

ZALMOXIS AND PYTHAGORAS IN ANCIENT GREEK SOURCES

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Abstract. The paper is meant as a short debate of the possible connection between the Get-Dacian historical character Zalmoxis and the Greek philosopher and Mathematician Pythagoras. The main ideas are exemplified considering all texts of the most important Greek ancient authors, as well as some others who approached this topic. The conclusion is that the religion set up by Zalmoxis that became an important part of the civilization in the S-E and Balkan European area, are due to the Greek elements naturalized.

1. PROLOGUE

Zalmoxis, or Zamolxes, or even Zalmoxis (hereafter referred as Zalmoxis, except the ancient Greek texts), is a quite discussed person, and various stories are related to him. Zalmoxis is considered as the law maker as well as the social and religion reformer of the Gets. The Gets were a branch of the Thracians, people of Indo-European origin who were firstly mentioned by the Greek historian Herodotus, who presented them as being situated on the territories south of the Danube in 514 BC.

Strabo in his work “*Geographica*” made a more exact presentation of the Gets’ frontiers: “Τὸ δὲ νότιον μέρος τῆς Γερμανίας τὸ πέραν τοῦ Ἄλβιος τὸ μὲν συνεχὲς ἀκμὴν ὑπὸ τῶν Σοήβων κατέχεται· εἴτ’ ἐνθὺς ἢ τῶν Γετῶν συνάπτει γῆ, κατ’ ἀρχὰς μὲν στενὴ, παρατεταμένη τῷ Ἰστρῷ κατὰ τὸ νότιον μέρος, κατὰ δὲ τοῦναντίον τῇ παρωρείᾳ τοῦ Ἐρκυνίου δρυμοῦ, μέρος τι τῶν ὄρων καὶ αὐτὴ κατέχουσα, εἶτα πλατύνεται πρὸς τὰς ἄρκτους μέχρι Τυρεγετῶν”. (Στράβων, “*Γεωγραφικά*” Z, Chapter 3, §1). That is: “*The southern part of Germany, beyond the river Albios, at least where it borders upon the river, is inhabited by the Soebs. Immediately beyond its borders is the territory of the Gets. This is firstly narrow, verging to the Istrus (the Danube river) towards south and to the Hercinic Forest mountains towards the opposite direction, including a part of the mountains, too. Then, it enlarges, stretching up to the Tyregets to the north*”. And Strabo continues, referring to the Gets’ nationality: “*Λοιπὸν οἱ ἀρχαῖοι Ἕλληνας ἐθεώρουν τοὺς Γέτας ὡς θρακικὸν λαὸν· ὁ λαὸς οὗτος κατῴκει κατ’ ἀρχὰς τὰς δύο ὄχθας τοῦ Ἰστρου μαζί με τοὺς Μυσοὺς, ἢ, ὅπως τοὺς καλοῦν σήμερον, Μοισοὺς, οἱ ὅποιοι ἦσαν καὶ αὐτοὶ θρακικῆς καταγωγῆς*” (Στράβων, “*Γεωγραφικά*” Z, Chapter 3, §2).

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That is: “*Well, the ancient Greeks considered the Gets as being Thracians. They lived originally on both banks of the Istrus (river), together with the Mysians, or, Moissians as are now called, who are Thracians, too*”. We mention here that the Thracian nation was, after that of India, the most populated one (Ηροδότου ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ, Ε΄, §3).

Moreover, it was referred that the Gets considered Zalmoxis as god, and worshipped him like a god, because: “*Zalmoxis, a Thracian who was Pythagoras’ slave and had learned his teachings, returned to the Gets when was freed and gave them laws [...] and stirred his fellows to be brave by convincing them that the soul is immortal. Even today many of these barbarians teach their sons that the soul of the dead does not perish but survives and that they should not be afraid of death but to be brave when facing danger. Because he educated the Gets in this way and gave them written laws, Zalmoxis is justly considered by them as the greatest of their gods*” (Iamblichus, “*The Life of Pythagoras*”, XXX, 173).

There are contradictions concerning both the origin of Zalmoxis name, as well as **when** he exactly lived. The latter is very important, as Zalmoxis may, or may not, be related to Pythagoras. Thus, the main aim of this work is to lighten all these based mainly on some ancient Greek sources.

2. INFORMATION BY HERODOTUS

According to Herodotus (Ηρόδοτος) – who collected his information from the Greeks who lived at Pontus– Salmoxis, Σάλμοξις, was served the famous philosopher Pythagoras (Πυθαγόρας), the Samian, i.e. from the Greek island of Samos (Σάμος). Actually Herodotus refers: “*Ὡς δὲ ἐγὼ πυνθάνομαι τῶν τὸν Ἑλλήσποντον οἰκεόντων Ἑλλήνων [καὶ Πόντον], τὸν Σάλμοξιν τοῦτον ἐόντα ἄνθρωπον δουλεῦσαι ἐν Σάμῳ, δουλεῦσαι δὲ Πυθαγόρῃ τῷ Μνησάρχου*” (Ηρόδοτος, ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ Δ΄ “*Μελομένη*”, §95). That is: “*As I was informed by the Greeks who lived in Hellespont [and Pontus], Salmoxis lived and worked in Samos, working in Pythagoras, the son of Mnessarchos*”.

