sympho-metal isn't the most popular genre.

**Which was first song ever that you sang in front of people?**

It was a long time ago when I was in 6th grade. The first performance was at the cozy and small chamber hall, and I sang a Russian folk song "If only it was not winter". Most of all I was afraid to forget the words, but in the end everything went well.

**How was the first time when all of you played together for the first time?**

It was in December 2014. We were very worried as the club was small and half empty. We didn't know how to move and how to interact with people in the hall. But from the first time everything were well.

**Why did the band decide to be an epic or symphonic metal band?**

We were guided by what we could do. Most of us have classical music education, so we like symphonic metal very much. But after we entered this music industry, we changed our views a little and the second album will have a heavier style.

**As a singer have you studied opera or lyric?**

For most of my life I studied an academic program (operas, operettas, romances), but now I'm closer to the pop or "rock" vocals.







**Today when you listen to the song *A new day begin*, would you make some changes or is it perfect as it is?**

Yes, I would like to change everything :))

**Which singer inspired you?**

Now it's Lizzy Hale, Elize Ryd and Lara Fabian.

**The band is completely Russian. Do you think that in the future you will put some traditional music in the songs?**

No, we do not plan to put Russian traditions into music. Although, perhaps, this is reflected unconsciously in our work.

**The band profile says that your music is symphonic with some experimental sounds. Could you explain this a little better?**

We tried to move away from certain standards of symphonic metal (chorus, orchestra and only operatic vocals). We tried to find "our sound" by mixing with elements of melodic metal, progressive and some other styles. Maybe the songs "You are free" and "It's a war!" are more experimental than others.

**Talking about experiment do you think that in your music there will be ever the chance to play a theremin?**

This is a very interesting idea, but we are still trying to get closer to a more electronic modern sound.

**How the day was when all of you wrote *A new day begin*?**

This song was probably the most difficult for us because it reflected the whole idea of the album. Those days were very long, but happy, because we managed to convey the atmosphere of our music. At least we hope so.



**Is there a special song that you would like to sing? And, if you would like to sing in duet, who would you like to duet with?**

Probably, something from Scorpions (like Maybe I, Maybe You) or Lara Fabian (like Broken Vow). And about duets... with Klaus Meine and David Draiman.

**Our magazine is called Veritas Arcana, and I choosed this name because I would like to offer my readers the truth behind the ancient knowledge that sometimes is secret. Why did you choose your name Arcane Symphony, and what does it mean to you?**

We have had this name for a long time. For us it's something deep, sincere and beautiful. What should be carefully listened to and felt by heart.

**We share almost the same name, what does the word mystery mean to you?**

For us, this is the secret that every musical group carries with its creativity. Something that doesn't lie on the surface.

**Which is the most enigmatic mystery for you?**

Perhaps - How was this world formed? Are we on the right track?







**Are you superstitious, I mean, which are your rituals before you start to sing? And the other members of the band, do they have some rituals?**

In general, no. The main ritual is to take a lot of water and tune in to work. The rest of the musicians do something similar.

**Are you working on something new?**

We're recording the second album at the studio now.

**When you start thinking of a new song, what do you do to find the right inspiration?**

We're recording the second album at the studio now. First of all, Anton composes music, then I start to work on it. I'm inspired by any manifestation of art (cinema, painting, poets) and of course music itself.

**Just for fun as I am Italian, do you like Italian food? Any favourite pizza?**

I love Italy and Italian food, especially lasagna and tiramisu. And about pizza... I really like quattro formaggi and pizza with chicken.

We would like to thank you Anna and the band for your time. We wish you good luck for the new album, we will wait to hear it, hopefully soon.

Just one last thing... maybe for the next interview, I will skip the pizza with chicken... ciao!









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