

SCANDINAVIAN BACKGROUND  
OF GREEK MYTHIC COSMOGRAPHY:  
THE SUN'S WATER TRANSPORT\*

We know from a long passage in Athenaeus (469 c–470 d) that many Greek poets, including very early ones, referred to the sun's night journey in a cup-like device. Most of them spoke of the 'cup' (τὸ δέπας);<sup>1</sup> the poet of the *Titanomachia*, followed by other writers, called it the 'cauldron' (ὁ λέβης).<sup>2</sup> Heracles, who once borrowed his vehicle from Helios (Pisander, Panyassis, Pherecydes—all *apud* Athen., *loc. cit.* and Apollod. *Bibl.* 2. 5. 10), is also shown to sail in a cauldron on a cup from Vulci.<sup>3</sup> The cauldron apparently exemplified a particularly spacious and precious metal vessel. Mimnermus described the vehicle as a 'winged hollow bed',<sup>4</sup> but Athenaeus may be right in interpreting Mimnermus' words as a hint at the hollow shape of a cup.<sup>5</sup> An idea of associating the sun with a vessel is easy to account for. The round opening of a vessel fits with the shape of the sun's disc, and its hollow body provides the sun with a kind of container in which it can be hidden during the night.

As is clear from the citations in Athenaeus, Helios uses his vehicle to sail from the place of the sunset to the place of the sunrise. Homer does not mention such a journey. But since his sun sets into Okeanos and rises from Okeanos, there is no conflict between two pictures. A puzzle, however, emerges if we take a closer look at Helios' daily voyage. The only detailed exposition we have comes from Mimnermus:

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<sup>1</sup> Stes. *PMGF* S 17 = 185; Pis. fr. 5 West; Aesch. fr. 69 Radt; Pherecydes fr. 18 a Fowler; Antim. fr. 86 Matthews.

<sup>2</sup> Fr. 8 Bernabé; Theolytus *FGrHist* 478 F 1.

<sup>3</sup> *ARV* 449, 2. See Jessen, "Helios", *RE* VIII (1912) 92. Cf. *LIMC* V (add.) Helios 101.

<sup>4</sup> Fr. 12. 5–6 West.

<sup>5</sup> Helios' bowl is a part of iconographic tradition—see *LIMC* V (add.) Helios 99–100.

The Sun-god hath received the lot of toil all his days, nor ever cometh any surcease for his horses or for himself, when rosy-fingered Dawn hath left Oceanus and mounted the sky; for a lovely winged hollow couch of precious gold, made by the hands of Hephaestus, bears him lightly across the billow, on the top of the wave, while he sleeps; it carries him from the land of the Hesperides even to the country of the Aethiopians, where his swift chariot and steeds stand waiting until early-born Dawn shall come. Then the son of Hyperion mounts his car.<sup>6</sup>

The idea of the Sun's god changing vehicle is nontrivial. Why should Helios not keep traveling in a chariot? If the sun is no longer seen during the night, this is possibly because it is hidden by huge mountains in the north, as some Ionian compatriots of Mimnermus will in fact later assert, or because it entered an immense cave, as in the Gilgamesh epics, or because during the night the sun's disc is turned towards us by its dark side, as in early Indian cosmography. To be sure, Egyptian Re traveled in a boat, but he did not change his vehicle: during the day the solar bark sailed a celestial river and came back during the night along the subterranean waters. No Near Eastern parallel to the idea of the sun's changing vehicle has been identified.<sup>7</sup> One finds it, however, in Bronze Age Scandinavia.

Before citing the evidence, it is appropriate to recall that the amount of the metalwork found in Bronze Age Scandinavia clearly points to the region's wide and intense trade connections since every piece of both copper and tin was imported;<sup>8</sup> that the Bronze Age 'Scandinavian culture' stretched into the eastern Netherlands, northern Germany, and also included major islands of the Baltic Sea and some outposts in southern Finland and Eastern Baltic countries;<sup>9</sup> and that the Late Bronze Age Europe witnessed a kind of cultural koine spread from the Atlantic shores to the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>10</sup>

For the world of ideas, hundreds of representations on Danish bronze razors<sup>11</sup> and thousands of carvings on Swedish and Norwegian

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<sup>6</sup> Transl. by C. B. Gulick.

<sup>7</sup> See M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford 1997) 507 f.

<sup>8</sup> K. Kristiansen, T. B. Larsson, *The Rise of Bronze Age Society* (Cambridge 2005) 186.

<sup>9</sup> German scholars usually speak about 'nordischer Kreis'; the expression 'the Nordic culture' also appears in works published in English.

<sup>10</sup> See J. Bouzek, *The Aegean, Anatolia and Europe: Cultural Interrelations in the Second Millennium B. C.* (Praha 1985) and Kristiansen, Larsson (n. 8) Ch. 5–6.