The above is not the only reference of Herodotus to Salmoxis, as we shall see. In his “*Ἱστορία*” and particularly in that referred above, i.e. “*Μελομένη*”, he dedicates three paragraphs to him: 94-96, from which we referred only the first 3.5 lines of §95. Thus, in the beginning of §96 Herodotus, expresses **his own opinion**, writing that he thinks that Salmoxis lived **many years earlier** than the times of Pythagoras. We think that Herodotus came to this conclusion, because he could not otherwise explain why the Gets were the only ones that resisted in the Perses, who under king Darius had come against the Thracians. And he very probably connected this fact with the Gets’ believes of immortality, which is attributed to Zalmoxis, because Herodotus refers that the Gets were the bravest and the most

righteous from all Thracians: “οἱ δὲ Γέται πρὸς ἀγνωμοσύνην τραπόμενοι αὐτίκα ἐδουλώθησαν, Θρηίκων ἐόντες ἀνδρη-ότατοι καὶ δικαιοτάτοι” («Μελομένη», §93). That is: “and the Gets, who being foolish resisted to Darius, were subdued, although they were the bravest and the most righteous from all Thracians”. Moreover, Herodotus explains why the Gets believed that they were immortal: “Ἀθανατίζουσι δὲ τόνδε τὸν τρόπον οὔτε ἀποθνήσκειν ἑωυτοὺς ἴεναί τε τὸν ἀπολλυμένον παρὰ Σάλμοξιν δαίμονα. Οἱ δὲ αὐτῶν τὸν αὐτὸν τοῦτον ὀνομάζουσι Γεβελείζιν” («Μελομένη», §94). That is: “They believe that they are immortals with this way; when somebody dies he goes straight to the demon Salmoxis. Some of them call this god Gebeleizin”.

It is worthwhile to mention here that the word demon, δαίμων, had not the same meaning as today. It was a class of spirits lower than gods. Demons were extraordinary creatures, protected and benefited people. The order was: gods, demons, heroes, human beings (Ἡσίοδος, “Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι”, 121-126). On the other hand, Gebeleizin was the god worshiped by Gets, very probably the Thracian god Zibelthiurdos.

Herodotus continues describing the way the Gets chose and sent every **five** years one of them as a messenger to Zalmoxis, after they had told him all their needs (§94): “some of them, sitting in a row hold three spars up pointed, while others grab the messenger to Zalmoxis by his arms and legs, swing him a couple of times in the air and finally throw him on top of the spars. If when he falls dies, they are convinced that their god is pleased. If the man does not die, the Gets blame him and accuse him that he is a bad man; then, they choose another. They repeat to the new messenger everything they want while he is still alive”.

Herodotus finishes §94 referring that: “Οὔτοι οἱ αὐτοὶ Θρηίκες καὶ πρὸς βροντὴν τε καὶ ἀστραπὴν τοξεύοντες ἄνω πρὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀπειλοῦσι τῷ θεῷ, οὐδένα ἄλλον θεὸν νομίζοντες εἶναι εἰ μὴ τὸν σφέτερον”. That is: “When there is thundering and lightning, these Thracians (the Gets) drew arrows up into the sky, thus threatening their god, because they believe that there is not any other god, except their own”. This might explain why Zalmoxis was also called Gebeleizin by some people, as mentioned above.

On the other hand, Herodotus, in §95, continues as follows: “Ἐντεῦθεν δὲ αὐτὸν γενόμενον ἐλεύθερον χρήματα κτήσασθαι συχνά, κτησάμενον δὲ ἀπελθεῖν ἐς τὴν ἑωυτοῦ ἅτε δὲ κακοβίων τε ἐόντων τῶν Θρηίκων καὶ ὑπαφρονεστέρων, τὸν Σάλμοξιν τοῦτον ἐπιστάμενον δίαίταν τε Ἰάδα καὶ ἦθεα βαθύτερα ἢ κατὰ Θρηίκας, οἷα Ἑλλησί τε ὀμίλησαντα καὶ Ἑλλήνων οὐ τῷ ἀσθενεστάτῳ σοφιστῇ [Πυθαγόρῃ], κατασκευάσασθαι **ἀνδρεῶνα**, ἐς τὸν πανδοκεύοντα τῶν ἀστῶν τοὺς πρώτους καὶ εὐωχέοντα ἀνα-διδάσκειν ὡς οὔτε αὐτός οὔτε οἱ συμῶται αὐτοῦ οὔτε οἱ ἐκ τούτων

