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“Unwritten Messages” from the Carpathian Basin

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FOREWORD

The Carpathian Basin, besides being a beautiful and interesting part of the European continent, is also a region of great actual and potential interest for archaeoastronomers.

As the area is situated in the temperate zone, more or less equidistant from the Equator and the Arctic Circle, there are many celestial events which can not be observed here. For example, the Sun never reaches its zenith, as it does in the tropics. The rise and setting of heavenly bodies does not have the 'drama' of the lands nearer the Equator, where, the path of the rising stars crosses the horizon at an ever steepening angle (approaching vertical) as the Equator is approached. This phenomenon was the basis of the navigation system of the ancient Polynesians.

The movement of the Moon is also less dramatic than in the lands nearer the Arctic Circle. The northern and southern extreme positions of the Moon (defined by the 18.6-year period of its movement) are not as spectacular as for example at Callanish (Scotland) or Stonehenge. In the northern countries the extreme position of the full Moon moves near the horizon. This gave rise to some remarkable cults, for example in Scandinavia.

What is left then to the inhabitants of the temperate zones? What can serve as a basis for their everyday rituals, belief systems, ideologies and burial customs? The answer: the four special events of the solar year, the two solstices and the two equinoxes.

Awareness of these days and events can be traced in the life of our remote, ancient and medieval, ancestors through their incorporating their knowledge in their communal architecture by aligning their shrines, graves churches and cemeteries. The examination of our ancestors' architecture from this point of view yields abundant proof of the intimate connection that existed between our ancestors' consciousness and the firmament.

This small collection of papers represents our first attempt of trying to use archaeoastronomy to gain some fresh insight into the practical and spiritual life of our remote ancestors in this region.

Budapest, December 2000

The Editors

Acknowledgements

It is my agreeable duty to express the editors' gratitude to the many people without whose unstinting and unselfish help, freely and generously given, the production of this volume would have been impossible due to the very limited financial resources available to us. The only shadow cast over my pleasure is the fact, that I am the only one of the editors left to do it.

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Katalin Barlai

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We have retained the habit, come down to us from the days when human palaeontology did not exist, of isolating that particular slice of six thousand years or so for which we possess written or dated documents. This for us is History, as opposed to pre-History. In reality, however, there is no breach of continuity between the two. The better we get the past into perspective, the more clearly we see that the periods called ‘historic’ (right down to and *including* the beginning of ‘modern’ times) are nothing else but direct prolongations of the Neolithic age. Of course, as we shall point out, there was increasing complexity and differentation, but essentially following the same lines and on the *same plane*.

(Teilhard de Chardin: The Phenomenon of Man)