<sup>11</sup> See now F. Kaul, *Ships on Bronzes. A Study in Bronze Age Religion and Iconography. Vol. 1: Text; Vol. 2: Catalogue of Danish Finds* (Copenhagen 1998). Similar bronze objects are also found in Sweden, Netherlands and northern Germany.

rocks<sup>12</sup> constitute a considerable body of evidence, though such evidence is not easy to interpret. The ship is among the most favorite subjects in these representations. It frequently appears in a close association with either the Sun or the horse or both. Many ships are shown to transport the sun; many are decorated with a horse's figurehead and are, in a sense, 'sea-horses'. The horse pulling the sun is also a well-known motif. Most importantly, there are several representations in which the horse pulling the sun appears along with the ship 'in such a way as to suggest that the horse is supposed to take the sun across the sky by day and then rendezvous with the ship'.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the horse standing on a ship with the Sun's disc in front of it is shown on a rock carving from Östergötland (Fig. 1).

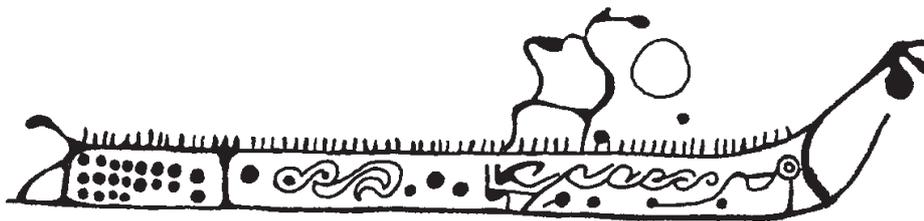


Fig. 1. A carving from Östergötland

That the disc represents here the sun is confirmed by the fact that the ship is facing to the right, that is, moving in the direction in which the sun is seen to proceed across the sky.<sup>14</sup> In a rock carving from Kalleby, Bohuslän, either the horse (according to some scholars) or the stag (according to the others) pulling the Sun's wheel is shown just above the ship (Fig. 2). The idea of alternatively combining two vehicles is still there in any case.



Fig. 2. A carving from Bohuslän

<sup>12</sup> For excellent introduction see P. Gelling, H. E. Davidson, *The Chariot of the Sun* (London 1969) and J. Coles, *Shadows of a Northern Past. Rock Carvings of Bohuslän and Østfold* (Oxford 2005). The publications and scholarly literature have been significantly growing over recent decades. A beautiful archaeological park has been established in Vitlycke, Bohuslän.

<sup>13</sup> M. L. West, *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* (Oxford 2007) 207.

<sup>14</sup> For orientation of the ships in Scandinavian monuments see K. A. Larsen, "Solvogn og Solkult", *Kuml* (1955) 49, Fig. 4 a; Kaul (n. 11) (Text) 185–187.

The Sun's god can be sometimes recognized in Scandinavian monuments. He is riding a one-wheeled chariot drawn by one horse on a rock carving from Bohuslän.<sup>15</sup> The following description is given to a carving on the island of Tjörn (a few miles off the west coast of Sweden, near the famous rock-carving area in the district of Tanum, Bohuslän): "There is a horse placed in front of a sun cross and a man partly kneeling with a sword; the man is driving the horse with the help of its flying mane which acts as reins, and the whole picture is placed on a primitive sleigh-like ship"<sup>16</sup> (cf. Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. A carving from the island of Tjörn

The combination of a ship, sun and horse appears also on Scandinavian bronze razors.<sup>17</sup> The artist who decorated one of such razors seems to have hinted at the sun's horse taking off from the ship (Fig. 4).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Larsen 53, Fig. 7 c. For one-wheeled chariot of the Sun's (or a related) god in Indian, Iranian and Irish traditions see M.L. West, *Indo-European Poetry and Myth*, 205.

<sup>16</sup> J. Pettersson, G. Kristiansson, *Hällristningar på Tjörn* (Malung 1977) 116. The horse and the horseman seem to be shown at the moment of landing.

<sup>17</sup> Larsen (n. 14) 47, Fig. 2; 51, Fig. 5 b. Kaul (n. 11) no. 363 displays a horse landing in a ship, but that part of the razor which could have had the sun's disc is broken.

<sup>18</sup> Kaul (n. 11) no. 353 (p. 144; the horse can be identified by two characteristic short strokes). The other four discs with the rays seem to represent the sun taking rest in a ship, rising sun, culminating sun and declining sun respectively.