αἰεὶ γινόμενοι ἀποθανέονται, ἀλλ' ἤζουσι ἐς χῶρον τοῦτον ἵνα αἰεὶ περιόντες ἔξουσι τὰ πάντα ἀγαθά. Ἐν ᾧ δὲ ἐποίεε τὰ καταλεχθέντα καὶ ἔλεγε ταῦτα, ἐν τούτῳ κατάγειον οἶκημα ἐποίεετο. Ὡς δὲ οἱ παντελέως εἶχε τὸ οἶκημα, ἐκ μὲν τῶν Θρηκίων ἠφανίσθη, καταβάς δὲ κάτω ἐς τὸ κατάγειον οἶκημα διαιτᾶτο ἐπ' ἔτεα τρία. Οἱ δὲ μιν ἐπόθεόν τε καὶ ἐπένθεον ὡς τεθνεῶτα· τετάρτῳ δὲ ἔτει ἐφάνη τοῖσι Θρήξι, καὶ οὕτω πιθανά σφι ἐγένετο τὰ ἔλεγε [ὁ] Σάλμοξις. Ταῦτα φασὶ μιν ποιῆσαι”.

That is: “After Salmoxis got his freedom, he gained a large fortune and came back to his country. As the Thracians led a life of severe poorness and were lacking any kind of knowledge, this Salmoxis –who had known the Ionian way of life and better customs than in Thrace, as one who had lived among the Greeks and had discussed especially with the wisest Greek man, [Pythagoras]– had a banquet hall built, “ἀνδρεώνας”, where he hosted and feasted the foremost citizens. During the feast he taught them that neither him, nor his followers will die for they will only move to a place where they will live forever enjoying all goods. While he was feasting his guests and talking to them like this, he had an abode made for him underground. When the abode was ready, he disappeared from the Thracians, descending into the depth of his underground abode, where he stayed hidden for three years. The Thracians were very saddened by this and cried for him considering him as dead. In the fourth year he appeared again in front of the Thracians. This is how Salmoxis made them believe everything he said. This is what they say he had done”.

3. INFORMATION BY STRABO

Herodotus’ information was used by other Greek historians, who developed the reference to the relationship between Zalmoxis and Pythagoras adding new facts. One of them was Strabo who says: “Λέγεται γὰρ τινα τῶν Γετῶν ὄνομα Ζάμολξιν δουλεῦσαι Πυθαγόρα καὶ τινα τῶν οὐρανίων παρ’ ἐκείνου μαθεῖν, τὰ δὲ καὶ παρ’ Αἰγυπτίων πλανηθέντα καὶ μέχρι δεῦρο” (Στράβων, “Γεωγραφικά”, Chapter 3, §5). That is: “It is said that one of the Gets named Zalmoxis, served Pythagoras and that he got some astronomical knowledge by him; besides that he completed his knowledge by the Egyptians, when wanderings had been there, too”.

And Strabo continues: “ἐπανελθόντα δ’ εἰς τὴν οἰκείαν σπουδα-σθῆναι παρὰ τοῖς ἡγεμόσι καὶ τῶ ἔθνει προλέγοντα τὰς ἐπισημασίας, τελευτώντα δὲ πείσαι τὸν βασιλέα κοινωρόν τῆς ἀρχῆς αὐτόν λαβεῖν ὡς τὰ παρὰ τῶν θεῶν ἐξαγγέλειν ἱκανόν· καὶ κατ’ ἀρχάς μὲν ἱερέα κατασταθῆναι τοῦ μάλιστα τιμωμένου παρ’ αὐτοῖς θεοῦ, μετὰ ταῦτα δὲ καὶ θεόν προσαγορευθῆναι, καὶ καταλαβόντα

ἀντρῶδές τι χωρίον ἄβατον τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐνταῦθα δαιτᾶσθαι, σπάνιον ἐντυγχάνοντα τοῖς ἐκτός πλην τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ τῶν θεραπόντων· συμπράττειν δὲ τὸν βασιλέα ὀρώντα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους προσέχοντας ἑαυτῷ πολὺ πλεόν ἢ πρότερον, ὡς ἐκφέροντι τὰ προστάγματα κατὰ συμβουλήν θεῶν. Τοῦτι δὲ τὸ ἔθος διέτεινεν ἄχρι καὶ εἰς ἡμᾶς, ἀεὶ τινος εὐρισκομένου τοιοῦτου τὸ ἦθος, ὅς τῷ μὲν βασιλεῖ σύμβουλος ὑπῆρχε, παρὰ δὲ τοῖς Γέταις ὠνομάζετο θεός· καὶ τὸ ὄρος ὑπελήφθη ἱερόν, καὶ προσαγορεύουσιν οὕτως· ὄνομα δ' αὐτῷ Κωγαίονον ὀμώνυμον τῷ παραρρέοντι ποταμῷ. Καὶ δὴ ὅτε Βυρεβίστας ἦρχε τῶν Γετῶν, ἐφ' ὃν ἤδη παρεσκευάσατο Καῖσαρ ὁ θεός στρατεύειν, Δεκαίνεος εἶχε ταύτην τὴν τιμὴν, καὶ πῶς τὸ τῶν ἐμψύχων ἀπέχεσθαι Πυθαγόρειον τοῦ Ζαμόλξιος ἔμεινε παραδοθέν” (Στράβων, “Γεωγραφικά”, Chapter 3, §5).

