PART EIGHT

SYMBOLS IN THE FIELD OF THE SOUTHEAST EUROPEAN RELIEFS

The reliefs of Southeast Europe are of type II, found particularly in Thrace, of type III, found particularly in Lower Moesia, of type IV found especially in Dacia, and of type V found primarily in Dalmatia and the Pannonias. It may be emphasized (cf Typology, II 2-5) that the reliefs of Thrace in their simplest form are composed in a single field, the field being that of a stele with a rounded top. In extreme contrast the reliefs of type III are rectangular and are divided into three horizontal registers of which the middle register, where the tauroctone action is portrayed, is equal in height to that of the top and bottom registers combined. This type of composition was derived, not from classical Greek art, but rather from the orient. Composition in two or more conjoined friezes may be found in the relief sculpture of ancient Sumer, of the Hittites of northern Mesopotamia, in the sculptures of Persepolis, in later Sassanian rock reliefs, and in the pictorial art of ancient Egypt. Traces of such composition can also be found in early Ionic art of Asia Minor and appears in certain Etruscan monuments. This type of narrative picture in multiple registers was, I believe, inspired by the desire to turn paintings into sculptured monuments, as in Egypt. The composition of the lower Moesian monuments has affinity with the Graeco-Persian monuments of Dascylium and the early Ionic reliefs as developed on the Heroon of Trysa. Type IV composition as found in Dacia in particular is a combination of types II and III in which the form of II is preserved but the narrative method of type III is superimposed. Type V in its simplest form is a single field composition, but the field is a circle or disk. This is gradually modified by contact with the other types so that the circular tauroctone field is used as the middle register of type IV, or it becomes a central feature of type I (810 1472). Otherwise the circular field is surrounded with a concentric circular frieze
containing the signs of the zodiac (i870) or even the subject matter of the top and bottom registers of types III and IV (i815 i861* cf i415 2187 2246 with i128* 2202).

a. Natura dei (apogenesis). The Birth of the god is one of the very common symbols found on the reliefs of Southeast Europe, far more regularly than on the monuments of type I where in fact it is relatively infrequent. Moreover on a few reliefs the Natura dei was presented within the tauroctone field as the only addition to the normal tauroctone group of Mithra and the torchbearers. This addition is conspicuous, for example, on the relatively simple type II reliefs from Thrace (2332 2339) and Upper Moesia (2243 2191), or on a simple type V relief from Dacia (2187). All of these are of subtype AB. The Birth motive appears to be closely knit to the A subtype, whose artistic origin appears to have been in western Asia Minor (Typology, III 1-2). The Natura dei is represented in several distinct ways, of which the first to be discussed is characteristic of the AB subtype tauroctone.

1. Deus saxigenus (Theos ek petras). In this representation the head and torso of a naked male youth or infant emerges from a rough rock formation with arms upraised (cf 2191 2214 2243 2332). In one instance the rock appears to have a crescent shape (i958*). The god usually holds a dagger in his right hand and a torch in his left, as also on the large Hedernheim monument (cf 3 h). Sometimes a second torch is substituted for the dagger (cf Fig. 25) or a sphere for the torch (i283*). On the Trier monument (985*) the infant holds the world globe in his left hand and thrusts upward against the edge of the zodiac circle with his raised right hand (cf 6 d 3). This gesture may indicate the separating of the two halves of the cosmic egg by the emerging god of fire. The first six signs around the edge of the hemisphere may also suggest the upper, or summer, half of the sphere (cf 4 f 1). The torch held by the emerging figure suggests the birth of the god of fire or the fiery birth of the cosmos in which there was a separation of the elements as suggested by the dagger (cf 5 f 3).

The fiery nature of the birth is shown on the Dura fresco (Fig. 25) by the god holding a torch in both hands and a flame of fire issuing from the crown of his head. On two tauroctones of Southeast