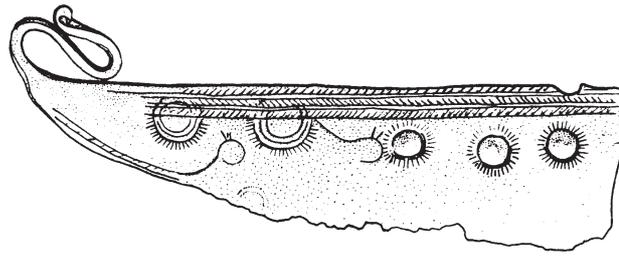


Fig. 4. Bronze razor from Denmark

One may note that the western part of Scandinavia provides a geographically adequate context for the idea of the Sun's god changing vehicle. The people dwelling on the shores which face an immense expanse of the sea in the west observe at the sunset how the sun touches the watery surface and subsequently disappears beneath it. To be sure, also in Ionia, on the eastern shores of the Aegean, the western horizon frequently coincides with the sea's surface, and the sun is accordingly seen to descend to the watery surface. But the Greeks of Ionia would have certainly known that the Greeks in Athens or Argos would have seen the sun rising from the sea, but never setting into it. The inhabitants of the western parts of Scandinavia were thus in a far better position than the inhabitants of the Aegean to conceive the idea of the sun's night journey by water. Before the recognition of the existence of America, the Atlantic Ocean could have been reasonably thought of to have been a body of water beyond the edge of the earth. And if the sun reappears every morning, it is not illogical to think of it traveling to the east by water. As a matter of fact, the idea of the sun's journeys in a boat or ship is well-documented in Bronze Age Scandinavia. It is represented in bronze and rock carvings. At the same time, it is obvious that during the day, when the sun is high in the sky, it does not travel by water; and if the sun changes its medium, it also changes vehicle. While the cycle presented by Mimnermus and implied by other Greek poets is strange within the geographical situation of the East Mediterranean, it is natural for the inhabitants of the Atlantic shores.<sup>19</sup> Historically, the combination of the boat and horse, both associated with the sun, seems to reflect two different cultural traditions that met in

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<sup>19</sup> Very much the same can be said in respect to the Homeric idea of the stars bathing in waters of Okeanos. Scandinavia also provided the only favourable geographical context for an idea of the surrounding ocean. It is only here that the body of water stretched from the west to encompass the land also from the north (in accordance to the sun's boat night journey from the west to the east through the north). It is worth noting that in Snorri's *Edda* the surrounding ocean is known as the world serpent—an archaic feature that could not have borrowed from the tradition of classical geography.

Scandinavia: the tradition of the megalithic culture of Atlantic Europe (for the sun's boat) and that of the battle-axes culture brought by the Indo-Europeans from Eastern or Central Europe (for the sun's horse and chariot).

As for the sun's cup-like vehicle, its representation is found on a bronze vessel from Siem, Jutland (Fig. 5). This representation seems also to

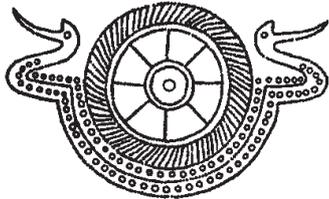


Fig. 5. Detail of decoration of a bronze vessel from Siem, Jutland

echo a particular detail given by Mimnermus. This poet presents the hollow bed of Helios as possessing wings.<sup>20</sup> But wings are appropriate to bear one across the sky, and not the sea. The solar cup-like boat of Siem is not depicted with wings, but it is itself in a way a water bird and therefore can be said to be winged.

It is further worth noting that Siem's vessel is a cauldron, and that representations of the sun's vehicle, both of Siem type and of somewhat different types, regularly appear on the Late Bronze Age cauldrons from Scandinavia, Hungary, and Italy.<sup>21</sup> The cauldrons with such decoration can be possibly seen as symbolic substitutes for the sun's cauldron. And we saw that the cauldron is a particularly well-attested version of the sun's vessel in early Greek tradition.

Some scholars believe that this type of decoration originated in the Danube region from where it radiated outward.<sup>22</sup> Whatever the truth concerning details of the decoration or the shape of such vessels, the idea behind the type was formed, I suggest, in a region where the sun was regularly observed to set into the sea; and this fits far better with the western shores of Jutland, Sweden, and Norway than with any part of Central Europe. The very association of the sun with the ship may also imply the experience of regularly seeing the sun descending into the sea.

A reference to the ship transporting the sun's vessel can probably be recognized in a remarkable object found in 1895 at Skallerup, Zeeland (Fig. 6). It was dated to the period III of the Scandinavian Bronze Age,<sup>23</sup> and dendrochronology suggests that in nearby Jutland period III began not

<sup>20</sup> The manuscript tradition presents Helios himself possessing wings. But then Helios does not need his horses. Editors rightly follow Heyne who proposed reading *ὑπόπτερος* instead of *ὑπόπτερον*.

<sup>21</sup> G. von Merhart, *Hallstatt und Italien. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Frühen Eisenzeit in Italien und Mitteleuropa*, ed. G. Kossack (Mainz 1969) pl. 44, 47, 48. Some specimens may belong to the Early Iron Age.

<sup>22</sup> Von Merhart (n. 21) 327–364.

<sup>23</sup> H. C. Broholm, *Danske Oldsager. Vol. 3: Ældre Bronzealder* (København 1952) 63 (N 335).



Fig. 6. Bronze cauldron from Skallerup

later than 1316 BC.<sup>24</sup> In the words of a prominent scholar, “this peculiar object ... consists of a hammered cauldron sailing forward on two ships with swan-figures in the bow and stern, the whole mounted on a wheel frame with two pairs of four-spoked wheels”.<sup>25</sup>

There is much to justify speaking of the ships in connection with the Skallerup cauldron. The ships decorated with bird's protomae at both prow and stern constitute a well-known type, commonly called *Vogelbarke*. It is well attested in the Danube region, Italy and especially in Scandinavia.<sup>26</sup> Double ships repeatedly appear on Scandinavian bronzes,<sup>27</sup> and combining

<sup>24</sup> K. Randsborg, “The Nordic Bronze Age: Chronological Dimensions”, *Acta Archaeologica* 67 (1996 [= Suppl. 1: Absolute Chronology, ed. by K. Randsborg]) 66; K. Randsborg, K. Christiansen, “Bronze Age Oak-Coffin Graves: Archaeology and Dendro-Dating”, *Acta Archaeologica* 77 (2006 [= Suppl. 7]).