That is: “After he returned home (to his own country), he enjoyed a great esteem by both the leaders and the ordinary people, because he used to do (predictions) forebodings based on celestial signs. So, he finally convinced the king to make him co-leader as he was able to announce the wishes of the gods. Thus, Zalmoxis firstly became the priest of the Gets’ highest god, and then he, himself, became a god; and leading his life in a cave, which he occupied and where the others were not allowed to enter. He rarely met the people outside, except the king and his attendants. The king co-operated with him, because he realized that [due to him] people became more obedient than before, as they believed that he [the king] gave his orders according to the gods’ advice. This custom was continued till our days, as there was always somebody to counsel the king, who was named god by the Gets. The mountain [where there was the cave] was considered holy and was called Kogaionon, Κωγαίονον, like the river which flowed by. Besides, the foregoing mentioned honour was bestowed on Dekaineos, Δεκαίνεος, when Vurevista, Βυρεβίστα, ruled the Gets, against whom the divine Cesar set up an army; and the Gets preserved the Pythagorean custom that Zalmoxis brought to them: the abstinence from eating the meat of animals”.

4. INFORMATION BY OTHERS

Except Herodotus and Strabo, information about Zalmoxis is given by some others, too. For example, Porphyry refers: “Ἦν δ’ αὐτῷ καὶ ἕτερον μαιράκιον ὃ ἐκ Θράκης ἐκτήσατο, ᾧ Ζάμολξις ἦν ὄνομα, ἐπεὶ γεννηθέντι αὐτῷ δωρὰ ἄρκτου ἐπεβλήθη· τὴν γὰρ δωρὰν οἱ Θράκες ζαλμόν καλοῦσιν. ἀγαπῶν δ’ αὐτὸν ὁ Πυθαγόρας τὴν μετέωρον θεωρίαν ἐπαίδευσεν τὰ τε περὶ ἱερουργίας καὶ τὰς ἄλλας εἰς θεοὺς θρησκείας· τινὲς δὲ καὶ Θαλῆν τοῦτον φασὶν ὀνομάζεσθαι. ὡς Ἡρακλέα δ’ αὐτὸν προσκυνοῦσιν οἱ βάρβαροι” (Πορφυρίου, “Ἡ Ζωὴ τοῦ Πυθαγόρα”, §14). That is: “Another child was with him [Pythagoras], too; which had obtained from

Thrace, and who was named Zamolxes, because when he was born had been wrapped up in a bear's skin, which the Thracians called **zalmos**. Pythagoras, who liked this boy, touched him the theory of meteors (stellar bodies), as well as the religion ceremonies, and the other religion customs; some people say that the boy was also named **Tales**. And the barbarians worship him as **Hercules**". And Porphyry continues: "Διονυσοφάνης δὲ λέγει δουλεῦσαι μὲν αὐτὸν τῷ Πυθαγόρᾳ, ἐμπεσόντα δ' εἰς ληστὰς καὶ στιχθέντα, ὅτε κατεστασιάσθη ὁ Πυθαγόρας καὶ ἔφευγεν, δῆσαι τὸ μέτωπον διὰ τὰ στήγματα. τινὲς δ' ἐρμηνεύεσθαι τὸ ὄνομα φασὶ **ξένος ἀνήρ**" (Πορφυρίου, "Ἡ Ζωὴ του Πυθαγόρα", §15). That is: "Dionyssofanos informs us that he (Zalmoxis) served Pythagoras, and when the latter was injured, being the victim of some robbers, and when Pythagoras was rebelled and escaped, he took care of him. Some people explained Zalmoxis name as having the mean of **foreign man**".

Moreover, in the Plato's work title "Charmides", Socrates informed Charmides about some **exorcisms** that he had learned when he was in the war. He learned them from a Thracian doctor, who had been Zalmoxis' student. This Thracian doctor, who described Zalmoxis as being their **king** and **god**, teaches them that is not right to try to **therapy a part of the body, and not the body as a whole**; besides is not right to therapy **the body without trying to therapy simultaneously the soul**. Plato refers precisely: "Ἔτι δὲ μᾶλλον ἀγανακτῶ ὑπὲρ τῆς ἐπωδῆς, ἣν παρὰ τοῦ Θρακός ἔμαθον, εἰ μηδενός ἀξίου πράγματος οὐσαν αὐτὴν μετὰ πολλῆς σπουδῆς ἐμάνθανον. Ταῦτ' οὖν πάνυ μὲν οὐκ οἶομαι οὕτως ἔχειν, ἀλλ' ἐμέ φαῦλον εἶναι ζητητὴν· ἐπεὶ τὴν γε σωφροσύνην μέγα τι ἀγαθόν εἶναι, καὶ εἶπερ γε ἔχεις αὐτό, μακάριον εἶναί σε. Ἄλλ' ὅρα εἰ ἔχεις τε καὶ μηδὲν δέη τῆς ἐπωδῆς· εἰ γὰρ ἔχεις, μᾶλλον ἂν ἐγωγέ σοι συμβουλεύσαιμι ἐμὲ μὲν λήρον ἡγεῖσθαι εἶναι καὶ ἀδύνατον λόγῳ ὅτιοῦν ζητεῖν, σεαυτὸν δὲ, ὅσῳ περ σωφρονέστερος εἶ, τοσοῦτω εἶναι καὶ εὐδαιμονέστερον" (Πλάτων, "Χαρμίδης", §23).

