

Cosmic spinning and weaving: Hints on a celestial reference system used by some ancient cultures

Myths and pictures from all over the world show the archaic idea of making a heavenly grid of reference by spinning and weaving it. There are ropes connecting heaven and earth. Nets and webs spread over the sky, originating in the polar points of the heaven or covering the course of sun, moon and planets above and below the ecliptic. Spindles represent the polar axis, around which the cosmos turns. Cords tie animals to the polar point. Gigantic weaving looms control the movements of the planets, of sun and moon. The sky is a garment, a large matting, latticework, tissue, textile, in any case a sort of network.

The spinners and weavers are mostly animals, human beings and gods, living at earth or in the heaven. A famous spinner and weaver is the spider. Worldwide ancient cultures handed down a lot of myths and representations, which show the insect constructing a complex network, containing the essential points and lines of the cosmos. The spider symbolism is very deeply rooted in some cultures and may reach not only in Neolithic times, where the technology of weaving is already proofed, but also in Palaeolithic epochs, where recent research work showed the knowledge of weaving too.

The common aspect of the myths of spinning and weaving a whole cosmos and course of the astral bodies in him, is to be found in the movements of turning, twisting, twining and binding. Together with fixed points as rods, sticks, posts or fixed frameworks a detailed dynamic and static structure of the cosmos is presented in the myths and pictures of ancient cultures.

Often people related cosmic spinning and weaving to the beginning, changing or ending of the world or to birth, life, death and rebirth of the human beings. For example the archaic concept of fire-drilling is frequently connected with the spider. Or the spindles and looms referred to the fate of man.

The paper discusses the meaning of myths and pictures about cosmic spinning and weaving, coming from all continents. It gives hints how the symbols and stories are related to a celestial reference systems, which may be used by some of the ancients cultures.