<sup>25</sup> P. V. Glob, *The Mound People* (London 1974) 148. See also F. Kaul, “Kultwagen”, *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde* 17 (Berlin–New York 2001) 463–478, esp. 473 f.

<sup>26</sup> W. Kimmig, “Seevölkerbewegung und Urnenfelderkultur”, in: *Studien aus Alteuropa* (Bonn 1964) I, 224 identifies the type as “donauländische Vogelbarken”. A similar approach was taken by H. Henken, *Tarquinius, Villanovans and Early Etruscans* (Cambridge, Mass. 1968) 2, 514–517, 537, 568–570. For the likely Scandinavian origin of the type see my “Mice Destroying an Army (Hdt. 2. 141) and a Solution of the Tocharian Problem”, *Hyperboreus* 16/17 (2010/2011) 39–43 and “Викинги бронзового века и их наследие” (“The Vikings of the Bronze Age and their Legacy”), *Stratum plus* 2 (2012) 84–89.

<sup>27</sup> E. Sprockhoff, “Nordische Bronzezeit und frühes Griechentum”, *JbRGZM* 1 (1954) 57, Abb. 14; Kaul (n. 11) no. 99; 168, etc.

two ships can be explained either as reflection of actual practice<sup>28</sup> or as the motif of twin ships related to the cult of divine Twins.<sup>29</sup> A ship put on wheels is something very well known from the tradition of European carnivals, and it appears already on a sixth-century Attic vase painting.<sup>30</sup>

Now, what is the function of the wheels? The famous Trundholm group (also from Zealand and from about the same epoch as the Skallerup cauldron) which consists of the horse pulling the sun's disc, both put on wheels, has an opening for the cord.<sup>31</sup> It is clear, then, that it was used for ceremonial processions. One may think of a similar use of the Skallerup cauldron—all the more so because it represents a certain type.<sup>32</sup> This suggests, in turn, that the vessel put on the ships and wheels (to be carried in a procession) had a symbolic meaning. Greek poetry, I propose, reveals this meaning: the vessel symbolized the sun's cauldron in which the sun was hidden during the night.

The suggestion that the Skallerup cauldron hints at the sun's vehicle agrees well with an iconographic motif of a disc combined with four bird protomae. This motif is attested in two regions that display a number of strikingly similar cultural elements, Scandinavia and Italy. It is probably worth noting that its version on a bronze shield from Denmark (Fig. 7)



Fig. 7. Bronze shield from Denmark

<sup>28</sup> G. Hallström, "Uritggade kanoter i Sverige?", *Fornvännen* (1925) 50–70.

<sup>29</sup> K. Kristiansen, "Rock Art and Religion. The Sun Journey in Indo-European Mythology and Bronze Age Rock Art", in: Å. Fredell, F. Criado, K. Kristiansen (eds.), *Representations and Communications* (Oxford 2010) 99 ff.

<sup>30</sup> See J. Boardman, "A Greek Vase from Egypt", *JHS* 78 (1958) 6, Fig. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Glob (n. 25) 103.

<sup>32</sup> G. Rausing, "The Wheeled Cauldrons and the Wine", *Antiquity* 71 (1997) 994–999.

involves seven concentric circles. As I argue elsewhere, the number seven was strongly connected with the sun, and especially with the sun's seasonal movement from solstice to solstice;<sup>33</sup> the concern with this movement fits very well with the involvement of such symbols as migratory birds (be those swans, wild geese or ducks). Further, the motif can be reasonably seen as a variant of the *Vogelbarke* type, while the latter derives in fact from that of the *Sonnen-Vogel-Barke*.<sup>34</sup>

To be sure, the cauldron put on a ship need not necessarily contain the sun. The Skallerup cauldron contained in fact burnt bones. Does this contradict the proposed interpretation? Even if one allows that the Skallerup cauldron was originally used for burnt bones, there is still a likely association of some cremation burials with the sun cult. Fire and the sun could have been easily related, and were indeed related in Europe of the very old, as so many European seasonal festivals prove. Now, it is plausibly suggested that the sun must have been to the Bronze Age Scandinavians 'the symbol of resurrection *par excellence*'.<sup>35</sup> One may, then, suppose a kind of wishful "logic" behind placing burnt bones in a vessel symbolizing the sun: just as the sun ever returns to new life, so will the deceased; or as the sun (with its fire) brings every spring new life, so fire will do to the deceased. There is some evidence to support the actual existence of such a train of thought. On the neck of a funerary urn from Øster Hierting, one may see a person with raised hands and outstretched fingers, an image analogies to which are also known from Scandinavian rock carvings. Knud A. Larsen seems to be right to interpret the raised hands and outstretched fingers as symbolizing sunrise and dawn (and he aptly recalls rosy-fingered Eos of Homer in this connection).<sup>36</sup> Then we have a combination of a funerary urn with an image of the god of the sun's light, and I see no other explanation for this combination than the hope for resurrection. Further, a house-urn from Vulci (said to be of the early eighth century) has a *Vogelbarke* on the roof and a typical *Sonnen-Vogel-*

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<sup>33</sup> D. Panchenko, "Solar Light and the Symbolism of the Number Seven", *Hyperboreus* 12 (2006) 21–36.