That is: "I'm vexed much more with the idea that these **exorcisms** I learned by this Thracian, and kept in my remembrance with difficulty, do not have any practical value. Besides, I do not believe that these are so, but that I'm a bad investigator. Because, I imagine that the wisdom is a big good, and that if you have it you are blessed. So, see, if you have got it, and if you have, you have not any need of **exorcisms**; and I would advice you to consider me as a garrulous, and unable to investigate anything related to this, because if you have wisdom, you must consider yourself happy and much happier the more wisdom you are".

On the other hand, Diogenes Laertios when he wrote about Pythagoras, he mentioned Zalmoxis, too: "καὶ δοῦλον Ζάλμοξιν, ᾧ Γέται θύουσι, Κρόνον νομίζοντες, ὡς φησιν Ἡρόδοτος" (Βιβλίον 8, "Πυθαγόρας", §2). That is: "and servant named Zalmoxis (had Pythagoras), to whom the Gets sacrificed, because, as Herodotus refers, they think he is (the god) Cronos (Saturn)".

5. COMMONS OF THE PYTHAGOREANS AND THE GETS' PHILOSOPHY

From what has been previously referred it is obvious that there are many similarities between Pythagorean philosophy and that of Gets, which was very possibly transferred to them by Zalmoxis (although they might had got all these habits from their contact with the near by ancient Greeks).

For example Porphyry in his treatise about Pythagoras' life refers (§9): “Επανελθόντα δ’ εἰς τὴν Ἰωνίαν κατασκευάσαι ἐν τῇ πατρίδι διδασκαλεῖον τὸ Πυθαγόρου καλούμενον ἔτι καὶ νῦν ἡμικύκλιον, ἐν ᾧ Σάμιοι περὶ τῶν κοινῶν συνιόντες βουλευόνται. Ἐξω δὲ τῆς πόλεως ἄντρον οἰκεῖον τῆς ἑαυτοῦ φιλοσοφίας ποιήσαντα, ἐν τούτῳ τα πολλὰ τῆς ἡμέρας καὶ τῆς νυκτός διατρίβειν συνόντα ὀλίγοις τῶν ἑταίρων”. That is: “When he came back to Ionia, he (Pythagoras) constructed in his own country a semi-cycle teaching place, which was and still is called Pythagorean, in which the Samians gathered together decided about the commons. Besides, he made outside the city a place to teach his philosophy, in which he spends the most time of day and night with a few of his fellows” (Πορφυρίου, “*Η Ζωή του Πυθαγόρα*”, §14). Similarly, Zalmoxis' practice of organizing gatherings with the foremost citizens, as well as his almost ritual retirement in an underground abode described by Ηρόδοτος (ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ Δ' “*Μελομένη*” §95), could have been inspired by some of Pythagoreans' practices.

Furthermore, the main dogma of the religion set up by Zalmoxis is the same as the one at the core of Pythagoras' philosophy, namely the belief in the **immortality of the soul**. This is referred by various ancient authors. For instance Herodotus' younger contemporary, Hellanicos, refers in his work “*Barbarian Customs*”: “...The Scythian (Zalmoxis) had been the slave of Pythagoras and after he returned home he taught his people learning about the immortality of the soul”. Similarly, Porphyry is referred in Pythagoras ideas about the soul: “**μάλιστα μέντοι γνώριμα παρὰ πᾶσιν ἐγένετο πρῶτον μὲν ὡς ἀθάνατον εἶναι φησὶ τὴν ψυχὴν, εἶτα μεταβάλλουσαν εἰς ἄλλα γένη ζώων. Φέρεται γὰρ εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα τὰ δόγματα πρῶτος κομίσαι ταῦτα Πυθαγόρας**” (Πορφυρίου, “*Η Ζωή του Πυθαγόρα*”, §19). That is: “**firstly it was made known to all (Pythagoras' students) that the soul is immortal, and then that it is transferred to some other kind of animals (metempsychosis). It is also referred that Pythagoras was the first who brought these dogmas in Greece**”. So, as Pythagoras was the first who brought these dogmas in Greece, similarly Zalmoxis was the first to bring the notion of the soul immortality to the Gets'.

