



Semiruna in Romania

"There are things known and unknown and in-between are the doors of perception."
(Aldous Huxley)

"I believe that we are a species of amnesia. I think we have forgotten our roots and origins and we are quite lost in many ways". (Graham Hancock)

"Our world is in crisis because of the absence of consciousness. And so, to whatever degree any one of us can bring back a small piece of the picture and contribute it to the building of the new paradigm, then we participate in the redemption of the human spirit and that, after all, is what it's really all about". (Terrence McKenna)

Just in time for the longed-for relief of the monsoon season, I have returned to sweltering Sedona, from my first trip to Romania; and my participation as a keynote presenter at a conference in Bucharest with the topic, **Trauma: Time, Space and Fractals**. Interestingly enough, temperatures there were well over 100 degrees F, as well. This event in Bucharest included both my first trip to Romania and also an opportunity to attend and present at a conference devoted to the exploration of shamanic practices, which focus upon the exploration of consciousness and alternative options for healing. Given the narrow definition of my official presence there, I am unable to offer much in the way of observations apart from my stay in the massive and somewhat spooky Hotel Phoenicia, now transformed into a rather

generic business hotel and at the shamanic conference venue. Unfortunately, I saw little of the capital city's blend of modern buildings, 17th and 18th century Eastern Orthodox churches, graceful Art Nouveau villas and dirty gray, communist-style apartment blocks.

Nevertheless, and given that I am a life-long student of history, and a curious traveler, I am quite aware of the unexplored potential awaiting within the vast reaches of this very complex culture (and frequently overlooked country) which might well be lost upon geographically unaware Americans who might have difficulty finding Romania on a map. If this is indeed the case, the basic facts are as follows: The Republic of Romania, comprised from a fusion between the Latin West and Greek East, is situated in Southeast Europe, and borders the Black Sea, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Hungary, Serbia and Moldova. Anyone with an interest in social and political trauma will find a wealth of material within the labyrinth of this region's immensely convoluted and often traumatic past; from pre-Roman times up until and through the dark decades of foreign invasion, Nazism, the Holocaust, Cold War and an especially brutal, Soviet-style dictatorship. While challenges remain, Romania today, as a roundabout between Russia and Europe has successfully struggled to emerge from a bleak communist-style backwater to become a vibrant democratic republic and resilient member of the EU, which conveys a sense of hope, promise and continuous renewal. (Robert D. Kaplan, **In Europe's Shadow**, 2016)

While this first-ever conference offered in Eastern Europe, **Sumiruna Awakenings: Emergence of a New Consciousness**, created for the purpose of bringing together some of world's leading visionaries, artists, researchers and teachers in Romania to discuss the latest research and techniques for exploring consciousness, the emphasis was clearly upon the potential roles of shamanism in healing unresolved trauma for the individual and for our endangered species. Sumiruna is a Peruvian term for "vegetalistas" or the highest level of shamans who employ plants to master all three realms of jungle, water and air. That this event was set in Romania should be no surprise given the long tradition for such explorations there. We have, for example, the extensive works of Romanian scholar Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), including **Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy**, a survey of shamanic practices in various parts of the world, as well as **Myths, Dreams and Mysteries** which also addresses shamanism in great detail. Eliade defined the term shaman as

follows: "... he is believed to cure, like all doctors, and to perform miracles...like all magicians - but beyond this, he is a psycho pomp and he may also be a priest". (Eliade: Shamanism).

Being that they are a nomadic culture; gypsies, also have a long tradition of shamanism and magic throughout the region. Gypsies commune with the spirits they call "mull dudia" or "mullo doods"...or "ghost lights". Much power is attributed to these entities which enable the practitioner to access the deeper secrets of a world where there is no time, no future or past...only the unfolding of the moment where all is revealed. The gypsy shamans also attune to the human body while utilizing plants and medicines and healing rituals to deal with many levels of disease. (Dolores Littell, Shamanism and Sorcery and the Gypsy Chov'hani).

While you may understandably wonder why such a gathering would invite a trauma specialist who is quite clearly not a shaman, we do after all share a common interest in cross-cultural methods for healing overwhelming life events. In reality, the first trauma specialists were the shamans and medicine people who were practicing long before the advent of psychology, psychiatry and other mental health modalities; and there is still much to learn from these healers today. In many parts of our world there exist vast numbers of traumatized people for whom the one on one psychotherapeutic model is unavailable, unaffordable or culturally inappropriate. Such conferences and similar gatherings offer an invitation to extend our thinking about trauma to include Nature, shamanic wisdom, cross-cultural and kinesthetic, non-verbal methods and an appreciation of the healing power of community.