<sup>34</sup> Von Merhart (n. 21) 327 interprets the motif of a disc combined with four bird protomae in terms of purely ornamental development, he proposes that it is just mirrored *Sonnen-Vogel-Barke* of a certain (Lavindsgaard) type. This train of thought thus deprives the combination of symbolic meaning and also neglects the independent existence of the double ship motif. Merhart is further prone to assume Hungarian provenance of the motif of a disc combined with four bird protomae, but he cites no example from the Danube region and explicitly notes that the Lavindsgaard type has no parallels there.

<sup>35</sup> Gelling, Davidson (n. 12) 58.

<sup>36</sup> Larsen (n. 14) esp. 54, Fig. 8.

*Barke* on its side surface.<sup>37</sup> Hence we have a clear reference to the sun in connection with cremation. It is also worth noting that house-urns belong to the cultural elements shared by Etruria and Scandinavia (in a specified, larger sense).<sup>38</sup>

It is thus likely that the Skallerup object represents the sun's cauldron.

It is appropriate to specify that wheeled cauldrons are known also from the Danube region, and according to an influential scholarly view the type originated there, which in turn may suggest that the idea of sun's journey in a bronze vessel originated there as well. However, the bronze vessel is to be transported by boat, and I already noted that Atlantic sea shores fit better with the corresponding assumption than the planes or mountains of Central Europe. Since I can imagine, nevertheless, that it was believed somewhere in what is modern Romania that the sun rose in the east from the sea (the Black Sea) and came back from the west, hidden during the night in a big bronze vessel, by sailing in a boat down such a long and east flowing river as the Danube, I do not deny categorically the possibility of Central European origin of the idea in question, even though I put in the title of this paper 'Scandinavian' rather than 'northern' background (of Greek mythic cosmography).<sup>39</sup>

One may venture suggesting that there is a reference to the sun's cauldron in an open circular outline drawn right above a ship, repeatedly found in rock carvings (Fig. 8 a).<sup>40</sup> Sometimes two such objects are shown above one ship (Fig. 8 b), but the same holds also for the sun's images. A carving from Bohuslän displays the same element in combination not only with a ship but also with horses (Fig. 8 c).<sup>41</sup> A pair of horses is a recurrent motif in Scandinavian rock carvings, and in the Eddic tradition the sun is carried by two horses, Arvak and Alsvin (*Grímnismál* 37 and also in Snorri Sturlusson's *Gylfaginning*). The combination of a ship with horses strongly suggests a reference to the sun's transport. This fits well with the idea that the element under discussion represents the sun's cauldron, though the corresponding conclusion remains of course hypothetical.

<sup>37</sup> *Die Etrusker und Europa* (Paris–Mainland 1992) 116 (N 35).

<sup>38</sup> See the map, *ibid.*, 193.

<sup>39</sup> For the historical context see Panchenko (n. 25).

<sup>40</sup> See, for instance: Å. Fredsjö, *Hällristingar i Kville härad, Svenneby socken* (Göteborg 1971) 240 Pl. III and VIII, 242, 285 Pl. IV; idem, *Hällristingar i Kville härad, Bottna socken* (Göteborg 1975) 299 Pl. VI; idem, *Hällristingar i Kville härad, Kville socken* (Göteborg 1981) 167 Pl. II, 185 Pl. I, 186 Pl. II, cf. 172 Pl. XI.

<sup>41</sup> For the context see R. Bradley, "Danish Razors and Swedish rocks: Cosmology and the Bronze Age Landscape", *Antiquity* 80 (2006) 380, Fig. 5.