There are several other similitudes between the Zalmoxis' religion and the Pythagorean philosophy. One such theme refers to **Cosmos** (Κόσμος), i.e. *Universe*. Actually, Pythagoras was the first to use the word Κόσμος, because the Universe became Κόσμος when it was formed from the existing chaos. According to

Pythagoreans, and especially to Philolaus, Cosmos was spherical and was consisted of the following parts: the *burning centre*, which generated everything; then came *Antixthon*, *Ἀντίχθων* – which very probably was the other earth’s hemisphere – and the *Earth* on which we live; then came the *Moon*, the *Sun*, and the **5** (known at those times) *planets*, and finally were the stars.

The Dacian concept of the universe is best represented by the great round sanctuary, also called the *Pantheon*, *Πάνθειον*, in the Orastie Mountains, near Sarmizegetusa (Fig. 1). It is made up of three concentric circles and an arch with Hestia’s hearth in the middle of the arch. The arch stands for the Earth, while the circle next to it is that of the Moon, followed by the circles of the Sun and (moving stars), i.e. planets and last by that of the fixed stars. This sanctuary was also used as calendar. The Dacian monks also placed a sacred hearth of fire the centre of their smaller, round, multi-circled sanctuaries raised in the area nearby Sarmizegetusa.



Fig. 1. The Pantheon.

Besides, in Pythagoreans’ philosophy, mathematics, astronomy and natural sciences were superior means of initiation, practiced only by elevated disciples. Within the Gets-Dacians all these sciences were part of their religion and were the appendage of the high priests, who were the only ones who practiced them and taught them to their disciples. Possibly, the first one of the Gets’ who made use of mathematics and astronomy was Zalmoxis according to Strabo and Porphyry. The Get-Dacians priests practiced astronomy as long as the Zalmoxian religion lasted.

Moreover, the Roman historian Jordanes mentions in his work “*On the Origin and Deeds of the Gets: Getica*” that, during the reign of king Burebista and of the high priest Deceneus, who comprised most of the first century BC, i.e. some centuries after the time of Zalmoxis, the Get-Dacians had come to very elevated

knowledge of astronomy: "...they (the Dacians) knew the theory of the twelve zodiacal signs,...the planets' trajectories... how the Moon's orbit grows and decreases, how much the Sun's fire globe outgrows the earthly globe, under what name and signs the three hundred and forty six stars pass in their fast way from east to west, closer or father from the celestial pole..., the solar eclipses, sky rotation..." (Jordanes, *Getica*, 69-71).

Another element present in both the Zalmoxian and Pythagorean philosophies is the number's symbolism. To the Pythagoreans the numbers represented the ultimate reality of the world and each one of them was given a symbol, i.e. *Tetractys* (Fig. 2). This means *the sum of the first four numbers*, which is: $1+2+3+4=10$. This supposed to be very important, as number **10** symbolized the Universe, Σύμπαν. Moreover, Pythagoras' fans, took an oath, or invoked him, as they did for gods. The oath they made was: "οὐ, μὰ τὸν ἀματέρα γενεᾶ παραδόντα **τετρακτύν**, παγὰν ἀενάου φύσιος ριζώματ' ἔχουσαν" (Πορφύριος, "*Ἡ Ζωή του Πυθαγόρα*", §20). That is: "no, to him who has given (offered) us and to our generations, **tetraktys**, which roots are going back to infinity".

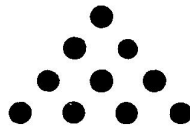


Fig. 2. Tetraktys.

According to the Pythagoreans, each one of the first ten numbers had its own special meaning. Number **3**, for instance, symbolized the **time**, as god; that is: the past, the present and the future. Number **4** symbolized the **space**, the order of Cosmos. Number **5** symbolized the **five elements**, from which Cosmos is made. That is: the soil, the water, the air, the fire, and the ether, as well as the corresponding five polyhedral: cubic, 20edral, 8edral, 4edral, and 12edral. Because, numbering (*αριθμολογία*), geometry (*γεωμετρία*), and music (*μουσική*), yield, the internal students of Pythagoras to understand the cosmic phenomena.

It was mentioned that Gets sent to Zalmoxes a messenger every **5** years (Herodotus, *HISTORIA*, §94), or every **4** years according to some others. This may be symbolic, and have the meaning of numbers 4, or 5, as described above. Furthermore, number **5** might denote the five years of speechlessness of Pythagoras students, as part of their training (Diogenes Laertios, "*Pythagoras*", §10), or, it may be simply so, because every **4**, or **5**, years they had **new needs**.

Another number attributed to Pythagoras is the *golden number* $\varphi=1.618$, which is found in most of the ancient Greek and Egyptian monuments. An archaeological proof that seems to indicate similitude's between the Zalmoxean cult and elements of Pythagorean mathematics is a ritual picture found in a tomb

discovered nearby Fantanele village – *S-E Walachia, Romania, close to a Getic settlement at Zimnicea* – in 1965. The tomb dates since the 4th century BC. In this tomb were found elements that seem to indicate that the man buried there was involved in Zalmoxis' cult, namely that he was a *messenger* sacrificed to Zalmoxis, within the religion rituals that took place every 4 or 5 years as mentioned by Herodotus. The main findings yield to this conclusion are *seven spear pointed ends* (in Herodotus text there were only *three spears*), glass beads and a ritual picture. The length of the tomb is of 3.8m and is directed to N-S, while the width is of 2.28 m along E-W direction. The ratio L/W gives **1.666**, a value very close to the golden number.