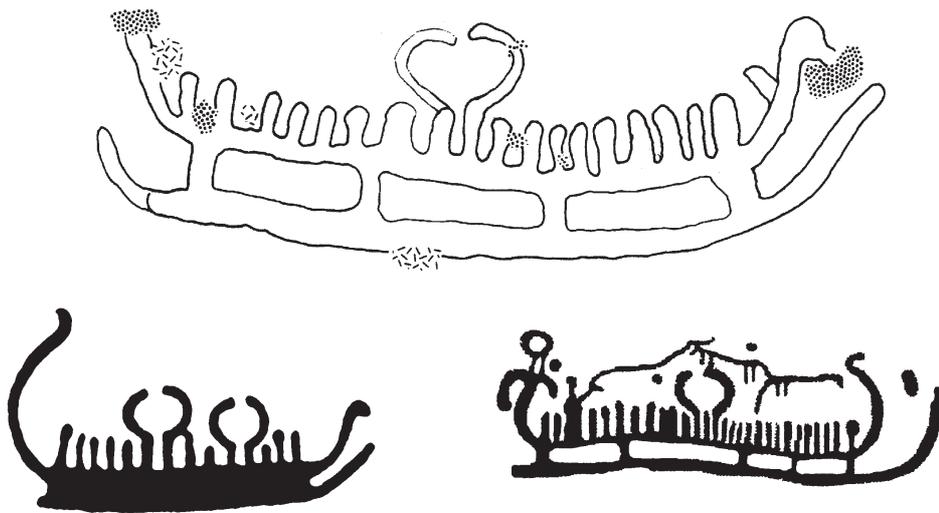


Fig. 8, a–c. Carvings from Bohuslän

In sum, it is possible to locate Scandinavian parallels for specific motifs of the sun's daily journey as it is represented in Mimnermus' poetry, such as a cup-like device (which is found on the cauldron from Siem) and the motif of changing a vehicle (which is repeatedly implied in representations found on both rocks and metalwork). Greek influence upon Scandinavia in the case in question is unlikely for the simple reason that the solar cult was marginal in Greece in both Mycenaean and later times, while it was central in Bronze Age Scandinavia. Moreover, it was Scandinavia and not the Aegean which provided a geographically adequate context for the emergence of the idea of the sun's changing vehicle. Furthermore, this idea recurs in the Latvian folk tradition (the Sun travels alternately in a chariot and in a boat),<sup>42</sup> while western, seaside Latvia may be said to have belonged in the Bronze Age to the realm of 'Scandinavian' (or 'Nordic') culture; in any case Latvia and Scandinavia are parts of the same Baltic region.

There remains a very odd idea of the sun's sailing in a cup or a cauldron. Likely Scandinavian parallels to Aegean poetry have it seen as a transformation of an initially more natural notion, according to which the cauldron itself is transported by a boat. But why, one may ask, does the boat not figure in the Greek tradition? It is absent even in Mimnermus, whether or not one follows Athenaeus in identifying the poet's 'hollow bed' with a cup-like vehicle. To answer this question we should take into account a characteristic feature of Greek mythology which has been emphasized by David Konstan: gods can represent the natural world, but

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<sup>42</sup> See West (n. 13) 209.

they are never confused with particular elements of that world.<sup>43</sup> Let us imagine that early Greek poets were familiar with the notion of the vessel of Helios and they also heard of Helios' night journey by water. The same word means in Greek both the Sun as god and the object shining in the sky. Now, it would be strange for a Greek poet to think of Sun's god, Helios, getting into a vessel every night. "The vessel of Helios" would mean for such a poet something that Helios uses. For crossing the sky, the idea of riding a chariot was available, and the vessel used by Helios turned into his water transport. The very idea of the sun's vessel belongs in fact to a type of religion different from that recorded for the Greeks. The sun's vessel is meant to contain fire (because of which the sun shines and emits heat) and not a person. The idea belongs to a religion in which natural powers are not substituted for the strength, benevolence and anger of divine anthropomorphic characters in such a systematic way as in Greek religion. Accordingly, this idea may be seen as an intruder in Greek mythology, even as we have seen reasons to think of Scandinavian influence upon the corresponding element of Greek mythic cosmography.<sup>44</sup>

It is not easy, however, to specify the route and the time of the arrival of the idea at Greece. Particular cultural elements common to both Scandinavia and the Aegean are known from the Middle Helladic / Middle Minoan until early Archaic periods.<sup>45</sup> The motif of the *Sonnen-Vogel-Barke* is attested for Pylos shortly before its destruction (Fig. 9).<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> D. Konstan, "What is Greek about Greek Mythology?", *Kernos* 4 (1991) 11–30.

<sup>44</sup> Gisela Fuchs in her interesting study proposes a Near Eastern origin of the idea of the sun's cup—G. Fuchs, *Der Becher des Sonnengottes. Zur Entwicklung der Motifs "Becher des Zorn"* (Münster, etc. 2003). But in reality she is trying to recover the notion of the sun's cup in the Old Testament mainly on the basis of Greek poetry. It is true, she adduces an interesting report by Pausanias (9, 41, 1 f.) on an object in a Lycian temple which she plausibly interprets as pointing to the sun's cup. But in what sense does Lycia represent the East? There was significant movement of various ethnic and military groups from Europe to Asia Minor in the late second–early first millennia BC. The Phrygians, Mysians, Lydians and in all probability Carians came from Europe. The Lycians were among the Sea Peoples, and at least many of the Sea People were of European (including Scandinavian) background. After all, the cultural legacy of the Sea Peoples can be discerned in the Old Testament itself.

<sup>45</sup> See Bouzek (n. 10); Kristiansen, Larsson (n. 8); Panchenko (n. 25) 82 f., 106–109.

<sup>46</sup> C. W. Blegen et al., *The Palace of Nestor at Pylos in Western Messenia* (Cincinnati 1973) III, 16, Fig. 108. Parallels to other elements of the Pylos diadem decoration can be found in Denmark and Pomeranian—see: E. Sprockhoff, "Das bronzene Zierband von Kronshagen bei Kiel", *Offa* 14 (1955) 35, Fig. 13, 3; 4–5. The mushroom-like images (in my reproduction, the Pylos diadem is seen upside down) repeatedly occur in Scandinavian bronzes and rock carvings.

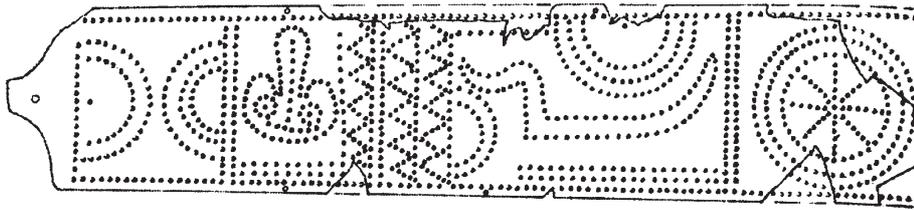


Fig. 9. Golden diadem from Pylos

It reappears somewhat later on a krater sherd from Tiryns (Fig. 10 a; cf. e. g. Fig. 10 b).

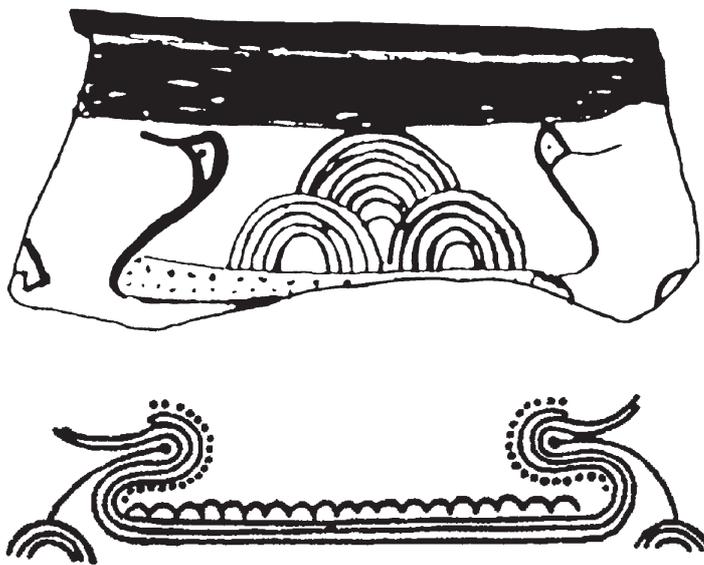


Fig. 10 a–b. A krater sherd from Tiryns; *Vogelbarke* from Emden (Lower Saxony)

A sherd from Kynos of about the same epoch displays a ship's figurehead remarkably similar to that seen on a Danish bronze razor (Fig. 11 a–b).

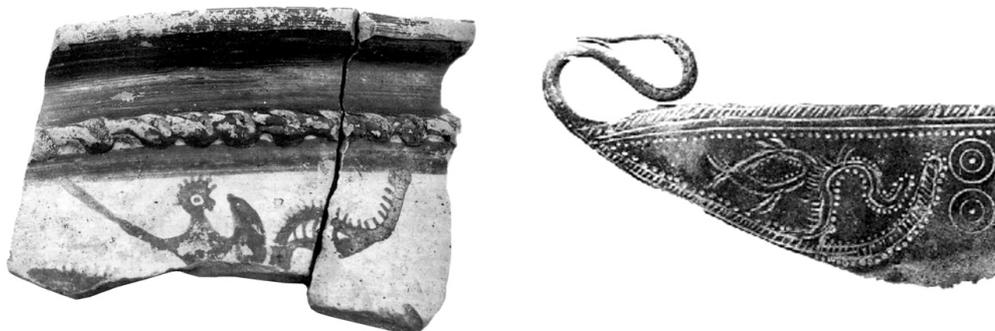


Fig. 11 a–b. A sherd from Kynos; bronze razor from Denmark

Another striking parallel appears much later, in a representation on an Attic geometric vase (Fig. 12). We see here a ship that in all probability transports the sun. Here it is self-sufficient subject matter—precisely as on Scandinavian rock carvings (Fig. 13 a–d).