On the other hand, Plato is referring to a perfect number corresponding to the divine race, and another number for the humans (Πλάτων, “Πολιτεία” H, 546 B). He is doing so, knowing the Pythagoreans life-giving (*vivifying*) triangle. The latter is a rectangular triangle with sides of **3, 4 & 5**. The area covered by this triangle is: $(4 \times 3) / 2 = 6$, while the cubic of **6** is **216**, which is the summation of the cubic of the three sides of this triangle, too. This number, named by Pythagoras *soul cubic* (*ψυχογικός κύβος*), was also related by him to the *least number of days* needed for a human being to be born: **7 months X 30 days** each, plus **6 days** needed to start the pregnancy. We do not know if **this number**, as well as the general numbering used by the Pythagoreans, had some specific meaning in the Gets.

Moreover, it was referred that the Gets considered Zalmoxis as **god**, and worshipped him like a god (Herodotus, “Μελομένη”, § (94-96); Diogenes Laertios Book 8, “Pythagoras”, §2). Similarly, Pythagoras' fans, took an oath, or invoked him, as they did for gods.

We've also mentioned what Plato refers in his work “*Charmides*” about some *exorcisms*, which learned by a Thracian doctor, who had been Zalmoxis' student. These exorcisms were used for both the **body** and the **soul** therapy. On the other hand, Porphyry informs us that (§30): “*Pythagoras calmed (soothed) peoples' scourges, passions, both these of their soul and those of their bodies using appropriate rhythms and sweet words and epodes*”. As well as (§33): “*When Pythagoras' friends were ill, either in soul or in their bodies, he calmed them; others using epodes, and others with music*”. Moreover, Porphyry adds that Pythagoras himself spent his free time in his house till early the morning, synchronized his voice with that of the lyre, and signed some of the ancient paeans (victory songs), etc., those who he believed that **calm the soul**. Finally, Hesych informs us that Zalmoxis gave his name to a song and a dance style.

Furthermore, Diogenes Laertios, refers: “*Τοῦτον γὰρ καὶ τὸ φονεύειν ἀπαγορεύειν, μὴ ὅτι γε ἄπτεσθαι τῶν ζῶων κοινὸν δίκαιον ἡμῖν ἐχόντων ψυχῆς. καὶ τὸδε μὲν ἦν τὸ πρόσχημα· τὸ δ' ἀληθὲς τῶν ἐμψύχων ἀπηγόρευεν ἄπτεσθαι συνασκῶν καὶ συνεθίζων εἰς εὐκολίαν βίου τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ὥστε εὐπορίστους*

αὐτοῖς εἶναι τὰς τροφὰς ἄπυρα προσφε-ρομένοις καὶ λιτὸν ὕδωρ πίνουσιν· ἐντεῦθεν γὰρ καὶ σώματος ὑγίειαν καὶ ψυχῆς ὀξύτητα περιγίγνεσθαι” (Βιβλίο 8, “Πυθαγόρας”, §13). That is: “He (Pythagoras) forbidden (to his students and his fans) to kill the animals, and much more he forbidden to eat them, because human beings and the animals have something in common that is the soul. This was the pretext; in reality he was against a diet with meat, because he wanted people to be used in a simple life. Thus, they could be fitted with things that it was easily found, and no fire was necessary for their preparation; besides, he told them to drink water only; because, both the body’s health and the good condition of the soul come out of these”.

Similarly, all Pythagoreans keep this habit and avoid eating meat, and keeling animals: “Ἐμπεδοκλῆς δ’ ὁ Ἀκραγαντίνος ἵπποις Ὀλύμπια νικήσας, πυθαγορικός ὢν καὶ ἐμψύχων ἀπεχόμενος, ἐκ σμύρνης καὶ λιβα-νωτοῦ καὶ τῶν πολυτεστάτων ἀρωμάτων βοῦν ἀναπλάσας διένειμε τοῖς εἰς τὴν πανήγυριν ἀπαντήσασιν” (Αθηναῖος, “Δειπνοσοφισταί”, Βιβλίο Α). That is: “Empedocles, from Acragas, because as a Pythagorean did not eat anything having life, when won in the ridding at Olympia, he made from myrrh, incense, and other valuable aromatics an image of a bull, and offered it to all attendants”. On the other hand, it is known that Zalmoxis had taught the Gets to avoid eating meat (Στράβων, “Γεωγραφικά”, Κεφάλαιο 3, §5):

Finally, another similarity between Zalmoxis and Pythagoras was that, as is referred, both of them did predictions. For Pythagoras, Porphyry cites some such cases; while for Zalmoxis, Strabo informs us about (Στράβων, “Γεωγραφικά”, Chapter 3, §5). Besides, both Pythagoras and Zalmoxis used a similar trick, i.e. being hidden, to convince people that they had spent some time with the deaths, being at Hades.