Fig. 12. Attic geometric vase

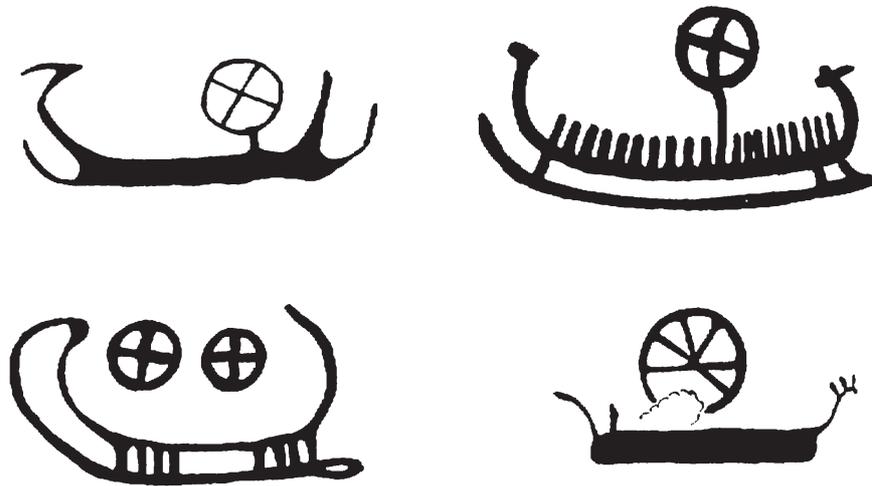


Fig. 13 a–d. Carvings from Bohuslän and Östergötland

Moreover, the ship on the Attic vase has neither mast nor sail, and the team is indicated by vertical strokes—all elements characteristic of the representation of ships on Scandinavian petroglyphs. It is quite possible, after all, that Scandinavian influence, both direct and indirect, reached the Aegean in several waves. This is a matter for further investigation.\*

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\* I am grateful to Matthew Kendall for correcting my English.

## Sources of illustrations:

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- Fig. 2: *ibid.*, 93, Fig. 44 c.
- Fig. 3: J. Pettersson, G. Kristiansson, *Hällristningar på Tjörn* (Malung 1977) 47, Fig. 28.
- Fig. 4: F. Kaul, *Ships on Bronzes. Catalogue of Danish Finds* (Copenhagen 1998) 144, no. 353.
- Fig. 5: J. Bouzek, *The Aegean, Anatolia and Europe: Cultural Interrelations in the Second Millennium B. C.* (Praha 1985) 180, Fig. 90: 16.
- Fig. 6: H. C. Broholm, *Danske Oldsager. Vol. 3: Ældre Bronzealder* (København 1952) 63, Fig. 335 a.
- Fig. 7: G. von Merhart, *Hallstatt und Italien. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Frühen Eisenzeit in Italien und Mitteleuropa*, ed. G. Kossack (Mainz 1969) pl. 14.1.
- Fig. 8 a: Å. Fredsjö, *Hällristningar i Kville härad, Bottna socken* (Göteborg 1975) 299, Pl. VI.
- Fig. 8 b: P. Gelling, H. E. Davidson, *The Chariot of the Sun* (London 1969) 44, Fig. 20 e.
- Fig. 9: C. W. Blegen et al., *The Palace of Nestor at Pylos in Western Messenia* (Cincinnati 1973) III, 16, Fig. 108.
- Fig. 10 a: S. Wachsmann, *Seagoing Ships and Seamanship in the Bronze Age* (London 1998) 181, Fig. 8: 32.
- Fig. 10 b: J. Bouzek, *The Aegean, Anatolia and Europe: Cultural Interrelations in the Second Millennium B. C.* (Praha 1985) 180, Fig. 90: 1.
- Fig. 11 a: S. Wachsmann, *Seagoing Ships and Seamanship in the Bronze Age* (London 1998) 134, Fig. 7: 15.
- Fig. 11 b: F. Kaul, *Ships on Bronzes. Catalogue of Danish Finds* (Copenhagen 1998) no. 387.
- Fig. 12: J. S. Morrison, R. T. Williams, *Greek Oared Ships* (Cambridge 1968) Pl. 6 c.
- Fig. 13: P. Gelling, H. E. Davidson, *The Chariot of the Sun* (London 1969) 12, Fig. 4.

Благодаря Афинейю (469 с–470 d) нам известно, что многие греческие поэты, в том числе очень ранние, в своих стихах упоминали ночное плавание солнца в каком-то сосуде. Одни из них говорили о “чаше”, другие – о “котле”. У Мимнерма, в единственном сохранившемся развернутом описании такого рода, это “крылатое полое ложе”, но Афиней, вероятно, прав, усматривая в словах и этого поэта отсылку к полый форме чаши. Примечательной чертой ежедневного путешествия Гелиоса=солнца, каким оно предстает у Мимнерма, является смена транспортного средства: колесницы, несущей днем солнечного

бога по воздуху, на своего рода ладью, в которой он перемещается ночью. В статье показывается, что оба мотива – и плавание солнца в сосуде, и смена солнечным богом транспортного средства – северного происхождения. Первый мотив зародился либо в Скандинавии, либо в нижнем Подунавье, второй – скорее всего, в Скандинавии, и оба мотива (первый – косвенно, второй – несомненно) засвидетельствованы в изобразительных памятниках скандинавского бронзового века.

Many Greek poets, including very early ones, referred to the sun's night journey in a cup-like device. Most of them spoke of the 'cup'; the poet of the *Titanomachia*, followed by other writers, called it the 'cauldron'. Mimnermus described it as a 'winged hollow bed', but Athenaeus may be right in interpreting Mimnermus' words as a hint at the hollow shape of a cup. The only detailed exposition of Helios' daily voyage comes from Mimnermus. It includes nontrivial idea of the Sun's god changing vehicle. During the day Helios travels in a chariot and during the night he uses a 'winged hollow bed' to sail from the place of the sunset to the place of the sunrise. It is argued in this paper that the motif of the sun's night journey in a cup-like device originated either in the Danube region or in Scandinavia and that the motif of the Sun's god changing vehicle is of Scandinavian provenance.