6. DISCUSSION – CONCLUSIONS

Zalmoxis was mentioned in Greek historical texts starting from the 6th century, in Herodotus’ HISTORY (Ἡροδότου, ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ), and particularly in Chapter Z, title “Μελομένη”. Later, some other Greek authors continued to pay him attention. All these prove that the historical representatives of one of the world’s greatest civilizations, the Greek one, considered that the life and becoming of the historical character Zalmoxis was an important part of human civilization. We also notice that in the earliest ancient Greek sources the name Σάλμοξις, Salmoxis, is used, while later he is referred as Ζάμολξις, Zamolxes.

According to Herodotus his own opinion the relationship between Zalmoxis and Pythagoras is not sure, as he considers that Zalmoxis lived earlier than the Greek philosopher. Even so it seems that there is some kind of relation between Pythagoras and Zalmoxis’ ideas he brought to the Gets’. This proves the millenary

traditions of the cultural interconnections between the ancestors of the Romanian people and the Greeks. Although this could be really so, as the ancestors of the Romanians, the Gets were lived in a part of Thrace, which was in the Greeks' neighbourhood, it seems to be even deeper, because of *Λυσίμαχος* and his son *Άγαθοκλής* story (Παυσανίας, *ΑΤΤΙΚΑ* 9, §5). This may explain the deep Greek influence to the Gets.

Moreover, according to Herodotus it is not clear if Zalmoxis was Pythagoras' servant or slave, as it is only referred that he worked for Pythagoras (Ηρόδοτος, *ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ Δ' "Μελλομένη"*, §95). Diogenes Laertios seems to be the only one to describe Zalmoxis as being Pythagoras servant (Διογένης Λαέρτιος, Βιβλίο 8, "*Πυθαγόρας*", §2); while Iamblichus call him Pythagoras' slave («*The Life of Pythagoras*», XXX, 173).

On the other hand, we mentioned the similarities between Zalmoxis and Pythagoras, and we think that the most important was the *soul's immortality*. This trait of Zalmoxis' religion also appeared and grew very strong with the Gets as a result of the very powerful, ancient Gets cult of the ancestors. The worshipping of the brave departed forefathers originated in the beginning of Gets civilization and lasted until this civilization was conquered and destroyed by the Romans in the first century AD, in the time of king Decebalus, the last Dacian king.

The faith in immortality seems to be the result of the geo-political and historical conditions of the Gets' existence. Surrounded by powerful neighbours, very often under attack from them, the Gets had to be very good warriors and wedge permanent and hard battles for survival. In time they tried not only to defend their state, but also to expand it and thus as to gain strength and stability. That is why they adhered quickly and convincingly to the religion and laws preached by Zalmoxis. The belief in the immortality of the brave dead became such a strong trait of their character that it impressed all people who came in touch with them. Herodotus mentioned it for the first time and both Greek, as well as Roman historians, continued to write about it for many centuries. Especially Strabo and some of the following Greek historians traced the roots of the Gets' belief in immortality to the Pythagorean philosophy.

Besides, it seems that both Pythagoras and the Gets believed in metempsychosis. For Pythagoras this is *obvious* and *clear*, because he, himself, used to describe the various phases he had passed through before being Pythagoras. So, Pythagoras had been: *Aithalides*, i.e. god's Hermes son from whom he received the gift of metempsychosis. Then, he became the *Euforvos*, who was injured by Menelaus (the king of Sparta, during the Trojan's war). Afterwards, his soul moved to some flowers and animals. Then, his soul was moved to *Ermotimos*, and when he was died he reborn as *Pyrros*, a fisherman from the island of Delos, while after *Pyrros*' death, he reborn as *Pythagoras* (Diogenes Laertius, Book 8, "*Pythagoras*", §4-7). For Zalmoxis, on the other hand, although this is not directly obvious, one

can easily conclude it from the way the Gets sent him a messenger: the messenger **had to die**. This is very probably the reason for which some connect both Pythagoras and Zalmoxis with *Sharman*'s, and consider Zalmoxis as the god of dead people.



Fig. 3. The death of a messenger (god Hermes is also in the scene).

On the other hand, there were not only similarities, but differences between Zalmoxis actions and those of Pythagoras. For instance, it is known that Pythagoras' *School*, at Sicily, attended many women, too, as students. On the contrary, the name used for the meeting place of Zalmoxis', "*ἀνδρεώνας*", has the meaning of a place for men only, as it comes from the Greek word *ἄνδρας* = man.

Last, but not least, the most evident conclusion is that Greek civilization had a great impact on the Get-Dacian existence in very many ways. Here we have tried to show again that a legend or not, Pythagorean philosophy shaped the core of the Gets' religion set up by the most renowned Get historical character, Zalmoxis, as well as the first knowledge in the fields of astronomy and mathematics.

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